«Unio Mystica» as a Criterion: Some Observations on «Hegelian» Phenomenologies of Mysticism*

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During the Renaissance period, Jewish mysticism was considered as one of the most important form of religious literature. In the twentieth century however, two major developments can be singled out: the *Hegelian one* envisions the future as open to progress, for the emergence of an even more spiritual version of the religion as manifested in the past, *the archaic* one sees the forms of religion as more genuine religious modalities. Problematically in these phenomenologies is the generic attitude to complex types of religious literature which are conceived as embodying one central type of spirituality. In our case, the centrality of the notion of devequt in Jewish mysticism is more important than the attempt to define it in a certain way, namely that it stands for union or communion. Or the kind of interactions between devequt, theosophy and theurgy, will define better the essence of Kabbalistic mysticism than the analysis of devequt in abstracto. The difference between the theological versus the technical approach implies more than methods to deal with the role of an imponderable experience as part of the more general understanding of a certain form of mysticism. When studying the religious writings we do not witness fixed systems, clear-cut theologies or frozen techniques, whose essence can be easily determined, but living structures and proclivities for moving in a certain direction, or directions, rather than crystallized static entities.

1. Introduction

During the Renaissance period, Jewish mysticism was considered as one of the most important form of religious literature. The widespread assumption that Kabbalah was an ancient lore that adumbrated Christian tenets attracted the attention of some Christian intellectuals who attempted at demonstrating the contribution of this lore for the demonstration of the antiquity of the Christian tenets. Eventually these intellectuals have learned from the translated Kabbalistic texts not only about the existence of a Jewish mystical theology, but also about mystical raptures, death by kiss, a phrase that was even adopted almost verbatim into Italian under the form bensica.(1) The notions of prisca theologia and philosophia perennis

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were given a special emphasis with the emergence of the Christian Kabbalah. The search for the antique as a source of inspiration and authority was part and parcel of the Renaissance spirit. A distinction between the ancients and the moderns will assume the superiority of the former over the latter.

In the twentieth century however, despite the tremendous achievements in exposing Kabbalah to wider audiences in Gershom Scholem's magisterial writings, a rather opposite view as to the mystical nature of Judaism, and even of Kabbalah, may be seen as more dominant among some scholars of mysticism. What happened between the rather admiratory, and exaggerated, attitude of some of the Christian intellectuals in the 15th and 16th century to Kabbalah as a superior form of mysticism, and the quite reserved attitude of some of the 20th century supposedly objective academicians? Two major developments can be singled out in the last generation of generalist scholars of religion: one, to be referred as the Hegelian one,(2) would emphasize the superiority of the later religious manifestations as been more spiritual and therefore more developed. The other, represented especially by Mircea Eliade, and to a certain degree also by C. G. Jung and G. Scholem, would regard the more archaic forms of religion as more genuine religious modalities in comparison to later religious developments, which tend to evade the primordiality of myth, symbol and re-creative ritual as the basic forms of religion. To a certain extent, we can characterize this school as fond of a religiosity that was defined by Levi-Bruhl's famous phrase "participation mystique".(3)

The Hegelian option, to be represented here mainly by three scholars, Gershom Scholem, Robert C. Zaehner and Edward Caird emphasizes the importance of historical progress as positive for the formation of the higher version of a certain religion. The Hegelians will envision the future as open to progress, for the emergence of an even more spiritual version of a stage of the religion as manifested in the past. To a great extent, this is a teleological vector that informs the move, a vector that is theological, namely representing the axis of the theological, more spiritual evolution. The archaic orientation, however, would regard history not as the scene of the progress but, on the contrary, as the catalyst for the regress. It is a restorative mode that informs this attitude. While the Hegelian attitude is much more monotheistically and mystically oriented, the archaic one is rather suspicious toward theological claims, emphasizing the centrality of the mythical experience. While historical stasis would be the central characteristic of the archaic religion, historical dynamism would characterize the Hegelian view of religion. Moreover, the Hegelian attitude focuses its attention on the theological developments, being concerned with the content of abstract systems, while the archaic approach deals much more with the experiences, symbols, rituals, myths, and less with theoretical believes. It should be mentioned that the two attitudes focus their views on the extremes of the wide spectrum of the religious facts. Nevertheless one should not expect that a Hegelian scholar should divorce himself totally from the archaic religiosity. Though someone like Zaehner has done it,(4) while an archaist like Eliade would com-

pletely disassociate himself from the Hegelian trend, others, like Scholem and Jung, may be described as attempting at combining, in different manners, the two extremes.

Seen from the perspective of the archaists, Judaism, as well as other monotheistic religions, suffers from its belatedness; It does not evince, according to some criteria, the fresh symbolism and mythologies that inform the archaic religions.(5) However, when seen from the perspectives of the Hegelians, Judaism, including its mystical forms, is conceived as being too an early, and underdeveloped religion, which falls short of the ideal of this conception, the mystical union with the divine. Too early for the 'progressive' Hegelians and too late for the 'conservative' archaists, not mythical enough for some scholars and, at the same time not mystical enough for others, these extreme attitudes to religion relegate Judaism to a limbo, or interim situation that implies a rejection of the possibility that this religion will serve as a classical paradigm for the essence of religion. In the following discussion, I shall ignore the problematic related to the archaic attitude in order to focus my discussion solely upon the Hegelians, singling out one major question of this paradigm: the status of unio mystica, or the union without distinction, as symptomatic for the pattern that underscores this scheme. The aim of this presentation is not to vindicate Judaism from the "blame" of being impoverished in so far as mystical union is concerned. The presentation of the Kabbalistic and Hasidic material that shows that there is not reason to deny the existence of extreme mystical expressions, and eventually also experiences, in Jewish mysticism, has been done elsewhere.(6) Here I am addressing only the question of the methodological presuppositions of some scholarly presentations of this topic, rather than that of the actual content of a certain religion.

2. G. G. Scholem

Let me address the Hegelian scheme of religious development as presented by Gershom Scholem; He assumes a three-stage evolution of religion in general: the mythical one, which implies the animistic presence of the divine in the world. A second one, which emphasizes the gulf between man and the transcendental God, which involves the importance of the religious establishment, and third, a phase where an attempt to bridge this gap the human and the divine in a mystical experience.(7) The Hegelian nature of this scheme has been recognized by scholars experts in Scholem's thought.(8) It seems that especially the presentation of the third phase is Hegelian, as it attempts at offering a synthesis between the two previous ones, which are antithetic to each other. Mysticism, the core of the last phase, is a synthesis between the animistic mythology and the transcendental theology. In general, the very fact that mysticism is conceived as the last phase of religious development is reminiscent of Hegel's view of his own philosophy as the last philosophy.

Nowhere in Scholem's works did he supply details concerning any specific religion which underwent such a development, or what are the three stages in Judaism

that fit his scheme and his proposal remained a very abstract one. I would like to discuss a possible implication of this scheme for Jewish religion, and especially for mystical union.

