

TRADITIONALISM AND RATIONALISM IN JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

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There are two main ways known in history for humans to reach true knowledge: the traditionalistic one, which is that of receiving knowledge as a gift or a revelation from a presumably higher and authoritative source of all things, and the rationalistic one, which is that of obtaining it on the basis of human capacity to apply human reason to what is perceived by humans as being initially outside this reason. In the first case, knowledge is to be broadcasted in a way from the higher realm to the level of human reach, while, in the second one, it is to be approached by a consecutive system of active moves human reason can and, therefore, is to do up to the level the knowledge is presumably disposed. Both these views are based on a presumption that nothing is initially known to humans. Their adherents believe that all knowledge is originally disposed in a sphere which is essentially not human, but that humans nevertheless can somehow get at least some or maybe even all knowledge by applying for this aim certain means they are originally able to use. Though, probably, to adopt these means they are still in need for some help or/and training, and that those means consist, in the first case, in principally nonhuman revelation of knowledge and in humans' capacity to perceive, adopt, and use what is revealed to them, and, in the second case, in human ability to draw in a reasonable way all the necessary conclusions from a set of initial basic assumptions considered by humans as obvious.

What is in common for the traditionalistic and rationalistic attitudes is that they hold that there is just one and universal, in its application, true knowledge which is, however, initially hidden in a way from humans. However, the former believe that the knowledge is or can be revealed by an authority that knows it due to its/her/his/theirs unconceivable for human beings capacities while the latter believe it can be discovered by human reason in a process of scientific research that consists in following specific rules of intellectual activity like those, for instance, that were listed and described by Aristotle in his *Organon*, or Rene Descartes in the *Discourse on the Method*, or Francis Bacon in the *New Organon*.

It follows that no rationalist is concerned with a question of origins (of things); her or his main concern is with things as they *are*, and not so much with how they *came to be*. The questions a rationalist asks are primarily these: “What really is?” and “How is it?”, which form the basic structure for many other important questions, as, for instance: “What does it mean to be real?,” “What is reality?” and so on. What we have here is a concern with what *is* given or what *has been* given but not with the *way it was* given. Rationalists are generally agreed on the fundamental importance of the assumption that what *is* equals to what *was given*, which means that *what is* fully covers for them in a way everything that was and even will or would be. (The rationalist attitude is classically expressed, for example, in the famous Book XI of the *Confession* by St. Augustine, where he argues that the past and the future are just modes of the present state of mind). Having taken this, it is not necessary (and, therefore, not rational) to consider the question “What was given?” at all, since it is regarded just as a reformulation of the question “What is?” This argument is based on the presumption that what was *received is exactly* what was (once) *given* (questions on difference in time and space between what was given and what was received are actually neglected by rationalists), without any part of the given lost or defected in the acts of its transmission and reception. This means that what we have is as a *whole* exactly what was given. However, a question must be asked here, namely: What is whole, and how it can be transmitted? (For rationalists, however, the question is, in fact, substituted for by the question: “What can be derived from what is?” In this way the basic rationalistic question “What *is*?” is smoothly reduced to the question “What *is*

to be gotten?”, and further to the question “What is to be?” As a consequence, *is* in the sequence of questions has been reduced to *is to be* and even to *must be* or *ought to be*, which fact is of great importance for philosophy which thus became a preeminently rationalistic philosophy). However, the question of the whole and its transmission is actually a question on the *relations* between whole and its parts. And this is already not an entirely rationalistic question. In every question on parts a presumption of change is hidden, and this is a traditionalistic presumption (because it contains in itself a concept of chaos or disorder). Both rationalists and traditionalists agree in general that the whole is divisible into parts. The main questions, therefore, which concern both rationalists and traditionalists, though considered by them very differently, can be stated as follows: “What are the relations between the parts that constitute the whole (the world) which is present now?”, “How are the parts disposed in the whole as to make *this* whole (*this* world)?”

