Julius Guttmann (1880–1950) was born into a distinguished family of German rabbis and scholars. One of the leaders of the movement for a scientific study of the history of Judaism, Guttmann was Professor at the Academy for the Scientific Study of Judaism in Berlin from 1919 to 1934. In 1934 he was appointed professor of Jewish philosophy at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In addition to the present work, Professor Guttmann was the author of many studies of Jewish philosophers and the editor of a considerable number of Hebrew philosophic works.

The present translation by Dr. David W. Silverman, a young American rabbi and theologian, has been made from both the German original and the revised and enlarged Hebrew edition of this book. The text of Dr. Silverman's translation has been reviewed by Dr. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, of the Hebrew University (Jerusalem), who also contributes a biographic essay and an appreciation of Professor Guttmann's achievements.

PHILOSOPHIES OF JUDAISM

THE HISTORY OF JEWISH PHILOSOPHY FROM BIBLICAL TIMES TO FRANZ ROSENZWEIG

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Yitzhak (Julius) Guttmann was born into the noble tradition of modern Jewish scholarship which, despite the somewhat forbidding name *Wissenschaft des Judentums,* had such a remarkable flowering among German Jewry. His father, Jacob Guttmann (1845–1919), had served as rabbi of the Jewish communities of Hildesheim (1874–92) and of Breslau (from 1892 until his death). As a scholar, Jacob Guttmann specialized in the history of medieval Jewish philosophy, publishing papers and monographs on Ibn Daud, Saadia, Solomon ibn Gabirol, and Maimonides, as well as studies on the interrelations between Jewish and Christian philosophical thinking.

Julius Guttmann (b. 1880) was twelve years old when the family moved to Breslau. Here the young student found the same Jewish and academic climate with which he was already familiar through paternal example, and which proved so congenial to his intellectual development. The Breslau Rabbinical Seminary had been a center of Jewish scholarship since the days of its foundation, in 1854, by Zacharias Frankel, one of the fathers of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums.* Guttmann received his training in Jewish, Semitic, and philosophical studies, both at the Rabbinical Seminary and at the University of Breslau. From 1910 to 1919 he lectured at Breslau, and from 1919 to 1934, at the *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Berlin. In 1934 he was appointed professor of Jewish philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he taught until his death in 1950.

Well versed in all the main branches of general philosophy, Guttmann's interests were focused, naturally enough, on those problems that especially concerned the German thinkers of his generation. Special mention should be made of the

Neo-Kantian revival (in which the name of Hermann Cohen is also associated), which led Guttmann into Kantian studies, as well as of the growing preoccupation of philosophers with sociology and sociological perspectives. The latter interest resulted in Guttmann's great critical essays on the works of Sombart and Max Weber.

However, even these sociological papers testified to Guttmann's fundamental preoccupation with the question of the nature and essence of Judaism. It was Sombart's well-known thesis, which argued for an essential and inner relationship of Judaism to the spirit of capitalism, that had been examined in Guttmann's essay *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (1913), just as the immediate occasion of his review of Weber's work had been the latter's application of his sociological theories to Jewish history. Guttmann's ultimate and profoundest concern, both as a systematic thinker and as an historian, was with the philosophy of Judaism, and it was surely no accident that the most important work of this man, who thought and taught so much, but who wrote comparatively little and only with great reluctance, should be his *Die Philosophie des Judentums*.

The very title of the book contains a programme, and betrays its basic orientation—that of the philosopher of religion. The philosopher of religion philosophizes about religion, just as the philosopher of law philosophizes about law, and the philosopher of art philosophizes about art. The implied assumption of all such philosophizing is that there exist such spheres of reality as art, law, and religion, about which one can philosophize. Once you say that religion (or, for that matter, art or law) is "nothing but" something else, it automatically ceases to be a legitimate object of genuine philosophical inquiry and becomes, instead, a phenomenon to be explained—or, rather, to be explained away—by some positive science like psychology or sociology.

In order to be true to his calling, therefore, the philosopher of religion must hold views on the nature of religion. What is it that gives religion its specific character, making it "religion," as distinct from ethics, morality, or art? Guttmann's great master, Hermann Cohen, started with a Neo-Kantian ethical conception of religion, but in his later work tried increasingly to grasp the specificity of the religious idea, in which he proceeded by way of an interpretation of Judaism. Guttmann is also clearly indebted to Schleiermacher and Rudolf Otto, those great philosopher-theologians who reclaimed the right of religion to be objectively considered as something *sui generis*. But perhaps the most important and also most subtle influence on Guttmann's thinking was that of Husserl, whose phenomenology claimed to provide a method of knowing those a priori elements and structures which were present, as original data, in human consciousness. This was the ultimate source of Guttmann's carefully- and well-argued criticism of modern existentialism, first published in Hebrew in 1944 (now also available in English under the title "Existence and Idea: Critical Observations on the Existentialist Philosophy," in *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, Vol. VI, 1960).

The application of all this to Judaism is obvious, and Guttmann leaves us no doubts on that score in this book. He is not so much concerned with Jewish philosophy or Jewish philosophers, as with the *philosophy of Judaism*. Judaism is something given, a datum, something that is there *before* Jewish philosophers begin to philosophize about it. "Jewish" philosophy consists of the process in which Jewish philosophers throughout the generations take the fact of Jewish religion as they find it, and then "elucidate and justify it."

In this book, as well as in his more detailed papers (for example, on Judah Halevi, Maimonides, Gersonides, Spinoza, Mendelssohn, and others), Guttmann is first and foremost an historian of philosophy. But unlike Husik's *History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, or N. Rotenstreich's important Hebrew work *Jewish Thought in the Modern Era*, Guttmann's survey embraces the philosophy of Judaism from the Bible to the present day. Whereas the original German edition (1933) had ended with Hermann Cohen, the later Hebrew edition (on which the present English version is based) has an additional chapter on the last great philosopher of Judaism, Franz Rosenzweig. Guttmann nowhere explicitly states his own views regarding the essence of Judaism; as an historian, rather than a creative systematic thinker, he preferred his "phenomenology of Judaism" to remain implicit in his work. But he was far from being an historical relativist, and

firmly believed in an essence of Judaism, the proper understanding of which would provide a yardstick by which to measure the essential Jewishness (or, alternatively, the degree of un-Jewish deviation) in ideas and doctrines. With this firm conviction, Guttmann was even able to argue that Jewish philosophy, as such, was never a purely and immanently Jewish creation; it never welled up spontaneously from the inmost fountains of Jewish life. It always drew on alien influences, yet always stamped what it received from outside with its individual and specifically Jewish character. Only one popular account of Guttmann's ideas on "The Principles of Judaism" was ever published; it is available now in an English translation by David Wolf Silverman (*Conservative Judaism*, Vol. XIV, No. 1, Fall, 1959). Guttmann also had well-defined views on the nature and character of philosophy, and these were no doubt the reason why he excluded from his work such significant phenomena as mystical and kabbalistic thinking. This explains why, among the thinkers of the last generation, Franz Rosenzweig is allowed to speak for the philosophy of Judaism, but not Rabbi Kook.

Philosophers and historians may be at variance on the question of the nature, or even of the very existence, of constant factors or structures making up an "essence" of Judaism. It is not only philosophies—including philosophies of Judaism—that may change, but also the historian's views on the nature and historical function of earlier philosophical expressions. Perhaps sometime in the near or more distant future, a new history of the philosophy of Judaism will have to be written. But Guttmann's work stands out, not only as a reliable study which condenses sound and subtle scholarship, and a unique survey of the history of Jewish philosophy; it also represents the fruit and the summing up of an important period in the history of Jewish scholarship. As such, it will remain a lasting monument of a significant phase in the history of Jewish philosophy and its attempt to elucidate not only Judaism, but also itself.

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I

FUNDAMENTALS AND FIRST INFLUENCES

1

THE BASIC IDEAS OF BIBLICAL RELIGION

The Jewish people did not begin to philosophize because of an irresistible urge to do so. They received philosophy from outside sources, and the history of Jewish philosophy is a history of the successive absorptions of foreign ideas which were then transformed and adapted according to specific Jewish points of view.

Such a process first took place during the Hellenistic period. Judaeo-Hellenistic philosophy is so thoroughly imbued with the Greek spirit, however, that it may be regarded, historically speaking, as merely a chapter in the development of Greek thought as a whole. It disappeared quickly without leaving behind any permanent impact upon Judaism.

Philosophy penetrated Jewish intellectual life a second time in the Middle Ages. It was Greek philosophy at second hand, for the philosophic revival took place within the orbit of Islamic culture and was heavily indebted to Islamic philosophy, which, in its turn, derived from Greek systems of thought. This time, however, the vitality of Jewish philosophy proved stronger than during the Hellenistic period. It persisted from the ninth century to the end of the Middle Ages, and some traces of it are still discernible as late as the middle of the seventeenth century. Nonetheless, it is true to say that throughout this time, Jewish philosophy remained closely bound to the non-Jewish sources from which it originated.

After Judaism had entered the intellectual world of modern Europe, modern Jewish thought remained indebted to contemporary trends of European philosophy. This applies not only to the contribution of Jewish thinkers to the philosophic labors of the European nations, but also to those

systems of thought specifically concerned with the interpretation and justification of the Jewish religion. The former has its place in the general history of modern philosophy; its dependence on contemporary thought is consequently a truism. But even Jewish philosophy in the specific and narrow sense of the term, like its Christian counterpart, operated within the framework, the methods, and the conceptual apparatus of modern European philosophy.

The peculiar character of Jewish existence in the Diaspora prevented the emergence of a Jewish philosophy in the sense in which we can speak of Greek, Roman, French, or German philosophy. Since the days of antiquity, Jewish philosophy was essentially a philosophy of Judaism. Even during the Middle Ages—which knew something like a total, all-embracing culture based on religion—philosophy rarely transcended its religious center. This religious orientation constitutes the distinctive character of Jewish philosophy, whether it was concerned with using philosophic ideas to establish or justify Jewish doctrines, or with reconciling the contradictions between religious truth and scientific truth. It is religious philosophy in a sense peculiar to the monotheistic revealed religions which, because of their claim to truth and by virtue of their spiritual depth, could confront philosophy as an autonomous spiritual power.

Armed with the authority of a supernatural revelation, religion lays claim to an unconditioned truth of its own, and thereby becomes a problem for philosophy. In order to determine the relationships between these two types of truth, philosophers have tried to clarify, from a methodological point of view, the distinctiveness of religion. This is a modern development; earlier periods did not attempt to differentiate between the methods of philosophy and religion, but sought to reconcile the contents of their teachings. Philosophy was thus made subservient to religion; and philosophical material borrowed from the outside was treated accordingly. In this respect the philosophy of Judaism, whatever the differences in content deriving from the specific doctrines and the concepts of authority of the religions concerned, is formally similar to that of Christianity and of Islam. Appearing for the first time in Jewish Hellenism, this type of philosophy, though not

productive of original ideas, nevertheless proved of far-reaching significance and influence. From Jewish Hellenism it passed to Christianity, was transmitted to Islam, from whence it returned, in the Middle Ages, to Judaism.