Though Scholem did not expand the three-phase scheme to his negation of mystical union in Judaism, it seems to me that the two claims are consistent to each other and that we can clarify his particular view of mystical union within the frame of his wider theory. Mysticism, and in our case Jewish mysticism, is understood to be an effort to close a gap created by the institutionalized religiosity. Therefore, and this fact should be emphasized, it is a late phase, which has to cope with questions, sensibilities, concepts, inhibitions that were already widespread in the earlier phases of a certain religion. So, for example, a transcendental theology could preclude the attempts at, or at least the expressions of, extreme states of unitive experiences of the divine, that transcends, by definition, the human condition. When describing the earliest extensive brand of Jewish mystical literature, the Heikhalot one, Scholem emphasizes that «Ecstasy there was, and this fundamental experience must have been a source of religious inspiration, but we find no trace of a mystical union between the soul and God. Throughout there remained an almost exaggerated consciousness of God's otherness, nor does the identity and individuality of the mystic become blurred even at the height of ecstatic passion.»(9) I would like to emphasize, for reasons that will become obvious latter on, that Scholem's quote does not define Jewish mysticism in general, but only one, and a very definite, stage in its history, namely the ancient Jewish phase, the Heikhalot literature.(10)

In the case of the medieval Kabbalists, the institutionalized philosophy was conceived by Scholem as preventing such extreme expressions: «The necessity to compromise with medieval Jewish theology dictated this terminology, not the act itself, which may or may not include a state of mystical union.»(11) Therefore, Jewish medieval mysticism was portrayed as lacking the most extreme experiences, or at least locutions, that can be described as unio mystica. Let me adduce Scholem's statement at the beginning of his study of Devequt: «...union with God is denied to man even in that mystical upsurge of the soul, according to Kabbalistic theology.»(12) In other words, the antithesis, namely the transcendental theology, by becoming part of the synthesis, impinges upon the nature of this synthesis, which will consist in a milder form of bridging the gap, not by a total union but by what Scholem has described as a mystical communion. The gap of the second phase still remains a fact that cannot be totally overcome by mysticism. He asserts that

«It is only in extremely rare cases that ecstasy signifies actual union with God in which the human individuality abandons itself to the rapture of the complete submission in the divine stream. Even in his ecstatic frame of mind the Jewish mystic almost invariably retains a sense of the distance between the Creator and His creature(13) ... he does not regard it as constituting anything so extravagant as identity between the Creator and creature.»(14)

Therefore, the mitigated form of Jewish mysticism in general, in so far as the mystical union is concerned(15) is to be understood as the result of its formative historical conditions, preceded as it is by other forms of theologies, Rabbinic or philosophical, which impede a more radical mystical experience or, at least, its expressions. The gap between Creator and His creature is invoked time and again in order to substantiate the claim of the absence of mystical union. According to the logic of Scholem's scheme, the earlier form of religion are devoid of mysticism, which is to be confined to one phase alone.(16) It should be noticed that both in his general scheme of religion, and in some of his treatments of mystical union, the theological factor is crucial, in explicit terms, for the form of the expression and experience.

In the case of Judaism, Scholem has assumed that the philosophically oriented theologies emphasize a transcendental attitude, that precludes the bridging of the gulf. Moreover, he emphasized that some Kabbalistic theologies absorbed an extreme negative theology, of Neoplatonic origin, in the concept of 'Ein Sof, the unknown Infinite, that is the source of the revealed deity, the ten sefirot.(17) Thus, even the Kabbalistic form of Jewish mystical theology in the Middle Ages, is deemed to have retained a strong transcendental element. Furthermore, the mediating divine layer, the deus revelatus too, is conceived by Scholem to be, to a great extent, beyond the reach of the human comprehension.(18) Therefore, in order to contemplate even these lower manifestations, the Kabbalists were described as having to resort to symbolic knowledge.(19) The emphasis upon the role of symbolism is so great in Scholem's school, that we can describe it as a «science of symbols», to use a term originally coined in order to describe Eliade's approach.(20) It should be mentioned that the crucial role of the mystical theology is invoked by Scholem also as the starting point of contemplation, which culminates in creating Kabbalistic myths.(21) However, it is possible to assume, in a way similar to the proposal that will be elaborated later on in this study, that myths may emerge out of the attempt to understand the ritual, rather than from considerations and contemplations of the theological superstructure.(22)

3. C. R. Zaehner

Let us inspect for a moment the views of R. C. Zaehner on unio mystica. His basic assumption as to the phenomenology of religion is that there are two basic religious patterns: the Hindu one, explicating a vision of concord and harmony between man and God, which will culminate in a total fusion between the two in a mystical experience. India is «die Hauptschule der Mystik».(23) On the other hand, the Semites, who assume a basic discord between man and God, represent the prophetic religion par excellence, which is devoid of mystical elements as its crucial components.(24) This sharp distinction between the prophetic and the mystical, which was apparently inherited from M. Weber and

F. Heiler,(25) was applied by Zaehner to the ancient classical religions: the Hindu religion on one side, and the Biblical, Zoroastrian and Islamic ones on the other.(26) Christianity, however, is conceived by the Oxford scholar as the synthesis between the prophetic and the mystical religions, a synthesis that is able to overcome the striking divergences between them. He regards this religion as fulfilling in an ideal manner, the ideals of both the Semites and the Zoroastrian, of Hinduism and Buddhism.(27)

How does Zaehner eliminate the mystical elements from the prophetic religions? After all, Sufism is a major mystical phenomena and Kabbalah was, after the printing of the major writings of Scholem, well known in the West, and to Zaehner himself. His answers to this problem were that the Quranic, conceived as the «purer» form of Islam, is indeed representative of the Semitic prophetic genre,(28) while Sufism, the mystical version of this religion, was deeply informed by Hindu sources.(29) In so far the Jewish mysticism is concerned, Zaehner wrote as follows:(30)

«If mysticism is the key to religion, then we may as well exclude the Jews entirely from our inquiry: for Jewish mysticism, as Professor Scholem has so admirably portrayed it, except when influenced by Neo-Platonism and Sufism,(31) would not appear to be mysticism at all. Visionary experience is not mystical experience: for mysticism means if it means anything, the realization of a union or a unity with or in something that is enormously, if not infinitely, greater than the empirical self. With the Yahweh of the Old Testament, no such union is possible(32)...The Jews rejected the Incarnation and, with it, the promise that as co-heirs of the God-Man they too might be transformed into the divine-likeness; and it is therefore in the very nature of the case that Jewish «mysticism» should at most aspire to communion with God, never to union.»(33)

What is so admirable in Scholem's description, as understood, and to a certain degree also misunderstood by Zaehner, is the strong negation of the existence of unio mystica in Jewish mysticism. In any case, this «demystification» of Jewish mysticism has provided Zaehner with the opportunity to reassess his major phenomenology of world-religion, the Semitic assumption as to the discord between man and God, and the harmony, or concord between the two in Hindu religion, or respectively the prophetical versus the mystical religions.(34) Actually it is Scholem's statement, which seems to be the major starting point of Zaehner's characterization of Kabbalah as non-mystical, of Judaism as a purely prophetic religion, and of the whole Semitic religions as diverging from the Hindu ones. Indeed, a far reaching statement, based, as we shall see in a moment, on a conspicuous misunderstanding.

Scholem's quotation adduced above about the Heikhalot literature is understood by Zaehner as if it refers to the entire corpus of Jewish mystical literature. This is a blatant mistake, which adopts a view that indeed was formulated by Scholem as pertinent to one early stage of Jewish mysticism alone as if it portrays its entire spectrum, all this in order to dismiss it from the

range of mysticism at all, and preserve the prophetic nature of this religion also for the post-biblical phases of Judaism:

«Of all the great religions of the world it is Judaism alone that fights shy of mysticism. What is called Jewish mysticism is rather visionary experience or gnostic speculations(35) as in the Kabbalah and Isaac Luria. It is certainly not the integration of the personality around its immortal core as in the Gita, or the separation of the spirit from the matter as in early Buddhism, not is it union with God.»(36)

In other words, the Hegelian scheme of Scholem, that excluded the extreme expressions from Jewish mysticism, has contributed to a misunderstanding that culminated with the total exclusion of Jewish mysticism from the domain of mysticism, by using another Hegelian scheme: Christianity as synthesis between Hebrew prophetism and Hindu mysticism. It is a strange stroke of irony that the book of Scholem, that had contributed more than any other studies to establishing the contours of the Jewish mystical literature, has served, at the same time, as a starting point for the negation of the mystical elements in Judaism. In fact, Christianity plays in Zaehner's phenomenology, a role similar to that mysticism plays in Scholem's phenomenological scheme.