As a consequence, rationalists presume that all that can be discovered is *present*. Therefore, all research must be applied to what is present. This means that a genuine rational research must be purified from any kind of historical attitude.

Traditionalism, as it was already said, on the contrary, is concerned with origin, with the source of what we have at the present¹. Consequently, its principal questions can be stated as follows: What do we really have? In what way did come what we have as a present? Do we really have what was sent to us? Is the link between what was sent and what was received broken or not? Here what we have is not considered a priori as the same as what was given. This is why any answers to the questions are to be obtained from historical accounts of how and in what way things became to be what they are.

It can be argued that both these attitudes are making abstractions from the things as they are or were, will, and would be. However, to deal with things actually means to deal with what is *designated* as things according to this or that tradition of designation or naming. In other words, to deal with things actually means to deal with what is in a way *registered* as things, within a system of registration accepted by some circle of decision-makers which are those who are recognized within a more broad circle of decision consumers to be the experts on the questions of what is to be considered as normative and, therefore,

acceptable for such a kind of consummation by them and what is not. Normative is a set of rules accepted by a community as what corresponds to a set of all possible situations distinguished and accepted by the community as to be the world or reality. Any community has a standard image of such a world. To be standard means to be ready to be placed within a system of registration, or, in other words, to be fitted to a fixation by some normative way of articulation and/or notation elaborated and accepted by certain community. So, any standard is a community standard. The means for and the way of transmitting such a standard in time and space is a community tradition of perception of things, and of the way the community deals with what its members perceive as reality.

Any kind of articulation and notation presuppose the existence of a rule or a set of rules by which a relation of mutual correspondence between each item of the registration set corresponds to each item of the situations set (or the set of things or objects). There also must be another rule or a set of rules by which the registration set items correspond to each other within the set, making thus a set of combinations of the items which forms another level of correspondence, and so on. Every level of correspondence is based on (a) previous level(s) of correspondence (which can be considered as a group of such levels) to which a rule of a new way of corresponding is added. To add such a rule to a level of correspondence means to prescribe a meaning to it. Any meaning thus appears as a rule prescribed to a set or group of items. A rule is that prescribed (by some authority) order by which disordered (chaotic) elements become to be organized as items that is as elements that correspond to each other in a determined (by that authority) way. Due to this order, certain series of correspondences appear. Every correspondence appears in a series as related to its origin (that ascends to a decree of the authority) as well as to its position in the series. The mode of origin of a correspondence and its place in the series provides the correspondence with a meaning, or a fixed, standard act of applying the rule. The act itself is fixed (stated) in a formal position of an item within the series. And this is the *meaning* of the item *within the series*. The series exists as far as the meaning does, and *vice versa*.

All such levels form a series as well, in a way similar to the stated above. The difference between all the series is due to the meanings applied to them as the items of a common series.

Then it could be assumed that the mental structure of humans is also a kind of meaning series. Given this, it can also be put into correspondence to any series of items in the way similar to the described above. And for the members of a community of humans the correspondence is the basic one. It forms for them a basic meaning set that consists of a multiplicity of all the meaning series they conceive to be possible.

All the meaning series are the media structures through which all mental structure attitudes (or meaning relations) of the community members toward the situations set items are established making thus the latter to be meaningful to the former and thus accepted by them as existing. In other words, the series are used by the community of decision makers (which are the representatives of a more broad community of meaning consumers) for rendering their incomprehensible perceptions into meaningful phenomena by 1) defining them as a set of observable and thus accountable elements by putting on them a meaningful for the community description, or registration structure of the meaning set making, and 2) combining the elements of the set as to get a whole substance applicable as now a standard form for farther such operations.

Every act of dealing with something is based on an account of something else presented in the form of a notation, while every account, in turn, is based on an accepted beforehand mode of taking into consideration of what the community has agreed upon.