This special character of Jewish philosophy may justify a short introductory description of its underlying assumptions, implicit in the Bible and the Talmud. We are not concerned here with a full evaluation of the religious motives of the Bible and Talmud, but rather with those of their conceptual elements that are relevant to an understanding of Jewish religious philosophy. In connection with this, and for the reasons already given, only the barest indications will be given concerning the place of Jewish-Hellenistic philosophy in the total context of the history of Judaism.

The distinctiveness of biblical religion is due to its ethical conception of the personality of God. The God of the prophets is exemplified by his moral will; he is demanding and commanding, promising and threatening, the absolutely free ruler of man and nature. This conception of God developed only slowly in the history of Israelite religion. Neither God's uniqueness and superiority over the forces of nature nor his character as pure will were to be found in its beginnings. Only after a long process of evolution did the God of Israel become the God of the world. It also took a long time before he could shed his primitive attributes as a nature God, making it possible to think of him in purely personal terms. Even in the primitive understanding of God, of course, we could point out those traits which anticipated later developments, but the final result was a completely novel and original creation whose substance was unpredictable on the basis of the earlier conception. This "prehistory" of the Jewish idea of God is beyond the scope of our present enquiry. We shall be concerned with the idea of God as it is already present in the earliest literary prophets of Israel, and which, in its essential characteristics, remained substantially the same despite obvious and inevitable variations in detail.[1]

This idea of God, not the fruit of philosophic speculation but the product of the immediacy of the religious consciousness, was stamped with its definitive character during the

crisis which saw the destruction of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the nation were looked upon by the people as visitations of their own God, who became thereby a universal God: the kingdoms of the world were his tools, and he established the course of world history according to his will. Jewish monotheism grew out of this fundamental experience, and through it were established all those religious characteristics that were, in turn, transmitted to Christianity and Islam. The decisive feature of monotheism is that it is not grounded in an abstract idea of God, but in an intensely powerful divine will which rules history. This ethical voluntarism implies a thoroughly personalistic conception of God, and determines the specific character of the relationship between God and man. This relationship is an ethical-voluntaristic one between two moral personalities, between an "I" and a "Thou." As God imposes his will upon that of man, so man becomes aware of the nature of his relationship to God.

Communion with God is essentially a communion of moral wills. The meaning of "nearness" to God or "estrangement" from him is determined by this perspective. This purely formal determination still allows of great variety in the relations between God and man. For Amos, the relationship seems to have been determined by an acute sense of the "numinous" majesty and grandeur of God, whereas his immediate successor, Hosea, appears to have experienced the divine will primarily as a loving communion between God and his people. Whereas for Isaiah, the essential stance of man before God is humility before his awesome majesty, the Psalms testify to the feeling of closeness between God and man. Despite variations in its material forms of expression, the personalist character of this relationship remains the same throughout.

God's relationship to the world is conceived along the same lines. He is the Lord of the world, he directs it according to his will, and he realizes his purposes within it. His relationship to the world is not grounded in a natural force, but in the unconditioned freedom of his will. This conception empties all the ancient accounts of creation of their mythological content, and permeates them with its own spirit. The omnipotence of the divine will appears most clearly when the world

itself is looked upon as nothing but the work of this will. The Creator-God is not a part of, or link in, the world; but God and world face each other as Creator and creature. This trait emerges with increasing distinctness in the course of the evolution of the biblical idea of creation. At first, creation was conceived of as a kind of "making," or "fashioning," by God; in the end, it is the Creator's word that calls the world into existence. The divine act of will is sufficient for bringing everything into being. The biblical idea of creation does not pretend to provide a theoretical explanation of the origin of the universe; it is the form in which the religious consciousness of the nature of the relationship between God and the world has become articulate.

The personalist character of biblical religion stands in the most radical contrast to another, basically impersonal, form of spiritual and universal religion, which underlies all mysticism and pantheism. Whatever the significant differences between mysticism and pantheism, their general divergence from biblical religion becomes more evident as its radically different conception of the relationship between God and the world becomes apparent.[2] God is not conceived by them as a sovereign will ruling the universe, but as the hidden source from which all being emanates, or as the inner life-force which pulsates throughout the cosmos. This difference is not a matter of choosing either a theoretical or an imaginative representation of the idea of God, but is a matter of fundamental religious attitudes, as is convincingly demonstrated by the completely different relationship between God and man which mysticism and pantheism affirm.

Neither pantheism nor mysticism knows a personal, moral communion between God and man; in its place, there is union with the Godhead. It does not matter, for our present purpose, whether this union is experienced by man as an accomplished fact, or as the ultimate goal of his religious aspirations; whether it is envisaged as an essential identity of the self with the divine life of the universe, or as a merging of the soul in the mysterious divine ground of Being. The living relationship between persons is replaced by the extinction of personal individuality, which is felt to be the main barrier separating us from God.

Disregarding, for the moment, all mixed or transitional forms, our distinction between the two types of religion remains valid, even when they apparently use the same language. The *amor dei* of pantheism and the love of God of the mystic are as different in essence from the personalistic love of God (however enthusiastically the latter may experience the raptures of the divine presence) as is the mystic shudder before the hidden abyss of the divine being from the experience of the sublime majesty of the personal God.

The same distinction is again seen when we compare the respective relationships between God and the world in the various types of religion. Here, too, it is not just a matter of conflicting ideas, but of fundamentally contrasting religious attitudes. The transcendence of God as personal Creator is foreign to the doctrine of pantheism and mysticism because, according to the latter, the world is not subject to a sovereign divine will. This is too obvious to require further elaboration, particularly with regard to those views that conceive of God as the "inner life of things." Of greater interest is a comparison of the acosmism of the mystical notion of a divine "ground" of the world, with the transcendence predicated of God the Creator. In theoretical terms the difference is usually formulated by saying that for mysticism, the divine "ground," or source, does not create the world, but rather expels it from its own substance. In religious terms, this means that God is not conceived as the will which determines the world, but rather as a transcendent self-subsistent Being, completely withdrawn into itself. To elevate oneself to God, therefore, would mean separation from the world, that is, detaching the soul from the confusing multiplicity of the world and breaking through the barriers which the world places between the soul and God. In a way, the transcendence of God to the world is even more extreme here than in the notion of the personal Creator-God, who, despite his transcendence to the world, is still related to it, and, thereby, also confers upon it a measure of religious significance. Nonetheless, the relationship between God and the world, as envisaged by mysticism, is essentially characterized by a peculiar dialectic; however much the difference between God and the world may pervade the religious consciousness, the world is at the same time seen as the manifestation of God.

The radical distinction between God and the world is blurred even more by all those systems that consider the transition from one to the other as continuous and gradual, and posit an intermediary, suprasensual world between the Godhead and the world of the senses. Whereas the Creator-God stands over and against the world, his creation, the God of mysticism becomes the principle underlying the suprasensual world. Even the ascent of the soul to God is nothing more than the final completion of its way to the suprasensual or "intelligible" world. Such an interpretation helps us to account for one of the most significant phenomena in the history of religions: the differing attitudes of biblical religion and pantheistic-mystic religion toward polytheism. The latter could easily admit that alongside the oneness of the divine ground of all being, the multiplicity and variety of its manifestations should also be regarded as divine. There was no difficulty, therefore, in patiently tolerating the many gods of polytheistic religion. Personalist monotheism, however, can make no such concession. Even where it pictures a kind of celestial world inhabited by angels, neither the basic difference between God and his creation, nor the uniqueness of God himself is compromised.

Mysticism and pantheism did not cross the path of Jewish religion until after the close of the biblical period; we have compared the two only in order to better grasp the essential quality of biblical religion. Of more immediate historical significance is the battle which biblical religion waged against magic and myth.

The purging of magical and mythical elements which were embedded within biblical religion in its beginnings marks one of the most important achievements of biblical monotheism. This development was, from the nature of things, inevitable, because mythology and magic are possible only where the gods, in their actions and passions, are conceived as natural forces. The well-known observation that the characteristic quality of mythical thinking lies in its personification of natural forces is only half of the truth; the other half is the fact that even anthropomorphic personification is conceived com-

pletely in natural categories. As is well illustrated by the many creation myths and their mixture of natural processes and divine actions, the personal and the natural are commingled and undifferentiated. The same may be said also of the basis of magic, for magic, too, assumes that gods and demons are subject to some mysterious natural necessity.

In the voluntaristic religion of biblical monotheism, the personal was radically dissociated from its natural and material elements. It is true that the struggle against magic in the preprophetic age did not proceed on the assumption that magic was ineffectual, but rather that it was sinful to attempt by magic to coerce God. In spite of granting to magic a modicum of efficacy, this attitude bespeaks a religious consciousness for which magic and a genuine relationship between God and man had become incompatible. By its very nature this kind of religious consciousness ends by so exalting the notion of God that any thought of magical influence is completely excluded. To the extent that man realizes his relationship to God in its utmost purity, by complete submission to the divine will, he also realizes a spiritual conception of the divine personality which transcends all "natural" forms of existence. This specific conception of the nature of the divine will also gives a new significance to all other parts of the religious system. Thus, a miracle is essentially distinct from magic not only in that it is a completely free divine act, but more particularly in that it subserves the intelligible purposes of the divine will. In the same way, revelation is different from oracle and augury, for the secrets of the future are not unlocked by a mysterious causality, but are revealed by God himself for a specific purpose.

All the external similarities between prophetic and magical ecstasy notwithstanding, prophecy differs essentially from soothsaying.[3] An analogous transformation was accomplished in the sphere of cult and ritual. No doubt a great many of the cultic practices recorded in Scripture originally had magical significance. Although biblical monotheism retained these practices, it invested them with completely new meaning. Many old practices were supplied with an ethical content and even those which were not formally converted into commandments of the divine will, were at least deprived of the last

trace of magic. Reality as a whole becomes related to the ethical content of the divine will and thereby susceptible to rational comprehension. True, Judaism was unable to withstand forever the periodic eruptions and invasions of magic. During the Hellenistic period as well as in the Middle Ages, magical practices and, in particular, astrology found their way into Jewish life,[4] but were never able to penetrate the inner sanctum of the religious relationship to God. The struggle against magic was continuously renewed during the peaks of the religious history of Israel.