The mystical element in Judaism was, therefore, obliterated by the somewhat misunderstanding of Scholem's statements. The Muslim mysticism was conceived of as ultimately stemming from non-semitic sources, namely the Hindu ones.(37) The transcendental theology of Judaism played an important role in the phenomenology of both Zaehner and Scholem. The former addressed also the issue of Islam as fundamentally transcendental.(38) As he put it elsewhere,

«It can be maintained that the strictly monotheistic religions do not naturally lend themselves to mysticism... Christianity is the exception because it introduced into a monotheistic system an idea that is wholly foreign to it, namely, the Incarnation of God in the Person of Jesus Christ... Judaism, on its side, never developed a mystical tradition comparable to that of the other great religions because it held that union with a transcendental God who manifests himself in history could not be possible to a finite creature.»(39)

Once again, Scholem's reticence from admitting full fledged forms of mystical union in Judaism has been exploited, inadvertently or not, against its content, in order to construct a general statement, which allows to the religion to which a scholar subscribed, an exceptional and unique status.

4. C.G. Jung

Zaehner was not alone. He was more explicit but in fact he was preceded by two other scholars dealing with religion. One of them was quite an influential thinker, the other a more modest scholar. So, for example, we find in C. G. Jung's Mysterium Coniunctionis the problem of «correct» psychology exposed in terms of Christian theology, assuming that this religion is more ad-

vanced and true in comparison to biblical Judaism. This is a classical argument, running from ancient times to medieval polemics, or apologetic. However, even more surprising are his remarks when discussing the paramount psychological and mystical significance of Jesus' descent to hell:

«It is the prefiguration and anticipation of a future condition, a glimmering of an unspoken, half-conscious union of ego and non-ego. Rightly called a unio mystica, it is fundamental experience of all religion that have any life in them and have not yet degenerated into confessionalism; that have safeguarded the mystery of which the others know only the rites it produced - empty bags from which the gold has long since vanished.»(40)

So, we have here the explicit assumption that Christianity, in contrast to other, unnamed, religions, is the mystical, living religion, whereas there are others, «empty bags» which know only rites but miss the mystical union. Jung's assumption is that the mystical experience generated the rites, whose inertial existence prevailed long after the vanishing of the experience. Therefore, according to such a view the mystical experience preceded the ritualization, which is conceived to be a degeneration. The empty bags have been, after all, produced only in order to contain the already existing gold. In order to understand better Jung's stand, it is necessary to anticipate and say that a certain type of theology allows a mystical union which, as seen above, produces the rite. In other words, we can describe a descending sequel: theology, experience produced within its framework, and finally the rite expressing this experience. I suspect that the religion hinted at, but not explicitly mentioned, is Judaism, especially because of its description as confessionalistic and ritualistic and, at the same time, as devoid of unio mystica experience. It is not difficult to pinpoint the source of the view that Judaism, apparently even in its mystical forms, does not include significant unitive experiences, or expressions of unio mystica:(41) it is Gershom Scholem's famous introduction to his Major Trends,(42) a work repeatedly quoted in Mysterium Coniunctionis.(43) However, if someone still has any doubt as to the identity of the religion Jung had in mind, let us turn one page backward in the same book; there it is written, in more explicit terms:

«All distinction from God is separation, estrangement, a falling away. The Fall was inevitable even in paradise. Therefore Christ is «without the stain of sin» because he stands for the whole of the Godhead and is not distinct from it by reason of his manhood. Man, however, is branded by the stain of separation from God. This state of thing would be insupportable if there were nothing to set against evil but the law and the decalogue as in pre-Christian Judaism - until the reformer and rabbi Jesus tried to introduce the more advanced and psychologically more correct view that not fidelity to law but love and kindness are the antithesis of evil.»(44)

Here, in contrast to the former quote, the logic of the change in religion is different: not primarily a combination of mysticism and mystery, and subsequently a

rite produced by them, but a move for the better, from the law and the decalogue to love and kindness introduced by the Christ. Biblical Judaism is not a religion of mystery and mysticism that have degenerated, as hinted in the first quote, but from the very beginning a lower form of religion that has, later on, been perfected by the advent of the Christ. Thus, the mystical union ensured by the Christian redeemer, is a later stage, that reflects a more «more advanced and psychologically more correct view». In fact, a theory very similar to that of Zaehner, who described Christianity as adding the mystical element that was absent in prophetic non-mystical Judaism. Again, the mystical union is invoked as being a touch stone for the superiority of one religion upon another.

5. Edward Caird

In order not to leave the wrong impression that it was G. Scholem's assessment alone that was responsible for the neglect of Judaism as including unitive expressions, but rather the Hegelian scheme, let me analyze briefly the views of a fascinating scholar who has preceded all the thinkers mentioned above: Edward Caird [d. 1908]. He may be the source of some of the views presented by the authors dealt with above, though his name did not apparently occur in their writings.

Symptomatically enough, the first explicit negation of unio mystica in Judaism was expressed not by a Jewish scholar but by a Christian historian of theology, writing at the beginning of our century. In his The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers, Caird asserts that unlike the Plotinian blurring of the border between the finite and the infinite, «the Jew was always defended against the extreme of Mysticism by his strong sense of separate personality of God and man and, as a consequence his vivid consciousness of moral obligation as involved in the worship of God.»(45) Surprisingly enough, this statement appears after another interesting attempt to differentiate the Hebrew from the Greek mind; some pages earlier, the «Hebrew» mind is described as follows:

«The Hebrew mind is intuitive, imaginative, almost incapable of analysis or of systematic connections of ideas. It does not hold its object clearly and steadily before it, or endeavor exactly to measure it; rather it may be said to give itself up to the influence of that which it contemplates, to identify itself with it and to become possessed by it... The Greek mind, on the other hand is essentially discursive, analytical, and systematic, governing itself even in its highest flights by the ideas of measure and symmetry, of logical sequence and connection.»(46)

To judge from this quote, the «Hebrew mind» can easily identify itself with the object of its contemplation, a propensity that in principle could facilitate mystical union rather than inhibit it. Why therefore is the Greek Plotinus «the Mystic par excellence» (47) is not so clear. In any case, in Caird's opinion

«it is impossible for a pious Jew like Philo to be a mystic(48) or a pantheist and so to reduce the God of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to an absolute substance, in whom all the reality of the world is merged... he could not part with God's personality or sacrifice God's moral to his metaphysical attributes.»(49)

While describing a «Hebrew» psychology that may be conceived of as inclined to mystical union, Caird denies mysticism, and especially extreme mysticism, from the Jews on theological grounds. However, whereas Scholem invoked transcendental theology as inhibiting unitive experiences, Caird uses the claim of a personalistic theology as the main hindrance. It should be mentioned that this thinker was well acquainted with Hegelian philosophy - he wrote a learned study on Hegel - and was influenced by Hegelian vision of religion, when he describes Christianity as the «higher synthesis» between the Jewish subjectivity and the Greek objectivity.(50) Or, as Caird put it, between the religion of nature and the ethical monotheism, as Goethe thought,(51) or again, in a way reminiscent of Caird's compatriot R. C. Zaehner, «the contemplative Hindoo saint» and the «Israelite trusting in the sword of the Gideon and the Lord.»(52)

6. Critiques of the Theological Approach

In the very period when the scholarship on Jewish mysticism has reached its peak in the writings of Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem's studies, its mystical essence was negated by two influential intellectuals in matters of religion.(53) This negation is theologically oriented.(54) In the four cases we have examined above - Scholem, Zaehner, Jung and Caird - the starting point of the description is the nature of a certain theology, which either obstructs or totally prevents the attainment of unio mystica, as in the case of Scholem's scheme, or ensures it as in the case of the Christology as proposed by Zaehner and Jung.(55) The main criterion for the possibility of the existence of the extreme form of mysticism is the theological premises or tenets that are conceived of as crucial views that inform the mystic.(56) According to such a view, mystical theologies or theosophies would enable the emergence of extreme mysticism, while the more transcendental theologies may inhibit developments conductive to more extreme forms of mysticism. In other words, the nature of mysticism is understood, to a very great degree, to be a reflection or the actualization of the possibilities inherent in a certain type of theology. I assume that indeed theology had a formative in the different mystical systems, and there is no reason not to carefully inspect the affinities between theology and mysticism.(57) However, I fear that too great a role was attributed to this single factor. Let me emphasize that there is no one dominant and crystallized type of theology in any type of classical religion; at least we have variations, versions, which can differ substantially from each other. Therefore, a more mystically oriented person was able to turn to the more congenial form of theology.

As against the Scholemian argument of the inhibiting nature of Jewish theology it should be mentioned that important forms of Jewish theologies, which are

strands of Rabbinic and philosophical thought, do explicitly emphasize the importance of devequt. Though admittedly, not all Rabbinic and philosophical writings would agree on this issue, there is no reason to assume that the impression of the Kabbalist was that the authoritative «theologian», a category that I find rather evasive, would criticize them for embracing extreme understanding of devequt.(58) Let me mention just three examples. The Rabbinic thought includes very substantial elements of immanentistic tendencies, that were analyzed in the important study of J. Abelson,(59) which was well-known by Scholem.(60) In the different writings of Abraham Y. Heschel, there is a strong claim for a more spiritual understanding of the views of the Rabbinic sages in matters of theology in general, and devequt in particular.(61) For the time being, no meaningful challenges to either Abelson's or Heschel's views were composed. On the contrary, in an independent study Ira Chernus has duly emphasized mystical aspects of Rabbinic literature, including its theology(62) and we should, therefore, envision Rabbinic theology as consisting in transcendental and immanent factors altogether. Moreover, there are some discussions in this literature as to the union between God and Israel, which do not leave place for doubt as to the possibility of the cleaving between man and God.(63)

On the other side, the Plotinian description of the union of the soul with the One, was translated into Hebrew by a thirteenth century philosopher, R. Shem Tov ibn Falaquera, who used the term devequt in this context.(64) As Scholem himself has remarked, this translation could have influenced a version of Plotinus's passage found in R. Moshe de Leon.(65) Therefore, in lieu of assuming that Jewish philosophy would, invariably, inhibit Jewish mysticism from using extreme expressions, there are examples of the very opposite:Jewish philosophy has indeed provided concepts and terms that contributed greatly to the language of extreme mysticism.(66) This is just one example for the weakness of the theological argument: theology, at least in Judaism, is not a given, undisputable doctrine, that remains unchanged forever, and even if someone is able to adduce theological arguments in favor of a certain theological stand, there is no reason to assume that also different theologies could not inspire those persons who were inclined toward a more mystical form of life.

On the other hand, Hinduism and Christianity were referred by R. C. Zaehner as paramount examples for mystical religions, which enable mystical experience because of their respective monistic or Christological theologies,(67) while Judaism and Islam were portrayed as mystically handicapped by their transcendental theology, because of their refusal to absorb the mediating role of the Christ. As in the case of Scholem's theological argument, let me ponder for a moment upon Jung's and Zaehner's assumption. For him it is a matter of principle that the Christian theology is generative of a more mystical religiosity. However, after all, why should Zaehner and Jung be so sure that the mediative role of the Christ is conducive to unio mystica experiences more than other mediating theologies, like Neoplatonism, or the variety of Kabbalistic emanative

theosophies, or even the transcendental theology that does not impose such a strong mediator between the highest principle and man? Could not be also reasonable to assume, at least in principle, the very inverse argument, namely that by the very act of mediating the Christ, both as a theological concept and as a mystical ideal, is also obstructing the direct and more radical contact between man and God the father? Is it not more reasonable to assume that only by transcending the strong mediator can the mystic soar toward what the mystic would assume as the ultimate source of reality? Why not assume, for example, that the transcendental status of the divine in certain types of theologian also mean, at the same time, the possibility to encounter the divine in a manner that is «purer», or more spiritual than otherwise? In other words, the argument based on a theological conditioning of a certain type of experience is not only judgemental, by often preferring one form of theology over another, as seen from some of the examples above, but can be easily reversed and the inverse view may be formulated as following: if the object of the union in the mystical experience is the Son, why not see it, in comparison to the experiences of the union with the ultimate, as a communion or a more moderate union rather than as an extreme union? It would be more pertinent not to answer these questions in one way or another, because any answer, positive or negative, will in fact foster the adoption of a theological approach as crucial for the definition of the mysticism within a certain religion.

I would like not to deal here with this statement from the point of view of the pertinent material because an essentialistic approach can always marginalize those elements that do not fit into its general approach, by assuming that there were alien influences that have affected the core that is described in an essentialistic manner. Therefore, the very existence of unio mystica types of expressions in Jewish mysticism will be able to refute one of Scholem's main views of Jewish mysticism and, consequently, invalidate some of the general statements of Zaehner and Jung, based as they are upon the statement as to the alleged absence of extreme mystical experiences and concepts.(68) However, the examination of the occurrence of some forms of phrases alone may not suffice in order to fully describe extreme mystical phenomena in a certain religion.

7. A Proposal

Perhaps, the main question is not so much the very existence of a certain expression or even set of expressions that scholars will agree upon its extreme mystical content, but its «cruciality» within a overall structure, and the impact of the notion, or what I propose to call its radiation upon other key notions. It is possible to ask whether the Gestalt-coherence that includes such mystical expressions does not confer greater weigh to their significance. My assumption is that each major religion may include several forms of structure, which may, or may not incorporate mystical components. What seems to me to be problematic in the above phenomenologies is the generic attitude to complex types of religious literature which are conceived as em-

bodying one central type of spirituality. The essentialist approach is characteristic of the above scholars either when they speak about one religion or even when a certain phase in the history of a certain specific religion is dealt with. This is why the absence or the presence of a certain central concept, phrase or experience is so crucial in this type of approach. In lieu of the downward form of scholarly discourse, that starts with theology as the most crucial issue for an experience that is supposed to happen to a mortal human, why not start with what the mystic is doing before he attains a certain experiences, and described it as an upward movement. In the following I would like to auggest an outline for an alternative to the theological orientation of scholars toward the issue of mystical union. Instead of deciding upon the nature of a certain unitive experience according to its theoretical-theological starting-point, I would prefer an emphasis upon the more experiential components of the mystical event. In lieu of emphasizing the nature of the object of the mystical union, as part of a theological discourse, we may direct our attention to the expressions related to the experience itself, namely to the mystical techniques of its attainment, to the claims of efficacy, and to its psychological and physiological aspects. By shifting the focus of the scholarly concern from an overemphasis on the object of the experience to the type of the experience, at the extent we can address this issue on the base of the extant evidence, a decisive change in the meaning of unio mystica may take place. In lieu of dealing with theology in order to establish the content of a certain phrase, we shall better look for expressions related to intensity, vibrancy, or dealing with lasting impact of the experience. Indeed, I would say that such a shift will accept descriptions of experience whose object of union may not the ultimate divinity, as extreme mystical experiences nonetheless. According to such a phenomenology of mystical expressions(69) it will be less important if the Christian mystic describes his or her union with the Christ or with the Father, if the Sufi will relate his experience of the Hidr and not of Allah, if a Jewish mystic will intent to become one with a lower sefirah or even with the Agent Intellect and not with the Infinite. The quality and intensity of the experience as described by the mystic, and less the object of the union may turn more crucial than the theological status of its content.