The above considerations apply equally to the relationship of biblical monotheism and mythology. The myths of creation and of the flood are among the better-known examples of how biblical monotheism stamped with its own characteristic spirit the mythological legacy which it had received from its surroundings. At times mythological themes are used partly for purposes of poetic imagery. We are not now concerned with the question of whether traces of mythical thought have survived in the Bible. The point at issue here is this: religion is as different from myth as it is from magic, and the same force underlies its separation from them both. The idea of creation marks the point of cleavage between myth and religion, since it excludes any evolution or emanation by which the world proceeds naturally, as it were, from God, and posits the free will of God as sole cause of the world. Here too, the voluntaristic and personalist character of God forms a barrier against mythological intrusions, for over and against the voluntary and half-natural causality of the cosmogonic myths, it posits the absolute freedom of God in the act of creation. Nature has lost its divine quality; from the dwelling place of the divine it has itself become the work of God's hands.

This conception of nature dominates the story of creation found in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis. Nature here has a substantial life of its own, but is conceived as inanimate and subordinate to the purposes of God, which, as such, are foreign to it. Man himself, the end and purpose of creation, is not conceived solely as part of nature, but as standing over and against nature, as the image of God. This anthropocentric conception grants man the right to conquer the earth, and

relegates astral "divinities" to the role of mere luminaries for the earth; it redirects all religious feeling from nature towards the transmundane God. Henceforth man sees himself as a being superior to the forces of nature, which in a natural religion would be considered as divine. The nature poetry of the Bible expresses the same attitude; nature is looked upon as a manifestation of the majesty of God; any kind of pantheistic feeling is quite alien to it. Nature remains the work of God's hands, and above the rest of creation there is always present the thought of man's superiority. This opposition between man and nature has, as yet, no metaphysical connotation. There is certainly no hint of an opposition between the world of the senses and a suprasensual world. Man is a creature of this world, and it is only his character as a person that raises him above things natural. This also explains why, in the later history of monotheism, periods of intense "personalistic" piety tended toward a mechanistic conception of nature; both a mechanistic science and a rejection of all metaphysics are in accord with a religiosity which promotes man's mastery over nature.

From its very beginnings Israelite religion viewed God as the Lord of history. Israel saw its history as rooted in a covenant between YHWH and his people Israel; the covenant was upheld by Israel through its observance of the divine commandments, and by God through the providence he extended to his people. The history of the people thus became the locus wherein God might be known. This historical conception was raised by the later prophets to the level of world history. The impending destruction of the Israelite state by the Near Eastern kingdoms was interpreted, as has already been noted, as an act of judgment of the God of Israel who uses great nations as tools for the accomplishment of his own ends. As God was transformed into the God of history, he likewise became the God of the universe. The divine perspective now embraced both past and future.

The consciousness of the prophets was primarily directed to the future. The destruction of the nation which they predicted would not seal the end of Israel but would be followed by a renewal, a new communion between God and Israel, and a new salvation. This future blessing, not the property

of Israel alone, would be consummated in the kingdom of heaven in which all the nations would share. From this religious eschatology there emerges a unity of purpose which joins together the varied elements of the traditional past, embraces all nations, and turns them toward a common point to which all history is directed. The early history of the Israelites and the tribal legends of the patriarchs are combined with myths about the creation of the world and the first men, forming an historical picture which unfolds according to a divine plan. The resulting view of history, predicated as it is upon the uniqueness of the historical process,[5] unites past and future in one great vision. It is in the unique historical process and not in the unchanging being of nature that the revelation of God's will and the satisfaction of all religious aspirations are to be found. There, more than anywhere else, the contradiction between the biblical God and the God of mysticism dwelling within himself, beyond all time, becomes apparent. For biblical religion the world of time does not dissolve into empty nothingness; on the contrary, the moral activism of the Bible envisages the world as the scene of the realization of a divine order, which is an order of moral will and moral life.

Biblical religion is essentially historical in yet another sense. It sees its origin in an historical revelation, through which Israel became the people of God. Every subsequent revelation refers back to this parent revelation and bases itself upon it. The prophets do not claim to reveal something radically new, but merely seek to restore the ancient pristine faith of Israel. In the days of living prophecy this reference to an ancient faith certainly did not imply an explicit belief in a definite body of teaching communicated from outside, but rather expressed the faith that the truth given by God to the prophets was the same as that revealed to the patriarchs. Gradually, however, the reliance upon a definite historical event became stronger. Moses came to be thought of as the greatest of prophets "like unto whom there arose none in Israel." The revelation granted to him—which is the source of Israelite faith—is greater than any succeeding revelation. The decisive step in this direction was taken with the growth of a sacred literature ascribed to Mosaic authorship. Finally

the whole Pentateuch was considered Mosaic writing. The text of the original revelation, as it was considered, was placed as a norm of the religious history of Israel; subsequent revelations could merely bear witness to it and confirm it. When prophecy itself ceased and became an inheritance from the past, the notion of historical revelation ruled supreme in religious life.

Religious truth was thought of as something historically "given"; development was possible only by reading new ideas back into the traditional faith. The importance of this type of religion (that is, the religion of historical revelation) lies in the fact that it created the supreme expression of religious truth. Biblical monotheism, denying the very existence of all the gods of polytheism, claimed for itself final and exclusive religious truth as given in the divine revelation. The combination of profundity of content with rigidity in conception made it possible for all religious life and thought to be subordinated to the law of this "given" religious truth. In this way Judaism became an example for Christianity and Islam. By developing the notion of "revealed truth" it also created what was to become later the main issue dividing religion and philosophy.

During the biblical period the fundamental notions of biblical faith, which we have described, received an additional development. The religious thought of the prophets, nourished by their awareness of a crisis within the life of Israel, was centered upon the relationship of God to the people as a whole. God had made a convenant with Israel as a people; the sin of the people had brought down God's punishment upon the nation; but it was to the same nation or to its remnant that God had promised a future redemption. The subject of religion was thus the nation. Even the historical universalism of the prophets adhered to this national, "political" view. Humanity, a concept created by the prophets, was a community of nations. The individual, for the moment, was secondary to the people.

The relationship of God to the individual, already found in preprophetic popular religion, was never denied by the prophets, though their religious pathos was mainly focused upon their concern with history. The problem of the individual, however, appears with the later prophets. Individual religiosity, too, was subjected to the prophetic view of the divine. The problem of individual moral responsibility, though it can hardly be considered to have been discovered by Jeremiah, was clarified by him, and even more by Ezekiel. Every man was responsible before God for his own deeds, and according to those deeds—not according to the merit or demerit of his ancestors—he would be judged. This notion of individual responsibility evolved together with that of individual retribution. Divine justice manifests itself in the individual too, and not only in the collectivity of the people, though, of course, the relation of individual destiny with that of the nation is never obliterated.

In post-exilic literature the individual aspect of religion gains in importance and outstrips the limited ambit of rewards and punishments. The idea of a loving relationship with God is extended to the individual, especially in the Psalms; the greatest happiness of the pious becomes the nearness of God. At the same time, the notion of divine retribution loses none of its significance, but becomes the starting point for the problem of theodicy.

Jeremiah asks the perennial question concerning the prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the righteous, and post-exilic literature amply illustrates to what extent this problem exercised the minds of the post-exilic prophets and psalmists. It is this problem, too, which has made the Book of Job the earliest poetic expression of religious reflection in the Bible. We need not detail here the many and varied answers to this problem. Some held the opinion, despite all external evidence to the contrary, that suffering came as a result of sin; others considered the suffering of the righteous a means of purification for the soul. Deutero-Isaiah introduces the figure of the Servant of the Lord who suffers for the sake of the collective sin of the people. Finally, the Book of Job concludes with faith in the majestic and sublime God, who is above and beyond all human questioning.

It is noteworthy that the idea of a heavenly reward is never proposed as a possible solution to the problem. Apparently the belief in reward in the hereafter did not yet exist at the time; existence after death was thought of in terms of the

popular ideas about a shadow life in *Sheol*—a Hades-like underworld. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that the problem of theodicy was the point at which beliefs about retribution could enter the Jewish religion. These beliefs appeared in two forms: the resurrection of the dead and the immortality of the soul. It is a matter of some doubt whether they were borrowed from others, and more particularly, whether belief in resurrection was taken over from Persian religion. Even if there was borrowing, it could only have taken place because the inner development of Judaism rendered it susceptible to influences of this kind. The emergence of these eschatological beliefs brought a change in religious perspective that was to prove of great consequence for future developments. The religious meaning of the world is no longer fulfilled within it, but in another sphere of existence. Alongside of the historical future towards which the prophets had directed their hopes, there exists a transcendent world of ultimate fulfillment. This certainly holds true of the belief in the immortality of the soul, whereas the notion of a resurrection of the body inserts itself into the historical perspective of prophetic religion.

The problem of theodicy is important not only for its contribution to the content of Jewish religion. Its significance, from a formal point of view, resides in the fact that it represents the first fruition of religious reflection in Judaism. Whereas prophecy had been the product of the immediacy of religious consciousness, we find here, for the first time, an intellectual wrestling with religious truth. Traces of this change are present in the later prophets. Ezekiel is something of the schoolmaster when he expounds his notion of individual responsibility[6] by means of the parable of the evil son born to a righteous man, and of the righteous son born to an evil man.

Reflection in its full sense, however, comes to the fore in the Book of Job. The dialogue form of Job is essential to its content. With the play of opinion being expressed through question and answer, the problem of divine justice becomes one that can be solved by thought. Thought pits the differing possibilities one against the other, and through the clash of opinion seeks for truth. However, this thought is not yet reflection concerning religion; it is the religious consciousness

itself, which in its anguish calls to thought for aid. Divine justice becomes a problem for religious thought, which tries to solve it in a mighty struggle. Various forms of faith are arrayed against each other. It is characteristic of the book that the final answer is given in the form of a divine revelation. The struggle of faith comes to rest in the immediate certitude of divine majesty. The very fact that it is at this juncture that religious reflection reappears, emphasizes the distinctiveness of biblical religion.

Jewish thought is not oriented towards metaphysical questions. The sloughing off of mythological cosmogonies eliminated all potential starting points for the growth of metaphysics. The notion of a Creator provides no occasion for a theoretical interpretation of the world. This may well be part of the answer to the question: Why did Judaism not develop its own philosophic system? The first attempt at reflective thought was directed toward an understanding of those of God's acts which appeared dubious. For the monotheism of the prophets, the belief in the moral quality and purposive nature of the divine will was an absolute certainty which informed all aspects of religious life. It was the basis of their understanding of history. To interpret reality in terms of the purposiveness of the divine will, and to uphold this purposiveness in the face of the facts of experience—this was the task that necessarily followed from the basic assumptions of Jewish religion.

The form in which the problem of theodicy posed itself corresponded precisely to this context. It was not a reason for "suffering in general" that was sought. The question underlying the ancient story of the Garden of Eden—how suffering and death came into the world—was never taken up again. Not suffering in general, but rather the suffering of the righteous, causes us to doubt the justice of God and becomes a stumbling block. The Book of Job especially reveals to what extent everything revolves about this one question. Job does not revolt against the magnitude of his suffering. He would resign himself to it, if only he knew its reason. He is driven to rebellion because he suffers without cause, and because he feels himself the victim of God's despotism. He finds peace

once again when he regains his belief in the meaningfulness of God's acts.

It may be said, therefore, that the first movements of reflection within Judaism took place within the sphere of religious meaning, and emerged from the immanent problems of biblical religion. Jewish religious speculation was to continue along that path. The premise underlying such thought is the notion that God's moral will is accessible to human comprehension. The theoretical question, whether ethics as such was independent of God or dependent upon him, was completely beyond the intellectual horizon of the prophets.[7] They were all the more conscious of the inner evidence of the moral claim as something proceeding from God. Every man apprehends intuitively what is good or evil. The intelligibility of moral obligation implied the rationality of the divine will. Hence God, too, in his actions conformed to moral standards and could be measured by them.[8] At the same time there existed also the opposite recognition that God was incomprehensible, and that his ways were higher than the ways of man, even as the heavens were higher than the earth. All this, however, did not detract from the belief in the moral reasonableness of the divine will. Only the Book of Job seems to question this principle when, as its sole answer to the doubts raised by humanity, it points to the impenetrable majesty of God. In spite of some signs apparently pointing to Moslem and Calvinist doctrines of the absolute and sovereign superiority of the divine over all ethical criteria, this is hardly the real intent of the Book of Job. The problem of theodicy is not settled for Job by saying that God is above all ethical criteria, but rather by the recognition of God's utter incomprehensibility paradoxically becoming a ground for trust in the meaningfulness of his providence, a providence of love and justice which is no less meaningful for remaining impenetrable to human understanding. Thus, even where biblical religion seems to verge most on an irrational conception of the divine will, it never relinquishes the basic conviction of an essential meaningfulness. Even the intelligibility of the divine will is merely limited, not nullified, by our deficient human understanding.

2

JEWISH HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY

The ideas outlined thus far supplied Judaism with the intellectual equipment necessary for its encounter with Greek culture. The full effect of the latter cannot detain us here, for the same reason that prevented, in the preceding chapter, a more detailed discussion of the relationships of biblical religion to Near Eastern and Oriental culture. We shall confine ourselves to the penetration of Greek philosophy into Judaism.

It has often been remarked that at least one scriptural book, the Book of Kohelet, clearly shows the influence of Greek philosophy. If this is the case, Greek philosophy must have made its influence felt in Palestine at the beginning of the second century B.C.E., for Kohelet cannot have been composed later than this date.[1] All efforts to find specific Greek doctrines in the Book of Kohelet, however, have yielded only vague analogies, from which the characteristic Greek flavor has been lost. Thus, Kohelet's complaint that there was nothing new under the sun, or that the thing that has been was that which shall be,[2] has been compared to the Greek doctrine of eternal cyclical return. What is missing from Kohelet, however, is precisely that specific philosophic turn which differentiates the Greek doctrine from the popular observation of the monotonous recurrence of all things. In the same way, Kohelet's observation that whether it is birth or death, war or peace, there is a season for all things,[3] differs from the Heraclitean notion of the relativity of opposites, just as a simple life observation differs from a philosophical doctrine. The actual parallels between Greek and Jewish thought in the Book of Kohelet are no proof of necessary connection

with any definite philosophic school. They merely show the contact of Judaism with contemporary popular Greek thought.

Whatever our opinions may be concerning this matter, it is certain that Kohelet's thinking is far removed from and uninfluenced by any scientific philosophy. The Preacher's criticism of life's blessings does not rest, as with the Greek philosopher, upon a methodological principle, but upon immediate experience. He does not measure earthly goods against a philosophically conceived *summum bonum,* but convinces himself empirically of their worthlessness. Certain facts about life, its subjection to accidents, the inevitability of death which robs us of all our possessions, the manifest injustice in the distribution of goods, the insatiability of human desires, and the like, are sufficient to prove to him that all is vanity.[4] Also, his belief that man's reason is powerless is founded on similar observations and not on a thoroughgoing scientific skepticism. Theoretical doubts concerning the possibility of knowledge are altogether beyond Kohelet's horizon. The book, as a whole, breathes the certainty that we are capable of knowing the reality around us, though its meaning and inner articulation remain impenetrable.[5] The book's key concept, "Wisdom," thus seems to denote practical wisdom. The superiority of the wise man to the fool is due to his more penetrating overview of life, rather than to any scientific theorizing.[6] Moreover, the substance and occasional profundity of Kohelet's thought points in a direction which is very different from that of Greek speculation. The very first chapter, surely the most profound portion of the book, bespeaks a basic attitude toward life that is radically foreign to Greek philosophy. The eternal recurrence of natural events, which was what had suggested the idea of an eternal order, and thereby provided the mainstay of Greek philosophy, is, for Kohelet, the epitome of senselessness: vanity of vanities. The regularity of nature does not reveal to Kohelet the majesty of a divinely instituted natural law, but rather a meaningless monotony. If one adds to this Kohelet's fundamentally un-Grecian deprecation of knowledge, epigrammatically expressed in the phrase, "He that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow,"[7] his distance from Greek turns of speculation is underscored.

Even more than from Greek philosophy, Kohelet deviates from Jewish religious feeling. He does, of course, uphold the Jewish faith in a God who determines man's fate, and he recommends submission to the will of God. It would doubtless be wrong to consider all statements to that effect as additions to the text of Kohelet, but it is apparent that they did not mean very much to the author, who offers them less as expressions of his personal opinion than as an inherited tradition of ideas. This submission to a divinely ordained fate does not, really, amount to very much more than a resignation to life as it is. Kohelet's evaluation of life is independent of any religious presuppositions or criteria. His entire outlook is thus oriented to this world and to the worldly happiness of the individual. Kohelet's religious sense does not extend much beyond this. Submission to the will of God appears as an expression of worldly wisdom.[8] How far all this is from the biblical outlook as a whole becomes evident where the two seem to be most similar. Kohelet too, is aware that the righteous frequently suffer the fate of the wicked and vice versa, but to him this is merely further confirmation of the fact that all is vanity.[9]

The tenor of the Book of Kohelet is skeptical. The author approaches life with a critical stance, trusting only his personal observations, believing only what his eyes can see. He wants to search out all things that are done under heaven, to explore—systematically, as it were—all the possibilities of life.[10] Though much of what he has to say is reminiscent of the proverbial style of biblical wisdom literature (where, frequently enough, the religious mentality is displaced by a more realistic appraisal of life) yet the spirit of the Book of Kohelet is quite different from the rest of Scripture. The practical realism of Proverbs is restricted to the ordinary concerns of daily life, and remains subordinated to the authority of a self-evident religious conception of life. Compared with its simple practical wisdom, Kohelet's radical criticism of life is something altogether new. This kind of criticism is possible only in a world in which traditional ways of life have lost their authority, and the individual is

looking to himself as the measure of things. In this somewhat broad sense Kohelet is undoubtedly related to the individualism of the Greek enlightenment without which, indeed, it is unthinkable. Here and there (as has already been indicated) some more specific points of contact with Greek popular philosophy may exist; even reliance upon the pessimistic viewpoint of certain Greek philosophers cannot altogether be excluded. As to genuine dependence of Kohelet on Greek philosophers, there is none. Just as the Preacher's own peculiar view is without a Greek exemplar, so the characteristic marks of Greek speculation are all missing.

The Palestinian Judaism which produced Kohelet does not seem to have been deeply affected by Greek philosophy. Apocryphal literature contains few if any philosophic elements. As for Talmudic Judaism, the extent of its knowledge of Greek philosophic doctrines and of its rapprochement to Greek thinking will be discussed in a later chapter. Only for the Jews dwelling in the Diaspora did Greek philosophy become an essential factor of spiritual life. To what extent skeptical and Epicurean criticism of religion became common among Jews cannot be determined from the sources available to us; what they do show is the extent to which Judaism had merged with the kind of philosophic religion that had developed especially in Neoplatonic and Stoic philosophy. The affinity of Jewish monotheism with the concept of God as developed by the philosophers had been recognized by both sides at an early date. Clearchus—in his account of the meeting of his teacher Aristotle with a Jewish sage—as well as Theophrastus, describes the Jews as a kind of philosophic sect; Hecataeus and Strabo interpreted the Jewish idea of God in the spirit of Stoic pantheism.[11]

The Jews who lived within the orbit of Greek culture conceived of the relation of their religion to Greek philosophy along similar lines. They called their religion a philosophy, and in their apologetics sought to demonstrate the philosophic character of the Jewish idea of God and the humane nature of Jewish ethics.[12] They laid the foundations for the attempt to provide a philosophical form for the intellectual content of Judaism, clothing it in Greek modes of expression

and using philosophical arguments in support of the ethical doctrines of the Bible. Not only the form but the content of Greek philosophy also invaded Judaism. The manner and extent of this penetration varied, ranging from the mere philosophical embellishment of Jewish ideas, to their replacement by Greek doctrines, and culminating in the radical philosophical sublimation undertaken by Philo.

An intermediate position is occupied by the Wisdom of Solomon. Despite the use of philosophic concepts, occasionally quoted verbatim from Greek sources, and the occurrence of a number of ideas that are essentially foreign to Judaism, the basic attitude of the book is thoroughly Jewish.[13] Its main themes are the comparison of the fate of the wicked with that of the righteous, the praise of wisdom and the exhortation to seek it, excursuses upon the role of wisdom, and the proofs on its behalf drawn from the history of Israel. All these clearly betray the influence of Scripture, the first two more especially that of Proverbs. Equally Jewish are the book's conception of a personal God who intervenes in the affairs of man to reward or punish, who reveals himself in miracles, and who demonstrates, through the history of Israel, his own power and the vanity of idols,[14] as well as the ethics rooted in such a belief. The mention of Plato's four cardinal virtues[15] gives the ethics of the book a vaguely philosophic coloring without determining its material content. Altogether, the Wisdom of Solomon is much given to using philosophic concepts in order to present or justify notions drawn entirely from the Bible. The ideal philosophical system for this exercise was provided by the Neoplatonic version of Stoicism, founded by Posidonius, which, in fact, underlies its philosophy.