Thus, for example, the questions that will become crucial will be not whether or not in a certain type of mysticism there are expressions of mystical union, but the question that even when they appear, whether they are at the centre of a specific tradition, or religious structure, or at its margin; or whether the concept of mystical union significantly interacts with other main concepts and practices and qualifies them, and is qualified by such interactions. I propose to emphasize the aspect of coherence and cohesiveness of a certain system that is, or is not, constituted by the mutual radiations between its key notions. Such a check will also be able to better answer the question whether the occurrence of a certain mystical formulae is merely a matter of convention, of sharing a vocabulary en vogue in a certain tradition without any experiential substratum, or

whether even in the case of a repetition of a certain slogan, there are good reasons to believe that it may reflect a deeper experience. So, for example, the fact that Abraham Abulafia does use already existing formula does not detract from the experiential mode of his mysticism, which can be judged by the inspection of his mystical path, his mystical techniques for example, and his descriptions of the mystical experiences themselves.(70)

In principle, we may assume an attitude that is not so far away from the dependence of mystical union on theology. However, the notion of radiation or Gestalt-coherence may involve a more flexible type of relationship between different notions. So, for example, the centrality of the concept of devequt in a certain mystical system will be greater if this kind of experience will be conceived as necessary for the success of another main kind of activity, namely the theurgical activity related to the fulfillment of the commandments. The introduction of devequt as a prerequisite for the mystical intention [Kavvanah] during the performance of the commandments and for their influence, bears evidence for a new stage in the development of Jewish spirituality toward a full fledged mystical phenomenon. Or, to take another example: the probability that certain unitive phrases stand for more than a repetition of a cliche, but may reflect an actual experience, is greater if the same mystic will stress the importance of some related concepts like hishtawwut [equanimity], hitbodedut [mental concentration], Tzerufei 'Otiyyot [combinations of letters].(71)

Therefore, it seems inadequate to decide the place and role of the mystical union only on the bases of the recurrence of extreme mystical expressions alone; it is possible to come somehow closer to the actual significance of extreme expressions for mystical union,(72) not only by examining the simple semantics of the phrase but also by analyzing the more general structure of the text and, if possible, also of the religious behavior of the author or the group to which he belongs, in order to foster a more radical or moderate understanding of a phrase.(73) Or, to formulate the question from a different angle: the theological criterion assumes a strong constructivist approach, that either allows or informs certain forms of experiences by the dint of the articulated abstract theological core that presides the religious phenomena that can, or cannot, occur within its domain. The predictability of the experience solely from the nature of the eidetic component of religion is crucial for an essentialistic stand. However, what type of theology was known to a certain mystic may be a matter of debate. Some of the more learned among them were presumably acquainted with more than one type of theology, some of them quite different. To take one example that may illumine the question: Abraham Abulafia, a thirteenth century ecstatic mystic was well acquainted, in addition to the biblical and rabbinic material, with Maimonides' neoaristotelian theology, with the synthesis between the anthropomorphic and more speculative theology of the early thirteenth-century Hasidei Ashkenaz, the sefirotic system of the Catalan Kabbalists, and with Arabic and scholastic philoso-

phies. He apparently studied them before his first mystical experiences, and his mystical expressions take in consideration a variety of elements from some of these diverse forms of thought. Though this mystic may be considered a rather exceptional case, I believe that to a lesser degree the same is true in many other cases in a multi-layered Jewish culture, which develops as a minority religion in a variety of cultural environments. However, it is possible to envisage also the approach which would emphasize the centrality of the spiritual discipline for the particular nature of experience as flawed by the same tendency to presuppose an essential dependence of the experience on its triggers. In lieu of a theological constructivism, which is problematic given the diversity of theologies active in the cases of some of the mystics, there is also the danger of a technical constructivism.

Nevertheless, there is a certain substantial difference between them: while theology is prone of being exclusive, preventing, according to the methodology of Scholem and Zaehner, extreme forms of mystical experience, the technical constructivism can be envisioned as inclusive: a variety of experiences can be induced by the same mystical technique, - given the diversity of the spiritual physiognomies of the mystics - and in some cases a variety of techniques are available within the same mystical system. On the other side I am not aware of an explicit assumption that there are forms of experience that cannot be attained by the means of a certain technique. I assume that though it is possible to postulate a certain affinity between the nature of the techniques and the content of the experience induced by these techniques, the nexus between them is not always an organic one, and unexpected experiences can be incited by these techniques.(74) In other words, a certain theology is considered, by those scholars I propose to see them as belonging to the Hegelian approach, to be the representative of a certain religion, and at the same time, a closed system, and the nexus between it and the nature of the experience determined by a certain intrinsic logic. However, if we assume a significant affinity between the mystical experiences and the mystical techniques, we may speak about a form of relationship that much more open-ended, and then attempt at offering forms of categorizations that will take in consideration the types of mystical techniques. Such a proposal has, perhaps, its strength, but also its limitations, and the latter are worthwhile to be emphasized.

The forms of mystical experiences that may be correlated to a certain type of theology, even if a general one, are much more numerous than those that may be related to specific mystical techniques, for the simple reason that a scholar will be quite hesitant in reconstructing a mystical technique without solid evidence, but will, at the same time, more easily adventure in creating, as seen above, an affinity between a mystical experience and a theological stand, even if the latter is not mentioned explicitly by the mystic himself. Moreover, there are good reasons to assume that not all mystical experiences are related to mystical techniques.75 This relative absence is more evident in the Christian-Western forms of mysticism than in the Orthodox ones, and

more central in Hindu, Japanese or Muslim forms of mysticism, than in the Christian ones. Jewish mysticism belongs more to the later group than to the earlier one. Therefore, because of the relative irrelevance of techniques to some forms of Christian mysticism, my proposal may be less welcome by a field of research that was dominated by Western Christian categories. However, what may balance this weakness, is the possibility to offer a more comprehensive scheme for global spirituality, to use Ewert's term.

The interplay between the concepts that are conceived as being mystical determines, in my opinion, the nature of a certain mystical literature in general, or of a specific phase of it, as much as the presence or absence of a certain concept. In our case, the centrality of the notion of devequt in Jewish mysticism is more important than the attempt to define it in a certain way, namely that it stands for union or communion. Or the kind of interactions between devequt, theosophy and theurgy, will define better the essence of Kabbalistic mysticism than the analysis of devequt in abstracto. Someone can develop an interesting typology of the meanings of devequt but ignore, at the same time, the radiations of this notion within the major developments within a certain system.

Or, to take another example: the affinity, or affinities, between the nature of mystical techniques and the ideal of mystical union will clarify the status of the ideal in a certain mystical net in a way that may be different from a net where the mystical techniques that show the way to reach such an experience are absent. I would say that what impresses me more when reading the Upanishads or the Yogi treatises, the exercises of St. Ignatius, or the Sufi mystical treatises, is only the existence of fascinating theologies that allow deep mystical transformations, but primarily the existence of detailed and sophisticated treatments of mystical techniques that are supposed to induce these mystical changes. Likewise, it seems that the specific regula of a certain order may bear evidence of its mystical character much more than the more general theology shared by all the Christian orders. It is in the principium individuationis that better clues for the understanding of the specifics of a mystical experiences should be searched.