Characteristically enough, the fullest and most detailed rendering of philosophic concepts can be found in the polemics against idolatry. Posidonius' argument is rendered in great detail and with scholastic thoroughness, but all this philosophy only serves as scientific support of the biblical rejection of idolatry.[16] The author uses philosophic and scientific concepts even in his accounts of the biblical miracles. The same holds true for wisdom, the central concept of the book, for which Greek philosophy supplies the formal

description, rather than the material content. Wisdom is described with all the attributes of the Stoic *pneuma*.[17] Its source, however, is not in Stoicism, but in the Jewish wisdom literature. The latter was already familiar with the remarkable hypostasis of wisdom, and at least in this respect the author of the Wisdom of Solomon goes beyond the Book of Proverbs. The creative activity of God and his direct influence on the course of the world is emphasized to such an extent that not much weight can be attached to the utterances concerning wisdom's role in the creation and its miraculous influence,[18] especially as the forcefulness of these expressions is frequently matched by their vagueness. Evidently, the psychological and ethical value of the concept is more important to the author than its cosmic function; above all, wisdom is the principle that enlightens the spirit of man.[19] The precise nature of the relation between heavenly wisdom and man remains obscure. Occasional phrases call to mind the Stoic doctrine of the *pneuma* residing in every man's soul, but these do not agree very well with the prayers to God that he grant wisdom, or with the demand that princes should acquire it. The metaphysical status of wisdom remains doubtful, and only its ethical character is unequivocally clear. In accordance with Stoic ethics, wisdom becomes the fountainhead of the virtues in general.[20]

However, in spite of its recourse to Stoic doctrines, the ethics of the Wisdom of Solomon are essentially biblical. The fundamental ethical opposition is that between the righteous and the godless; the Stoic concept of wisdom is merely the form in which to clothe the ethical ideal of Judaism.[21] In some respects, however, Greek philosophy exerted a profound material influence. In place of the biblical doctrine of creation, we find the Platonic notion that God had created the world from formless matter. But the subject is hinted at with such brevity that it is impossible to form any opinion as to the extent and significance of this conception.[22] The relationship between body and soul is also conceived in Greek fashion. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul may, of course, derive either from Jewish or from Greek sources. The book's descriptions of the afterlife are partly indebted to Plato, partly of obviously Jewish origin.

The notion that the soul is degraded by its entry into the body (ignoring, for the moment, the doctrine of the preexistence of the soul, for which the evidence of the text is inconclusive)[23] is, however, definitely Platonic. This dualistic conception of man, which places body and soul in axiological opposition to each other, is important from more than a metaphysical viewpoint. It contains the elements of a religious ideal which was still foreign to biblical Judaism, which aimed at liberating the soul from the fetters of matter and preserving its pure spirituality. These conclusions are not actually drawn in the Wisdom of Solomon, but are clearly implicit.

A similar compromise between Greek and Jewish elements can be found in IV Maccabees. This book purports to be "a true philosophic discourse" and is composed according to the rules of Greek rhetoric. The introduction offers a philosophic disquisition on the subject of the rule of the intellect over the emotions, the like of which is not found in the other Book of Wisdom.[24] But here again it is the form of expression rather than the substance of the book that is influenced by philosophy. In its fundamental religious doctrines, which, of course, are not developed systematically within the book itself, IV Maccabees remains essentially and distinctively Jewish. Despite the occasional use of abstract terms borrowed from the language of the philosophical schools, the author has preserved the full and living concreteness of the biblical God. He is so unphilosophic as to ascribe to God pity for the sufferings of the righteous and anger over the prosperity of the wicked.[25] Belief in the immortality of the soul appears in the form of the doctrine that the righteous will join the heavenly choir of the patriarchs. The sufferings of the righteous are said to have atoning power.[26] Only the ethical teachings of the book, including their psychological presuppositions, are treated in a genuinely philosophical manner.

The principle common to all schools of Greek ethics, that reason should rule over the passions, could easily be considered the philosophical expression of the biblical demand of submission to the divine law. The high moral seriousness of the Stoic ethic could appear very close to that of the

Bible. The book closely follows Stoic ethics, in spite of occasional deviations both in terminology and substance; for example, the Jewish martyrs are described as Stoic sages.[27] Even in this identification, in spite of a superficial reliance on Stoic concepts, the substance of the ethical ideal is determined by Judaism. But the book's mildness in dealing with the passions, its renunciation of the harsh Stoic demand to extirpate them, and its substitution of the precept to conquer and rule them need not necessarily be attributed to Jewish influence. Our author may very well be influenced by Peripatetic teaching or by the Middle Stoa, which had already mitigated the original Stoic rigor.[28] Even so, a specifically religious coloring, foreign to Stoicism in all its forms, is given to Stoic ethics. The "fear of the Lord" which, at first, takes the place of wisdom as one of the four cardinal virtues, eventually becomes their very source. Similarly reason, which is the basis of all virtues, is described as "pious reason."[29] In dealing with the question of whether reason is powerful enough to control the passions, the author clearly relies upon piety to give reason the necessary strength.[30] Reason receives its strength from piety that puts its trust in the Lord, and expresses itself both in the observance of the ritual laws given by God and in ethical conduct. The self-sufficiency of the Stoic sage is thus subordinated to the higher ideal of a piety founded in God himself. The ultimate impulse of ethics has changed.

The only literary representative of a thoroughgoing philosophic reconstruction of Judaism is Philo of Alexandria, who, however, alludes to several Jewish predecessors. For Philo, philosophy is not merely a convenient means for an exposition of his ideas, nor is the acceptance of philosophic doctrines limited to details only; Judaism as a whole is conceived as a philosophic doctrine inasmuch as it contains a complete system of philosophy. With the aid of the allegorical method evolved by the Stoics, Philo succeeded in preaching a philosophical reinterpretation of both the historical and the legal parts of the Pentateuch; he was sincerely convinced that he was not misrepresenting Judaism but revealing its deepest meaning. The extent to which he was rooted in Judaism is borne out of the literary form of his writings,

most of which are commentaries on the Torah and probably originated from homilies delivered in the synagogue. The substance of his teaching also exhibits Jewish elements, though these appear in the sentiments underlying it rather than in its conceptional content. But on the whole, Philo's system can only be understood in terms of its Greek presuppositions.

In the wake of Posidonius' synthesis of Platonic and Stoic doctrines, Philo reduces the whole of reality to two factors. The two ultimate principles in the world are the active divine cause and matter, which is the object of divine causality. The idea of a formless primal matter, which was mentioned in the Book of Wisdom only in passing, becomes one of the main pillars of Philo's system; the scriptural doctrine of creation gives way to the notion of the fashioning of the world out of formless matter.[31] Of course, the relationship between God and the world is not seen in terms of Stoic pantheism. Philo's God is not the Greek *pneuma* that fills the world; he stands over and against the world in absolute transcendence, and unlike the Stoic *pneuma* is conceived as absolutely immaterial. Quite rightly, the influence of the traditional Jewish idea of God has been detected in the Philonic emphasis on God's transcendence and spirituality. However, the effect of this influence seems to manifest itself more in Philo's rejection of Stoic materialism and pantheism than in the concept of a personal God, which, in fact, is completely missing.

Philo's sublimation of the concept of God is not fulfilled merely by ridding it of all anthropomorphic characteristics; actually the concept of God is elevated above all values and perfections conceivable to the human mind. God is above knowledge and virtue, above the good and the beautiful.[32] Since God is exalted above all that is knowable, only his bare existence is accessible to our intellect; in fact, Philo prefers to describe God as "He Who Is," or in even more abstract language, as "Being."[33] The direction in which Philo developed the concept of God had already been anticipated by Plato. But Philo went far beyond Plato, and for the first time gave to the notion of divine transcendence the radical twist of later negative theology. If God is also

described as the sum of all perfection, this is but the reverse side of the same idea, and though this also seems to open the door again to the habit of predicating personal attributes to God—calling him Father and Creator, or speaking of his grace and goodness—this result was certainly not seriously intended by Philo.[34] Consistency was never Philo's strong point; if he occasionally seems to approach the biblical conception of a personal God, this may more safely be considered inconsistency rather than the essential nature of his teaching.

The endeavor to bridge the gap between God and the material world gave birth to Philo's doctrine of intermediate beings, and in particular, to his doctrine of the logos. God does not act immediately upon the world, but through mediating powers emanated by him. The first among these is the logos. It is in the doctrine of the logos that we encounter the most famous and most difficult part of Philo's system. His concept of divine powers combines the Platonic doctrine of ideas, the Stoic *logoi spermatikoi* which permeate the cosmos, and Jewish angelogy. Accordingly, the logos corresponds to all three; it is the unity of ideas, the simple source of all cosmic powers, and the highest of the angels. This combination of Stoic, Platonic, and Jewish notions has resulted in a complicated mixture riddled with contradictions.[35] These contradictions concern the relationship of these intermediate beings to God. Sometimes they are thought of as powers inherent in God, and sometimes as effects proceeding from him and their mutual relations to each other; lastly, it is hard to decide whether they are personal or impersonal beings.

In spite of the incompleteness and lack of balance of this concept, its underlying intention has considerable historical importance. Such an attempt to bridge the gap between a highly sublimated idea of God and the world of the senses, by interposing a series of intermediate steps which would convert an absolute opposition into one of degrees, was original in Philo and was to be repeated time and again in the history of metaphysics. Plato's derivation of the *ideas* from the idea of the good is quite different and can hardly have influenced Philo. Although the substance of Philo's

doctrine of the logos and the heavenly powers is borrowed from others, its function within his system is unique.

The value of Philo's doctrine is not restricted to the domain of metaphysics, but has relevance as well to religion. By making God the source of a supersensual world, it relates the opposites, God-cosmos and supersensual-sensual world, in a structured hierarchy. The imperfection of the world of the senses arises from the matter out of which it has been fashioned by the divine powers, which prevents these powers from becoming manifest in all their perfection.[36] The dualism of this conception is of special importance for understanding the nature of man. Through his body and the inferior parts of his soul, man belongs to the world of the senses; through his reason, however, which is an emanation from the divine logos, he belongs to the suprasensual world. To the superior part of his soul, man's body appears to be a prison house. It is the purpose of man, therefore, to free himself from the chains of corporeality and to return to his heavenly source.[37] The general direction of Philo's ethics is thus clearly indicated. He follows the earlier, more rigorous, version of Stoic ethics,[38] but gives it an entirely different, religious accent. War is to be waged against the passions no longer in order that man may follow the laws of universal reason and become master of himself, but in order to liberate the soul from the fetters of sensuality and enable it to fulfill its heavenly destiny. Stoic ethics is thus interpreted (as it was already by Posidonius) in the spirit of the dualistic religious sensibility of Plato. In a strange but revealing paradox, Philo asserts, against Stoic determination, the idea of man's freedom, while maintaining at the same time that without the aid of God man is unable to do good by his own power.[39] The consciousness of man's moral freedom seems to be maintained against scientific determinism, but not in the face of the religious experience of man's impotence before God.

Philo's dualism is intended to lead us from earthly existence to a suprasensual world: liberation from the dominion of the senses means elevation to the realm of spirit. The same idea is expressed by the notion that the contemplative life is man's highest end.[40] However, the concept of con-

templation (*theoria*) has lost the all-embracing character it had with Aristotle, and becomes restricted to the sphere of religion. Empirical knowledge is merely a preparation for the knowledge of God and has no value of its own.[41] Philo's scientific interest underscores this attitude since he uses Greek science exclusively for religious purposes. The result is equally significant for science and religion. By valuing science solely for its religious function, religion, in its turn, is made knowledge. The philosophic knowledge of God and the religious knowledge of God are now one. Religion may seem to become unduly intellectualized in this system, though this is certainly not Philo's intention. Next to and above the "scientific" knowledge of God there is an immediate intuition which requires no scientific preparation and which, in fact, is a deliberate repudiation of all theoretical knowledge.[42] At the same time that Philo praises the mystical knowledge of God, without noticing the contradiction he abandons scientific inquiry—which elsewhere he had highly praised—and actually argues against it in the manner of Greek skepticism.

However, Philo's religious ideal, for the sake of which philosophy is deprecated, is by no means the traditional Jewish one. The goal of Philo's piety is as far from historical Judaism as is his speculative reconstruction of its religious ideas. The ideal of an ascent of the soul to the suprasensual world, culminating in a union with God, is alien to the ethical religion of Judaism and closer to the world of mysticism. Already, the purely philosophic notion of the soul's ascent to God harbors a mystical element which becomes dominant in Philo's preference of immediate intuition over and above the rational knowledge of God. Philo even interprets the concept of revelation mystically. For mysticism, revelation is not tied to any particular historical event; rather it is part of individual piety and renews itself therefore in every soul that has entered into true communion with God. Philo adopts this mystical concept of revelation and interprets biblical prophecy accordingly.[43] He exhibits the same combination of mystical and moral religion as Plato, and like the latter, conceives the aim of ethics as the imitation of God, by which man becomes similar, as far as possible, to his model.[44] The

relationship to God thereby acquires an ethical character and Philo in fact does subscribe—although in Platonic formulations—to the ideal of Jewish religion and ethics. From this side of his religious consciousness, Philo is thus deeply anchored to Judaism. The relationship between man and God is conceived from a thoroughly Jewish point of view: humility, trust and obedience are the cardinal religious virtues.[45] Trustful submission to God is as important for him as the longing for mystical union with God. Philo probably did not realize the contradiction between the two ideals.

The two sides of Philo's religious consciousness are reflected also in his theological speculation. His concept of God, which is above and beyond all positive content, corresponds to the mystical. There is no doubt that, for Philo, this idea of God is the ultimately valid one; the personal traits occasionally attributed to God are, from a philosophic point of view, inconsequential lapses from consistency. However, what appears as mere inconsistency from a theoretical point of view, may well be an essential part in the religious context of Philo's thought. Despite the fact that the purely abstract idea of God logically excludes a personalistic conception, Philo seems unable to do without the latter when he wants to say what God really means for him.

In his doctrine of divine powers, the Jewish element in Philo again comes to the fore. When he attributes two main forces to the logos—goodness, the creative and merciful force, and power, the ruling and punishing force[46]—it is evident that the cosmological aspect of this notion is incidental to its ethical bearing. The mystical side of Philo's thought and feeling may well be the stronger, yet it is nevertheless true that for him Jewish piety is not merely an historic inheritance, but a personal possession, influencing the complexion of his system though not determining its basic structure.

This is illustrated once more by Philo's concept of revelation. We have already referred to his interpretation of historical revelation in mystical terms. Nevertheless, the special status of historical revelation is not lost in the process. Philo adheres to the Jewish concept of revelation and regards the Torah as the complete and absolute vehicle of God's truth,

no less than any teacher of the Talmud.[47] The five books of Moses are for him the highest expression of the truth and contain everything that science can discover. The significance of the allegorical interpretation of Scripture was therefore, for Philo, different than the allegorical explanation of myths was for his Stoic predecessors. Philo's aim is to bring together the two forms of truth: human knowledge and divine revelation. But the very contrast between these two forms of truth is possible only upon the assumption of an historically revealed religion. Philo was the first systematically to attempt to unite them, and in this respect he certainly deserves the title of "the first theologian" bestowed upon him by historians of philosophy. He was the first to pose the basic problem that subsequently was of continual concern for the philosophy and theology of the monotheistic religions; this fact by itself, even more than the actual content of his teachings, gives him his importance in the history of religious thought.[48]

3

THE RELIGIOUS IDEAS OF TALMUDIC JUDAISM

Jewish Hellenism was a transitory phenomenon in the development of Judaism. The dominant form of Jewish religion since the last centuries of antiquity—and the one that served as the foundation for the development of Judaism in the Middle Ages and modern times—was Talmudic Judaism, which developed in Palestine and Babylonia. Until the end of the first century of the Common Era, the most diverse religious tendencies flourished in Palestine, and many of the apocryphal books show the extent to which the Jews of Palestine were influenced by the religious syncretism of late antiquity. However, after the destruction of Second Temple by Titus (70 C.E.), all the religious currents that had competed with Pharasaic Talmudic Judaism quickly disappeared, and the latter achieved a unified form. The significance of the Talmud for coming generations resides mainly in religious law, which does not concern us here. The ritual, ceremonial, and legal provisions of the Talmud gave Jewish religious life its fixed and distinct form, which maintained itself until the end of the eighteenth century. The basic religious ideas of Judaism, on the other hand, were never given a similarly definitive form by the Talmud. The Talmud never attempts to formulate religious truths in fixed dogmatic expressions. The borderline between those binding doctrine and individual opinion is extremely fluid, and there is far greater variety between different generations and individuals than in the realm of religious law. The most diverse religious ideas were current between the last centuries B.C.E., when the development of the Talmud began to take place, and its final redaction at the end of the fifth century. Many of the

foreign doctrines which had penetrated into Judaism during the syncretistic period reappeared in Talmudic literature. Many of them, however, like those fantastic eschatological descriptions which we have already seen in the apocryphal literature, should be considered simply as the free play of imaginative fancy or the product of popular faith, rather than as doctrine in the precise sense. It is possible, after all, to detect a common and permanent pattern of basic ideas which proved of the greatest importance for subsequent developments.

The faith of Talmudic Judaism rests completely on biblical foundations. Central to it are the simple and sublime ideas of the Bible concerning a transcendent God, the Torah as the embodiment of his moral demands, the moral nature of the relationship between God and man, the wisdom and justice of divine providence, the election of Israel, and the promise of the coming kingdom of God. No theoretical reflection diminishes the living reality of God. Even speculations concerning hypostases and other mediating agencies could not affect his immediate presence to the world or remove him to an unapproachable distance. God acts as much in the present as he did in the past. It is true that prophecy and the miraculous events of biblical times belong to the past, and that the salvation announced by the prophets belongs to the future—the "end of days." This distinction between the present, on the one hand, and the mighty revelations of God in the past and future, on the other, is a necessary corollary of the historical character of the Jewish concept of revelation, and the expectation of a future (historical) salvation. Similar causes operated in Christianity and in Islam and led to similar distinctions between the present and the time of revelation—that is, the past. But even if the present was devoid of historic revelation, men still felt the immediate presence of God in their lives. Every individual Jew knew himself under the same divine providence which had governed the lives of his ancestors, and through some chosen pious persons, even miracles would be wrought—though these could not, of course, be compared to those wrought by the prophets.[1] In order to express the consciousness of the presence of God, the religious imagination did not stop even before the most daring anthropomorphisms. In order to emphasize the value of the study of Torah, the Talmudic rabbis describe God himself as studying the Torah. The faith that the sufferings of Israel could not destroy the intimate bond between God and his people was expressed by saying that God not only lamented over the sorrows that he had brought upon Israel, but actually shared their exile.[2]

But the Talmudists clearly recognized the nature of the anthropomorphisms of their own religious fantasy, as well as those of the Bible. They pointed out how God revealed himself according to the varying historical situations, and how the prophetic utterances were influenced by the individual personality of each prophet; in fact, they even suggested that every Jew standing at Sinai saw God in a slightly different fashion.[3] These notions were never systematically developed; no attempts were made to distinguish between anthropomorphic forms of expression and the actual content of the idea of God, but their intention is quite clear. The idea of the personal and moral nature of God remains beyond all criticism, and provides the basic common core of the different concrete images.

The passionate violence of the religious ethos of the prophets had given place, in Talmudic times, to a quieter, more restrained, and in a way even sober piety, bound to history and tradition. However, the activist character of Jewish religion was preserved. Religious life was still centered on the divine "commands," in which God addressed himself to the human will, and showed the way of communion between man and God. Human destiny is conceived in different ways. Piety is not so much the mere observance of the divine commandments as the imitation of a divine model. The biblical commandment to be holy even as the Lord God is holy, and the injunction to walk in the ways of God, are interpreted as demands to imitate the divine qualities of love and mercy.[4] Love of God and faithful trust in him are considered the foundation of the right observance of the commandments. The spirit of rabbinic religion is thus elevated above mere submission or obedience of the will. Its religious activity is rooted in the inner certainty of com-

munity with God, yet its piety remains one of precept and duty. Consequently, much stress is laid on moral freedom: man's actions are his own, even in relation to the divine omnipotence. The Torah is the embodiment of the divine will, and the observance of its commandments is the task given to Israel by God. The universality of the divine commandment is established by the notion of an original, pre-Israelite revelation, addressed to all nations and containing the foundations of morals.[5]

However, the perfect divine revelation is the Torah given to Israel. As a divinely revealed law, all its parts—ritual as well as moral—are of equal validity, and equally constitute the religious duty of Israel. The idea of equal and unassailable validity—from a formal point of view—of all parts of the Torah follows as a logical consequence from the biblical notion of a divine legislation; at the same time the rabbis—from the material point of view—distinguished between central and marginal laws, between means and ends. The Talmud frequently interprets ceremonial and cultic items of the biblical legislation as means toward the ultimate moral ends of the divine law, subordinating the former to the latter in spite of their common divine origin.[6] Psychologically of course, it is only to be expected that sometimes one, and sometimes the other of these two facets comes to the fore; at times the observance of the commandments is permeated by ethical attitudes; at other times, the distinction between ethics and ritual becomes blurred.