In other words it would be more reasonable to deduce the mystical nature of a system from its practices, and its general spiritual disciplines rather than reduce mysticism to a spiritual potentiality related to a certain theological belief, or to abstract ideas like theism, pantheism, panentheism.(76) Instead of starting from above, namely with the theological stand, and derive thus the kind of mysticism, I would prefer to start from below, namely with the details of the mystical practices and advance then toward the experiences that are molded by these practices. In my opinion, this approach is preferable also in the case of other areas of Jewish mysticism, like the emergence of Jewish myths from the ritual, and not vice-versa.(77) The prevalent assumption that Gnostic theologoumena were the major catalysts of medieval Kabbalah is but a complementary version of the priority given to the theology over praxis.(78)

In lieu of an essentialistic view that can decide, a priori, the nature of a mystical system from its theology, I would say that the praxis, the spiritual disciplines as described by the mystics, can bear a crucial testimony for the mystical nature of a certain religion. I would say that the notion that one basic theology informs a religion that developed over thousands of years is rather problematic, and if we assume that a Kabbalist was exposed to more than one kind of theology at the same time, it is very difficult to decide which of these theologies conditioned more the mystical experience of a certain individual.

What would be considered crucial for the understanding of the differences or the similarities between Jewish mysticism and any other form of mysticism will be not the very existence of the mystical union experiences or expressions but the more comprehensive structures within which they eventually function. In matters of religion it is hard to assume that concepts function in the way the Leibnizian monads do. The net of basic mystical notions defines the concept that enters it as much as the concept defines the dynamic net itself. Therefore, in lieu of resorting to detailed study of the theologies that were influential in a certain type of mysticism in order to discover whether these theologies allow extreme experiences and expressions, or would permit only moderate ones, as Caird, Scholem and Zaehner would say, why not turn to the inspection of the mystical paths as a major avenue of describing the mystical nature of a certain religion. By investigating the kinds of the mystical paths and correlate them to the mystical ideals, it would be more reasonable to decide whether a certain ideal was cultivated in fact, rather than consisting in a theoretical goal. The detailed description of the mystical path, the question of occurrence of initiation-rites, the intensity of the mystical techniques, altogether may testify as to the extreme nature of the experience more than the kind of theology that presides a certain religion.

Such an approach may involve other methodologies, less oriented toward theology but taking into account much more linguistics and psychology. A religion, or a certain type of mysticism, may included extreme experiences and expressions not only because some phrases are used - though the occurrence of such phrases is also an important fact to be taken into account - but also if scholars are able to detect circumstantial factors than contrive to ensure the occurrence of the extreme experiences. Perhaps the occurrence of oblique indications, like the appearance of techniques to return from an extreme mystical experience or descriptions of bodily symptoms related to a certain experience, are as important, or even more than the theological criteria.

The difference between the theological versus the technical approach implies more than methods to deal with the role of an imponderable experience as part of the more general understanding of a certain form of mysticism. It assumes another dynamics that is formative of religious experience, especially in the case of mysticism: less depending upon the nature of a reigning theology, on authority, on abstract ideas, mysticism will

be conceived as reaching its peak in extreme experiences if it will develop ways of duplicating these ideal experiences and transmitting them as an ideal. I can imagine that a mystic that have undergone extreme mystical experience will be more ready to write about techniques to return to these experiences, that the esoteric nature of his lore will become less important, and that he may attempt to impart his strong formative experience with the other.79 An extreme type of mystical experience may produce a more daring, and more open type of mystical literature.

The different forms of mysticism should, therefore, be examined not only with the eye of a theologian, mainly by explicating their abstract tenets but more eminently by recoursing to semiotic, literary, anthropological and psychological methods of investigation. This means also a certain restructuring of the corpora of mystical literature that will attract the attention of the scholars: so, for example, in lieu of expatiating upon the nature of divine attributes or upon the emanative processes, the scholars of Jewish mysticism should inspect the large literature dealing with the mystical rationales for the commandments or mystical handbooks that are still extant only in manuscripts.(80) The relative neglect of these types of literature in Jewish mystical scholarship is not an extraordinary case: from my modest acquaintance with the scholarly literature on other types of mysticism, it seems that only in the field of the Hindu and Buddhist mysticisms, scholars have directed their attention on the technical as well as on the theological aspects. In the scholarship of mysticism, a concentrated effort upon the study of the practical and the more concrete aspects of mysticism is most needed after the reign of the almost exclusive focus upon the theoretical and theological.(81)

In lieu of an essentialist approach, or an essentialist phenomenology, why not attempt at describing mystical union not as a frozen entity under analysis, but as a cluster of processes taking place between the central concepts and practices that are characteristic of and involved in a mystical phenomenon. Such a «phenomenology of processes», will still take in consideration the key concepts as starting points of the scholarly endeavor of understanding. However, it will regard as vital for the understanding of the nature of a certain mystical literature not simply the enumeration of those major concepts but the different forms of interactions between them.

From the methodological point of view, the more theologically oriented approaches are similar to the simplistic version of history of ideas method, that separate a certain idea or notion from its larger context in order to describe its evolution in history.(82) My proposal above is more consonant to intellectual history, as it attempts to elucidate the importance of the nets created by several concepts, and especially by their changing interplay.

This emphasis on the dynamics of the process, in lieu of the centrality of the static approach to concepts, may seem to be either more historical or more structuralistic than phenomenological. Historical - because the dynamic nets evolve and change in time;

structuralistic - because the meaning is extracted not only by reflecting upon separate entities but upon complex nets, whose morphology is part of the content of the discrete notions. Indeed, this is a much more historically oriented attitude in comparison to the essentialistic vision of Hegel and his later followers. Though they emphasize the changes religions underwent during history, these changes are basically quantic leaps from one essential form to another.(83) Each of the stages of these historical and spiritual processes is conceived of as being an essence in itself. However, another assumption may be that when studying the religious writings we do not witness fixed systems, clear-cut theologies or frozen techniques, whose essence can be easily determined, but living structures and proclivities for moving in a certain direction, or directions, rather than crystallized static entities.

Notes

1) Chaim Wirszubski, Pico della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, London, 1989), pp. 152, 153-160, 192.

2) On Hegel's ambiguous attitude to Judaism see Yirmiyahu Yovel, Dark Riddle, Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Jews, [Schocken, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, 1996] [Hebrew].

3) Jung was very fond of it, and understood it as corroborating his view of «collective unconscious»; Eliade was well-acquainted with though he did not agree to it. I am using the term in a vague way in order to point to the collective religious concepts and enterprises that differ dramatically from the unio mystica experiences, that are the achievements of the individual.

4) See his programmatic statements in At Sundry Times, [London, 1958], pp. 11-12, and Douglas Allen, Hermeneutics in Mircea Eliade's Phenomenology and New Directions, [Mouton Publishers, The Hague, 1978], p. 54 note 58.

5) This is the reason for the marginalization of Judaism in most of Eliade's descriptions of religion, especially the earlier ones, as well as the rather secondary references to Scholem's writings.

6) I would like to mention the brief observation of Leo Baeck, «Jewish Mysticism,» Journal for Jewish Studies, vol. II [1950], p. 7 to the effect that «Jewish Mysticism remained ethical only to him who fulfills God's commandments, so it teaches, is the «unio mystica» granted». Written in 1950, this remark seems to hint at Scholem's denial of unio mystica. This quote escaped the attention of the scholars that have dealt with this issue, [see note 12 below] and unfortunately also my own attention. However, I would say that Baeck's assumption, important as it is because he was the first who took, though implicitly, issue with Scholem's view, does not offer the best explanation for the occurrences of mystical experiences. I am inclined to see in the mystical experiences and expressions, not only a recompensation for a pious way of life, but more predominantly as the result of using some techniques for attaining such experiences, and philosophical vocabulary in order to express them.

7) Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, [Schocken Books, New York,1967], pp. 7-8.

8) See David Biale, Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah and Counter-History, [Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1979], pp. 137, 202-203; Nathan Rotenstreich, Judaism and Jewish Rights, [Hakibutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1959], pp. 119-120 [Hebrew]; Idel, Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah, [SUNY Press, Albany, 1989], pp. 3-4.

9) Major Trends, p. 55.