The messianic promises of the prophets were the mainstay of the Jewish community. We need not concern ourselves here with the transformation of the relatively simple expectations of the prophets into the more complicated notions of the later eschatologies developing in the last centuries of the pre-Christian era, or with the differences between the more national and the more universalistic versions of the messianic ideal, or with the changing ideas about the imminence or distance of the messianic coming. All these, though of considerable consequence for later times, are largely irrelevant to our present theme. Throughout all these variations on the messianic theme, the historical character of the prophetic hope for the future is preserved

intact. An expectation of an entirely different sort is found in the ideas of the resurrection of the dead and the immortality of the soul. In a way, the resurrection of the dead still links up with the expectations of an historical fulfillment. It will take place at the end of time, and the resurrected will take part in the miraculous events of that age. The individual hope for an eternal life was thus combined with the idea that past generations too, would share in the promise of the kingdom of God. The personal longing for eternal life is satisfied within the framework of collective historical eschatology.

These two elements are completely separated by the belief in the immortality of the soul. Frequently, the idea of immortality is overshadowed by that of resurrection. The Talmud, like the apocryphal literature, knows of a kind of intermediate state of the soul between death and resurrection; true retribution will be dispensed only after the resurrection of the body.[7] But along with it, we also find the faith in a retribution coming immediately after death, and in a life of blessedness for the soul in the beyond.[8] According to the latter view, the individual hope for the future has no connection whatsoever with history. "The world to come," the place of reward and punishment beyond, is distinct from the future "kingdom of God" even in its most eschatological form. "The world to come" does not succeed "this world" in time, but exists from eternity as a reality outside and above time, to which the soul ascends. This view faces a double opposition—on the one hand between the present reality of history and the future kingdom of God, and on the other, between life on earth and life beyond. The two orientations do not necessarily exclude each other. The original Jewish eschatology with its historical and collective hopes did not lose its power or intensity because of the belief in individual immortality, and the latter, as we have seen, could combine with the idea of the resurrection of the dead. Nevertheless, religious interpretation of the world had taken a new and decisive turn which provided starting points for the most diverse developments of Jewish thought in later periods.

The belief in another world, above and beyond time, led

to a new evaluation of the present world. It was not enough that this world should find its perfection and fulfillment in a world to come, and that the wrongs of this earthly life should be made good there, but the ultimate end of man was shifted to the world to come. Our life in this world came to be conceived as a mere preparation, whether in terms of the resurrection of the dead or of the immortality of the soul. According to a well-known Talmudic saying, this world is like a vestibule in which man should prepare himself for entering the banquet hall of the world to come.[9] The blessedness of the world to come is understood as consisting of the pious enjoying the radiance of the presence of God.[10]

Nevertheless, this rabbinic view is very different from the dualistic contempt for the world of the senses exhibited, for example, by Philo, under Platonic influence. The Talmud emphatically repeats the biblical affirmation of this world and interprets the words of Genesis, "and God saw everything that He had made and behold it was very good," as referring to *both* worlds.[11] The good things of this world, including sensual pleasures, may be enjoyed simply and naturally; only in rare instances do we find any ascetic tendencies. Even more important is the fact that asceticism plays no role in the understanding of ethics. Although the moral act was understood as a preparation for the future world, it lacked the negative connotation of separation from the world of the senses. Its meaning was rather wholly positive: to serve God in this world, to fulfill his will, and to build a social order in accordance with his will. The religious value of moral action is maintained even in the face of eschatological communion with God, since fulfilling the will of God in this world is no less communion with God than the state of blessedness in the hereafter. The same Talmudic teacher who described this world as only a vestibule to the coming world, also said that although one hour of blessedness in the world to come was worth more than all the life of this world, yet one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world was worth more than all the life of the world to come.

What has been said regarding the rabbinic view of the world applies as well to the idea of man. The Bible had

ascribed a divine origin to the human spirit, but now we find an explicit dualism. The body and the soul are seen in sharp contrast. Because of his soul, which is destined for eternal life, man belongs to the superior world of the spirit; in his body, he belongs to the earth. Thanks to his soul, he resembles the angels; thanks to his body, a beast. Following the Stoics and Philo, the relationship of the soul to the body is compared to that of God to the world.[12] The idea of the pre-existence of the soul is also known to the Talmud.[13] Man's higher powers, such as his reason and moral consciousness, are attributed to the soul; his lower passions are assigned to the body. The corollary of man's intermediate position between the higher and lower worlds is that by observing the divine commandments, he can rise to the rank of the angels, but by transgressing them he descends to the level of the beasts.[14]

But this dualism is far from identifying evil with man's sensual nature. The body is not the ground of evil, and consequently man's moral task does not consist in his separation from the body. The warfare between good and evil is fought out *within* man's soul; it is there that good and evil impulses face each other.[15] They represent two directions of the human will, and man must choose between them. As the source of temptation, sensuality occasionally is identified with the "evil impulse," but in itself it is ethically indifferent and has its legitimate sphere of existence. In spite of the Talmudic praise of the virtue of frugality as practiced by the pious, sensuality—provided it is kept under control—is considered unobjectionable, and the body is regarded as an essential part of man's God-given nature. Even the evil impulse is a necessary part of human nature, and the Talmud voices the remarkable demand to love God with both of our impulses—the good and the evil.[16] Here again the end of ethics is seen not as separation from the world of the senses, but rather serving God within that world, with all available human powers. The body and the senses should be subordinate and subservient to the soul; they are not, of themselves, enemies of its heavenly destiny. Nonetheless, the whole complex of ideas described so far—the belief in a spiritual world above the world of the senses, the eternal

destiny of the soul, and the dualistic conception of man, could easily be turned in the direction of an ascetic contemplative religion; it did, in fact, provide the opening through which the Neoplatonic type of spirituality entered Judaism in the Middle Ages.

Along with these speculative developments, there emerged another, more formal, though no less significant phenomenon: the growth of theoretical reflection on the contents of religion. Inquiry into fundamental religious questions is no longer an expression of the religious consciousness itself, seeking an answer to its doubts and anxieties (as in the later prophets, or in the book of Job), but acquires an independent value. The basic religious ideas of the Bible, as well as the commandments of the Law, become objects of theoretical reflection. Particularly in regard to ethical questions, a high degree of abstraction was reached. Of particular interest is the attempt to reduce the entire content of the biblical commandments to one principle. The Talmud, like the gospels, seeks to determine the "major principle" of the Torah. One Talmudic master finds it in the commandment, "But thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18); another finds it in the sentence, "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him" (Genesis 5:1). Similarly, a well-known legend has Hillel, the greatest of the Talmudic sages, declare that the rule, "That which is hateful unto thee, do not do unto thy neighbor," was the "entire Torah," and everything else was only a commentary on it.[17] By declaring love of one's neighbor to be the supreme ethical virtue, the Talmud does not make any material addition to the teaching of the Torah; the novelty lies in the theoretical formulations which describe the commandment of love as the greatest and most inclusive commandment of the Torah, or assert the whole Law to be merely a commentary on this superior ethical rule, to which both ethical and ritual laws are thus made subordinate. Elsewhere a comment on Leviticus 18:4, "Ye shall do my judgments and keep mine ordinances," emphasizes the difference between ethical and ritual commandments. These "judgments," which include the ethical commandments of the Torah, are defined as those laws that "ought to have been written" even if Scripture had not stated them.

The incomprehensibility of the ritual commandments is expressed in the saying that they were open to the objections of the "evil impulse and the nations of the world."[18] The idea of the intrinsic self-evidence of the ethical commandments which God gave to man is essentially a biblical heritage; it is merely the theoretical formulation that is new. The self-evidence of the moral law, implied by the Bible, is emphasized in obvious imitation of the Greek notion of an "unwritten law" in the pointed formulation that moral laws are laws that "ought to have been written down." True, according to the Talmud, the biblical laws which lack this intrinsic evidence possess the same unconditioned validity as the self-evident "judgments of the Lord." The Talmudic doctrine that the whole biblical law, by virtue of its divine origin, is equally and unconditionally authoritative—although material distinctions can be drawn between ethical and ceremonial precepts—appears here in its utmost clarity.

The doctrine of retribution is strongly emphasized and elaborated in considerable detail; yet the Talmud demands the disinterested observance of the divine commandments. It is not demand in itself, but the theoretical precision with which it is formulated, that is of immediate relevance to our theme. In the saying to which we have already referred—"Better is one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than the entire life of the world to come, and better is one hour of blessedness in the world to come than all of the life of this world"—the religious pathos employs conceptual language. Elsewhere the same demand is stated in sober theoretical language.

In connection with the commandment to love God, the Talmud discusses the difference between those who serve God out of love, and those who serve him out of fear. The question is raised in the form of a casuistical problem, whether an observance of the Law because of a desire of reward or fear of retribution has any value at all. The decision is that observance of the Law, even for ulterior motives, was not devoid of value, for through it men could

rise to a disinterested observance.[19] To this ideal of the observance of the commandments is added the study of the Law. The latter was not only a divine commandment in itself but also gave full scope to the desire for education. Discussing the primacy of "theory" (learning), over "practice" (the observance of the commandments), the Talmud solves the dilemma on one occasion by declaring that the study of the Law was equivalent to the observance of all the commandments, and on another by concluding that not theory but deeds were what mattered. Elsewhere a kind of compromise is reached: the dilemma is decided in favor of study, but the reason given is that "study leads to practice."[20]

Some of these ethical questions also led to theological discussions of dogmatic problems. Belief in the freedom of the human will, which in the Bible is an immediate religious certainty, becomes a doctrinal proposition in the Talmud. Talmudic predilection for pointed formulations produces the paradox: "Everything is in the hands of Heaven, with the exception of the fear of Heaven."[21] The difficulty of reconciling man's freedom with God's omniscience was fully realized, but was not resolved. Instead, the rabbis held fast to both horns of the dilemma: "Everything is foreseen, yet permission is given; the world is judged with mercy, yet the verdict is according to one's deeds."[22] The second half of this sentence refers to a question which greatly preoccupied the Talmudic sages. Once we realize that even the righteous are not free of sin, and that there is no wicked man who has not done some good, what is the line of division between the righteous and the wicked? The answer, though somewhat primitive, states that man is to be considered good or evil according to the preponderance of his good or evil deeds.[23] The biblical question "Why do the righteous suffer and the evil men prosper?" is treated in many and varied ways, and though faith in a future life dulled the point of this question to some extent, it did not solve it in principle. The meaning of human suffering remained a riddle. The Talmud stresses the purgative quality of suffering, and in some of its reflections on this subject it touches the most profound reaches of the religious consciousness.[24] But in addition to such levels of insight we also find a mechanical explanation: the sufferings of the righteous in this world are punishment for those sins they have committed, and the prosperity of the wicked represents a reward for the good deeds that they have done; ultimate retribution for both is left to the world to come.[25]

The rabbinic manner of thinking is seen in the form in which it is expressed. The terse and pithy formulations we have cited suggest its capacity for conceptual thinking. This appears at its best in those sentences and maxims in which the Talmudic masters enunciate with extraordinary concision fundamental religious and ethical doctrines. The art of coining such maxims was apparently cultivated in the schools of the Talmudic sages. One tractate of the Mishna—known as the *Sayings of the Fathers*—consists of a collection of sentences by some of the greatest Talmudic masters (some of which have already been quoted). Comparing these maxims with the proverbs or sayings in the biblical wisdom literature, one is immediately struck by the vast difference between them in regard to their subject matter, and perhaps even more, to their form of thought.