10) Recently, the concept of transformation undergone by the Heikhalot mystics has been emphasized by scholars, and it may be that, in the context of our proposal to be formulated

later on in this paper, though no adherence between the ascending mystics and the deity is described in this literature, we may nevertheless speak about a mystical union with an extension of God, the angel Metatron. See Peter Schaefer, The Hidden and the Manifest God, [SUNY, Albany, 1992] pp. 165-166; M. Idel, «Enoch is Metatron,» Immanuel, vol. 24/25, (1990), p. 225 note 18, and the study of Elliot R. Wolfson, «Yeridah la-Merkavah: Typology of Ecstasy and Enthronement in Ancient Jewish Mysticism,» in ed. R.A. Herrera, Mystics of the Book, Themes, Topics, and Typologies, [Peter Lang, New York, 1993], pp. 13-44.

11) «Mysticism and Society,» Diogenes, vol. 58, [1967], p. 16. Compare also to Major Trends, p. 11. According to another formulation complete union is denied by Kabbalistic theology: see Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism, [Schocken Books, New York, 1972], pp. 203-204.

12) Ibidem, pp. 203. See also ibidem, 227. I. Tishby has suggested to qualify Scholem's sweeping statements, see his The Wisdom of the Zohar, tr. David Goldstein, [Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989], vol. II, pp. 228-230. However, his views have been rejected openly by Gershom Scholem, Origins of the Kabbalah, tr. A. Arkush, ed., R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, [Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1987], p. 303 n. 206 [a view expressed already in the first version of this work in German as soon as 1962], and following him by R.J.Z. Werblowsky in his review essay on the Hebrew edition of the Tishby's Wisdom of the Zohar in Tarbiz, vol. 34, [1965], pp. 203-204 [Hebrew] and by a public lecture devoted to defending Scholem's stand by Joseph Dan, in 1984. The single scholar who added significantly new material to that brought by Tishby was Ephraim Gottlieb, Studies in Kabbalah Literature, ed. J. Hacker, [Tel Aviv, 1976], pp. 234-238 [Hebrew] and note 14 below. See more recently Idel, Kabbalah: New Perspectives, [Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1988], pp. 59-73; Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah, pp. 1-31. In the last years J. Dan advanced what I regard as a quite fantastic theory that Tishby's view has been accepted by all scholars, a claim contradicted by his very lecture and it is to be hoped that the original version of this speech will be printed sometimes.

13) It is here that the gap of the second stage of religion is conspicuous in Scholem's vision of mysticism.

14) Major Trends, pp. 122-123. Compare also his assertion in Kabbalah, [Keter Publishing House, Jerusalem, 1974], p. 176: «Devequt results in a sense of beatitude and intimate union, yet it does not entirely eliminate the distance between the creature and the Creator, a distinction that most kabbalists like most Hasidim, were careful not to obscure by claiming that there could be a complete unification of the soul and God. In the thought of Isaac of Acre, the concept of devequt takes a semi-contemplative, semi-ecstatic character.» Therefore Scholem not only reacted promptly to Tishby's attempt to qualify his view, but also to Gottlieb's one. See above, note 12. Compare however, Idel, Kabbalah: New Perspectives, pp. 59-73.

15) See also Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism, p. 227.

16) See, however, the critique of Bernard McGinn, The Foundations of Mysticism, Origins to the Fifth Century, [Crossroad, new York, 1991], p. 336.

17) Major Trends, pp. 27-28.

18) See his Kabbalah, [Keter Printing House, Jerusalem, 1972], pp.88-91; 96-105.

19) See Major Trends, pp. 27-28.

20) See Allen, [note 4 above], p. 140, n. 1.

21) On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism, tr. Ralph Manheim, [Schocken Books, New York, 1969], p. 99. Compare also the unnamed item Kabbalah in Encyclopaedia Britanica, vol. 13 [1959] c. 232: «Kabbalism may be described as a reaction of immanence against transcendence and, in fact, the Kabbalists attained a mystic communion which... seems at times, fantastic.»

22) A major question is, after all, what is the source of the mystical theology of the Kabbalists, which served as object of contemplation. Here, again, Scholem presupposes the primate of theology to experience. See also note 56 below.

23) Hindu and Muslim Mysticism, [Schocken Books, New York, 1972], p. 3.

24) As to the originality of this distinction I have some doubts; see E. Caird's views mentioned below, note 45 and especially Max Weber's view Ancient Judaism, trs. H. H. Gerth and D. Martindale, [The Free Press, Illinois, 1952] p. 314: «The prophet never knew himself emanicipated from suffering, be it only from the bondage of sin. There was no room for a unio mystica, not to mention the inner oceanic tranquility of the Buddhistic arhat...Likewise his personal majesty as a ruler precluded all thought of mystic communion with God as a quality of man's relation to him. No true Yahve prophet and no creature at all could even have dared to claim anything of the sort, much less the deification of self... The prophet could never arrive at a permanent inner peace with God. Yahwe's nature precluded it.. There is no reason to assume the apathetic-mystic states of Indian stamp have not also been experienced on Palestinian soil.» See also ibidem, p. 315.

25) For the time being I am unable to locate a reference to Weber and Heiler in Zaehner's discussions of the two major forms of religion.

26) The critiques on Zaehner's stands regarding Hinduism, especially that of N. Smart, should not concern us here, though in principle the same variety of theologies found in Hinduism and Buddhism can be detected also in Jewish mysticism. See Ninian Smart, Worldviews, Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs, [Charles Schreibner's Sons, New York, 1983], pp. 68-71; E. G. Parrinder, «Definitions of Mysticism,» Ex Orbe Religionum, [Leiden, Brill, 1972], vol. II pp. 309-315; Nelson Pike, Mystic Union, An Essay in the Phenomenology of Mysticism, [Cornell University Press, Ithaca, London, 1992], pp. 177-193.

27) See At Sundry Times, [Farber and Farber, London, 1958], pp. 190-194.

28) ibidem, pp. 195-217.

29) Hindu and Muslim Mysticism, pp. 86-109.

30) See his At Sundry Times, p. 171. See also the evaluation of the mystical element in Judaism in A.S. Pringle-Pattison's item on mysticism in the Encyclopedia Britanica, [1926] vol. 19 c. 124: «neither the Greek nor the Jewish mind lent itself ready to mysticism... the Jewish because of its rigid monotheism and its turn toward wordly realism and statutory observance.» Hence, at least in one of the reasons for the difficulty to create mystical literature is theological: «rigid monotheism.»

31) On this point Zaehner is indeed right, since the two sources had indeed contributed to the contemplative and the unitive nomenclature of Kabbalah. However, this fine observation seems to be the insight of Zaehner, and not so much of his reading of Scholem's writings. See below, par. 6. However, on the other hand, the mystical elements in biblical and Rabbinic Judaism are to be taken into account as major formative elements for the Jewish unitive language.

32) Note the ahistorical stand of this scholar: while speaking about medieval Jewish mystics, whose theosophies are so different from the Biblical theologies, he still assumes that the Jews have cultivated the conception of the Bible.

33) As it is well-known it is Scholem who has repeatedly distinguished between union and communion in Jewish texts.

34) See Concordant Discord, [Claredon, Oxford, 1970], pp. 8-9, 23-31, 324, and see also his At Sundry Times, pp. 165-166.

35) Indeed Scholem has overemphasized the Gnostic nature of Jewish mysticism as a corollary to his negation of mystical union.

36) Concordant Discord, pp. 323-324.

37) Zaehner, Mysticism, Sacred and Profane, [Oxford University Press, London, 1961], p. XVII.

38) Hindu and Muslim Mysticism, pp. 2-3.

39) ibidem, p. 2. Immediately afterwards Zaehner adduces, again, Scholem's passage on the Heikhalot non-unitive nature of the ecstatic experience.

40) Mysterium Coniunctionis, tr. R. F. C. Hull, [Bollingen Series, XX, New York, 1963], vol. 14, p. 171.

41) See however ibidem, p. 443, where Jung refers to a passage in the Zohar, III, as a unio mystica.

42) Major Trends, p. 11. 43) Mysterium Coniuctionis, pp. 23, 25, 414, 442.

44) ibidem, p. 170.

45) [Glassgow, 1904] vol. II, p. 214. 46) Caird, ibidem, pp. 188-189. For the dichotomy between the Hebrew and the Greek mind Caird is dependent, at least at some extent, on Matthew Arnold's famous distinction; see Caird's The Evolution of Religion, [New York, 1893] vol. II, pp. 14-15. For an inverse distinction, that between between the 'Oriental man' and the 'Occidental' one, the former described as motor, the latter as sensory, the former more active and expressive, the later more contemplative and inwardly oriented, see Martin Buber, On Judaism, ed. Nahum N. Glazer, (Schocken Books, New York, 1972), pp. 57-60

47) Caird, ibidem, p. 210. See also p. 209. On Plotinus's influence on Jewish mysticism see below paragraph 6.

48) For unitive expressions in Philo see now Bernard McGinn, Foundations of Mysticism, I pp. 39-41.

49) Ibidem, p. 195.

50) See his The Evolution of Religion, vol. II p. 6.

51) Ibidem, pp. 7-12.

52) Ibidem, p. 13.

53) What strikes me most in some of these formulations is not so much the subtle anti-Jewish implications, which anyway inform a significant part of study of religion even after the Second World War, in addition to Jung, like Joseph Campbel, Mircea Eliade or Arnold Toynbee, but the fact that it was Scholem's Major Trends that is invoked - correctly or not is another question - in order to portray an impoverished Judaism.

54) See e. g. Zaehner's awareness of Martin Buber's unitive experience, in his At Sundry Times, pp. 91-92 and Jung's mentioning a Zoharic text as pointing to a mystical union, in Mysterium Coniunctionis, p. 443. These instances notwithstanding, these scholars did not qualify their views on Judaism as described above.

55) For the importance of theological stands for the way Jung analyzed the significance of androgynity see see M. Idel, «Sexual Metaphors and Praxis in the Kabbalah» in The Jewish Family, ed. D. Kraemer, [Oxford University Press, New York, 1989], pp. 223-224.

56) Definitions of Kabbalah from theological points of view, rather than from more experiential one, are dominant in Scholem's school. On this issue see M. Idel, «Defining Kabbalah: The Kabbalah of the Divine Names,» Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, & Typology, ed. R. A. Herrera, [Peter Lang, New York, 1993], pp. 97-99; M. Idel, «The Contribution of Abraham Abulafia's Kabbalah to the Understanding of Jewish Mysticism,» in eds. P. Schaefer - J. Dan, Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, 50 Years After [J.C.B. Mohr, Tuebingen, 1993] pp. 131-133.

57) See M. Idel, «Universalization and Integration: Two Conceptions of Mystical Union in Jewish Mysticism,» in Mystical Union and Monotheistic Faith, An Ecumenical Dialogue, eds. M. Idel-B. McGinn, [MacMillan, New York, 1989], pp. 50-57.

58) It should be emphasized that the meaning of the root DVQ is rather loose in the Biblical and Rabbinic texts and there was no authoritative interpretation of its significance.

59) The Immanence of God in Rabbinic Literature, [London, 1912].

60) Major Trends, pp. 55, 229, 359, 362 and On The Mystical Shape of the Godhead, [Schocken Books, New York, 1991], pp. 148, 149, 152, 182.

61) The Theology of Ancient Judaism, [London- New York, Soncino, 1965], vol. I, pp. 153-155 [Hebrew].

62) Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism, [De Gruyter, New York, 1982].

63) See Idel, Kabbalah: New Perspectives, pp. 38-39.

64) See Sefer ha-Ma`alot, [Berlin, 1894], p. 22.

65) On the Mystical Shape, pp. 256-257. However, Scholem does skip over the devequt passage when discussing Falaquera's version of the Theology of Aristotle.

66) Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah, pp. 4-18; idem, The Mystical Experience, pp. 131-132.

67) In fact only Christianity with its theistic theology was considered by him as ensuring the unio mystica experiences.

68) See our discussions and quotes from the writing of these authors above.

69) Idel, The Mystical Experience, pp. 124-126, 130-134; «Universalization and Integration,» pp. 49-50.

70) See Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah, pp. 10-11.

71) On the issue of the mystical path I hope to elaborate elsewhere: see, meanwhile, Idel, ibidem, pp. 103-134.

72) See e.g. ibidem, pp. 7-11.

73) Compare, Ithamar Gruenwald, «From Talmudic to Zoharic Homiletics,» ed. Joseph Dan, The Age of the Zohar, [Jerusalem, 1989], p. 293 [Hebrew].

74) See Idel, Kabbalah: New Perspectives, pp. 84-85, 88, 110-111 and the evidence from Sefer Sha`arei Tzedeq, who described unexpected mystical experiences after a relatively long period of exercises. Cf. the text translated by Scholem, Major Trends, pp. 150-152.

75) Compare the absence of any discussion of mystical techniques in the most recent monograph on mystical union in Christian mysticism, by Pike, note 26 above.

76) On the criticism of the theory which sees in ideas the origin of myth see Walter Burkert, Homo Necans, The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth, tr. P. Bing, [University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983], pp. 26-29.

77) See M. Idel, «Between Rabbinism and Kabbalism: Gershom Scholem's Phenomenology of Judaism,» Modern Judaism, vol. XI, (1991), pp. 281-296.

78) See also M. Idel, «Some Remarks on Ritual, Mysticism, and Kabbalah in Gerone,» Journal for Jewish Thought and Philosophy, vol. III, [1993], pp. 111-130 and note 22 above.

79) On exit rites see M. Idel, Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic, [SUNY Press, Albany, 1995], pp. 127-133. In this book I have attempted to offer a theory of models, that include the value devequt into larger mystical structures, which combine, in a way reminiscent of Ewert Cousin's description of the axial and pre-axial elements, mysticism and magic. See his Christ of the 21th Century, (Element, Rockport, Mass., 1992), and Idel, Hasidism, p. 225. Compare also ibidem, pp. 107-109, where, following to a certain extent a view of Erich Neumann, I propose not to reduce the emergence of the hasidic mystical configuration to its pantheistic theology, but assume a more mystical opening of its masters, which was combined with theological beliefs.

80) So, for example, most of the more technical Kabbalistic treatises are still in manuscripts and major issues related to experiential aspects were treated only recently. See Idel, Kabbalah: New-Perspectives, pp. 27-29; idem, «Kavvanah and Colors: A Neglected Kabbalistic Responsum,» in eds. M. Idel, D. Dimant, S. Rosenberg, Tribute to Sara: Studies in Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah Presented to Professor Sara O. Heller Wilensky, [Jerusalem, The Magnes Press, 1994], pp. 1-2 [Hebrew]. For the importance of the experiential aspects in Kabbalah see more recently the statements of Yehuda Liebes, [note 83 below] and Elliot R. Wolfson, Through a Speculum that Shines, [Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994].

81) More on this issue see above note 56.

82) Indeed Scholem's inclination to use this method was correctly emphasized by Joseph Dan, in his forword to a collection of Scholem's studies, On The Mystical Shape, pp. 8-9. in some of Dan's own studies, this propensity for history of ideas is indeed quite conspicuous.

83) To a certain extent, also Scholem's vision of the major trends of Jewish mysticism implies quantic leaps. See Yehuda Liebes, «New Directions in the Study of Kabbalah,» Pe`amim, vol. 50, [1992], pp. 150-170 [Hebrew].