The Talmudic epigram is built on the pointed abstraction; its charm resides in its striking felicity and terseness of form. The epigram just quoted, concerning the relationship between divine providence and human freedom, may be taken as a complete theology in one sentence; in its power of compression it is not alone among rabbinic sayings. Even where the specific form of the epigram is not intended, rabbinic thought almost instinctively expresses itself in this way. The saying that certain precepts would have to be written down if they had not *already* been written down in the Torah, and the statement that everything is in the hand of God except the fear of God, are not less pungent than the maxims proper. A more precise formal analysis, which until now has never been attempted, would probably reveal, in addition to the characteristics described above, a whole series of typical forms of thought recurring again and again in rabbinic discussion of religious fundamentals.

These hints must suffice for our present purpose. They also enable us to recognize the limitations within which this

type of thought moves. Its form of expression shows that the systematic treatment of religious problems is intended; it is satisfied with an individual maxim or comment on a scriptural verse, and at the utmost proceeds from there to the discussion of a particular question. This lack of system is characteristic of Talmudic discussions of theology. Problems are taken up one by one; there is never an attempt to combine isolated conclusions in a coherent framework. As our examples have shown, there are insights into the most basic problems of religion, with full awareness of their fundamental significance; but fundamentals are discussed in the same way as details, and no attempt is made to follow them systematically to their conclusions. The Talmud is content with the abstract statement that the love of one's neighbor was the supreme principle of the Torah, but it never attempts to trace the different moral laws to this supreme principle or to demonstrate concretely (apart from a few occasional examples) the moral purpose of the ceremonial law. The demand of completely disinterested worship of God does not in itself contradict the doctrine of retribution which occupies so important a place in Talmudic ethics; but the problems posed by the juxtaposition of these two ideas are never properly discussed.

All the most important ideas in connection with the problem of theodicy can be found in the Talmud; yet it is impossible to construct from them a systematic doctrine. This is especially true of the metaphysical aspects of theology. The Talmud repeatedly emphasizes that the anthropomorphic expressions of the Bible are only metaphors, but it never enquires into the criteria for delimiting metaphorical from literal utterances. We may therefore speak of a definite and consistent over-all religious viewpoint of the Talmud, but no correspondingly consistent and unified theoretical comprehension of the central questions of religion. What the Talmud has produced is not theology, but scattered theological reflections. This accounts for the sometimes strange coexistence of ideas; next to insights of the utmost profundity there are other pages which show a primitive thought wrestling laboriously with its problems. Lack of

theoretical maturity is often found in conjunction with sharp and pointed conceptual formulations.

The difference between the righteous and the wicked man consists, as we have seen, in the preponderance of good over evil deeds. This atomistic conception of man characterizes not so much the moral view of the Talmud as the adequacy of its conceptual tools, which can measure the good or evil in man only according to the number of individual acts. Equally naive is the answer which tries to solve the profound question of theory versus practice by pronouncing in favor of the superiority of learning because it leads to practice. Rabbinic thought is struggling to master the content of religion, but seems still unable to grasp it in its wholeness and unity.

After what has been said, it is hardly necessary to point out that rabbinic Judaism was little affected by the scientific philosophy of the Greeks. Only the most popular forms of these Greek doctrines, in which they were spread among the masses, whether orally or in writing, seem to be echoed in the Talmud. Much in Talmudic ethics is reminiscent of Stoic popular philosophy. Both teach that everything that man possesses is borrowed from God, and therefore man should not complain if God demands the return of that which is properly his. Both consider the soul as a stranger in this world, praise the virtue of moderation as the true riches, and advise man to live every day as if it were his last.[26] Some of the rabbinic maxims which ask man to do his duty without thought of reward bear a strong formal resemblance to Stoic sayings. The dependence on Stoic models may be doubtful in the case of individual parallels. Stoic influence as such is beyond doubt. The comparison of the soul to God derives from Stoic metaphysics; the soul fills and vitalizes the body as God fills the world, and like God, it sees but cannot be seen.[27] The Talmud incorporates Platonic as well as Stoic ideas, which, divorced from their systematic context, were part and parcel of general Greek culture. The Talmud not only knows of the pre-existence of the soul, but also says that before birth the soul knew the entire Torah, forgetting it only at the moment of birth. Here the Torah takes the place of the Platonic Idea, as also

in the saying that God looked at the Torah and from this model created the world. The invisibility of God is exemplified by the Platonic parable of the human eye which cannot bear to look even at the brightness of the sun.[28] The Talmud uses such ideas in order to rebut the arguments of Gentile opponents and Jewish skeptics. The admonition, "Know what to answer to an Epicurean," (the Epicurean is, for the rabbis, the typical freethinker)[29] proves that the knowledge of foreign ideas was promoted by apologetic considerations. However, since the attacks emanated from popular philosophy rather than from strictly scientific circles, popular Greek wisdom could suffice for their rebuttal.

Gnostic speculation exerted a profounder influence than philosophy on the Talmudic rabbis. Particularly in the first and the beginning of the second century, Gnosticism fascinated many of the leading teachers. Later the suspicions against this trend, which had been present from the very beginning, gained the upper hand, and the Mishnah pronounced an anathema on it: "Whosoever speculated on these four things, it were better for him if he had not come into the world—what is above? what is beneath? what was beforetime? and what will be hereafter?"[30] This hostility to Gnosticism, or at least to its more extreme forms, did not destroy it but definitely broke its power. From its very beginning Gnosticism was considered an esoteric doctrine that could be propagated only in the narrow circle of the elect. Naturally, Judaism had no room for its dualistic and antinomian doctrines.

In its teaching that the creation of the world and the biblical legislation were not the work of the supreme good God but rather of a hostile demiurge, Gnosticism meant to hit and destroy its hated enemy, Judaism. The Gnostic doctrine of the "two powers" consequently became the worst heresy in Jewish eyes.[31] Accordingly, Jewish Gnosticism was unable to accept the pessimistic Gnostic doctrine of matter as an essentially evil principle completely independent of God. After discarding these elements, Jewish thought nevertheless preserved a number of characteristic and decisive Gnostic traits. The two main subjects of Jewish esotericism—the "work of creation" (*maaseh bereshit*) and the "the work of the chariot" described by Ezekiel (*maaseh merkabah*)[32] correspond to the central themes of Gnosticism. The world of the chariot—that is, the throne of glory and the angels surrounding it—corresponds to the highest spiritual sphere, the *pleroma* of the Gnostics. It is the terminus of the soul's mystical journey, the ascension to heaven, which is portrayed in similar terms by Jewish as well as non-Jewish Gnosticism.[33]

The doctrine of creation presents speculation concerning the origin of the world in the form of mystical interpretation of the biblical text. Gnostic ideas are adapted to the biblical notion of creation, but in such a way that the act of creation becomes merely the starting point of a highly mythological cosmogonic process. In the spirit of Gnostic metaphysics of light, God wraps himself in the radiance of a light that fills the world.[34] When God created the world, the latter sought to expand to infinity, until God set limits to its expansion.[35] In connection with the biblical idea of the upper and lower waters, Jewish Gnostics speculate on water as the primal matter of the world, and declare in thoroughly mythological fashion: "Three creations preceded the world: water, spirit, and fire; water conceived and gave birth to darkness, fire conceived and gave birth to light, the air conceived and gave birth to wisdom."[36] The continuation of these Gnostic doctrines can be found in post-Talmudic Jewish mysticism, but for the religious development of Judaism as a whole, they merely represent a sideline. Both in the Talmudic and post-Talmudic eras, they were cultivated only in small circles. Even if at times their influence was relatively great, they never determined the general religious scene.

Nothing so well indicates the limits of theological reflection in the Talmud as the absence of any dogmatic formulation of the substance of Jewish teaching. Attacks from the outside on certain doctrines, like the resurrection of the dead, are refuted, or those who deny them are excluded from the fellowship of Israel.[37] The Talmud nowhere systematically attempts to fix the contents of the Jewish faith; hence the impossibility of establishing with any precision the boundary between a generally valid doctrine and a teach-

er's individual opinion. This proved of far-reaching consequence for the later development of Judaism.[38] The flexible form in which the faith of Judaism was cast allowed the religious thought of later generations a great deal of freedom. Medieval Jewish philosophy was able to reinterpret traditional religious beliefs with a freedom that was denied to Christian scholasticism. Attempts were made in the Middle Ages to limit this freedom by formulating articles of faith, but since Jewish spiritual authorities could demand general recognition of their rulings only insofar as they acted as interpreters of the Talmud, such efforts could at best have limited success. Nevertheless, the freedom with regard to the tradition of faith had certain boundaries set to it from the beginning. The basic principles of the Jewish faith needed no dogmatic systematization in order to be clearly determined. The belief in the divine origin of the Bible as well as of the complementary oral tradition authoritatively bound the individual both in matters of belief and religious law.

Religious truth had been given once and for all in the Bible and the oral tradition, and it was the absolute norm for faith. All freedom was merely a freedom to interpret this truth, which by its very nature was valid for everybody. Also with regard to the material contents of faith, this freedom was bound to certain fixed principles. Thus the Jewish belief in revelation entailed a whole series of religious assumptions, sharing the authority of revelation and consequently not requiring explicit dogmatic emphasis in order to assert their authority over the faithful. The ideas of providence, retribution, and miracles were firmly established as elements of the Jewish faith through their connection with belief in revelation. Their factual truth was beyond doubt; only in regard to their precise understanding was there freedom for philosophical interpretation. Other religious ideas, though they lacked this close formal relationship to the notion of revelation, attained such prominence in liturgy and public worship that their authority was unquestioned. The whole complex of religious convictions that had grown up in the Talmudic period served as an incontestable, valid norm of faith for future Jewish genera-

tions and for their philosophies. Both facts—the existence of a norm of faith and the absence of a systematic formulation of dogma—are of equal importance for subsequent developments: both the freedom and constraint of medieval Jewish philosophy derive from them.