In relation to the agreement made first (or stated in an acceptable way by those whom it concerns as made first), a certain series or number of executions of the agreement can be considered as the tradition of realization of the agreement. And thus every tradition can be considered as an unbroken series or number of executions of the precepts in which a basic agreement, or contract (as, for example, the covenant made between God and the Jews as it is stated and restated again and again in the Bible, by which restatements it becomes developed into a fundamental set of precepts of the Jewish tradition which – in a restatement of the tradition known as *Mishnah* – is expressed with the forms to be stated to make the pattern to be used for dealing with every possible situation – that is for recognizing something perceptible as that which originally presupposes referring to a kind of situations placed within

the prescribed strict set of all possible situations – that every Jew may meet with in the course of her or his life).

In this sense, the text of the Bible presents an account, or a mode of registration, which depicts some situations by describing them. Description is a meaningful registration when an item or a set of items refers either to an accepted meaning form as one of its elements (as, for example, in the statement: “This thing is a rose” which means: “The item is *one* of a multiplicity of items covered by the term ‘rose’”, where we have an object as fixed and registered by referring it to a known beforehand relation structure (*ratio*) of a number of homogeneous essences tacitly regarded as items of a series and as presented by the object in question), or to a stated relation between some essences that are not items of a series, as, for example, in the naming of Jacob as Israel in the Bible [Gen 32:29], in which case the name is made as a reference – probably, there are or could be some other references as well – to a certain *event* the *meaning* and *significance* of which is, in fact, *expounded* by the very act of naming – which itself is an event in which the event it refers to recurs – and by the name itself by which a *tradition of recurrence of the event referred is put, as a meaningful sign, on a creature distinguished by the event and – identically – by the name itself* (the name in this case cannot provide a complete description because it points out not to some one level meaning set but to a multilevel meaning set which cannot be observable in any one level series of items); or in the naming of God by Himself: “I am which I am” [Ex 3:14] which is an *expounding* of the fact that even the name of God is to be presented and accepted as a recurrence of Him: even when you *articulate* His name – by the very act of hearing, speaking or writing it – you meet Him: His name is not to be attached to Him, because it had never been detached or isolated from Him.

Those who articulate some name repeatedly, come – by this very act of repetition – into some tradition. Tradition consists of a recurrence of articulation of a name, and even in a possibility of such a recurrence. A name exists so far there is a possibility to articulate it. On the other hand, every articulation is an articulation of a name. No name, no articulation, and *vice versa*².

In the first case stated above, the description is a naming of things. To describe a thing means to put a name on it and thus to include it in a name

structure of which the name is a representative. In this sense, the Bible, for example, contains in itself a registration of some set of named (in a special way) things, events, situations, relations, and so forth. Registration is a kind of fixation, when what is fixed is placed within a series of items related to each other by a set of relations. Due to this set of relations which is an order put on the items the fixed structure is to be considered as a rational one. Only a rational structure can be *fully* described. That means that it has a finite number of descriptions (names). Therefore, any description that is not complete is not rational. Any complete description refers to a finite number of names related to each other. Consequently, any description which does not provide for what is described by it a complete characteristic (that is a complete set of names the description refers to) is not to be regarded as a rational description. However, it can be a traditional one.

Traditional description is incomplete. It does not refer to a finite and exhaustive number of names that correspond to all the aspects of the object described. Tradition cannot be fully presented in a description, because any description does not have in itself the means for its delivery. In other words, tradition cannot be fully presented *in* a description understood as naming, or reference to a set of names, because tradition cannot be delivered only by name. To be delivered, tradition needs a series of descriptions which has a *ratio* in itself. However, *ratio* is not a name. It follows that name as such is something irrational. But a series of names is not. This is why traditionalism, in order to be valid, needs rationalism. This means that any tradition needs a rational description of it.

There are two ways to provide a complete (and, therefore, rational) description. The first one consists in providing the whole picture that shows every element put on its place; the second one consists in providing a formula or a set of formulas with variables which can provide us with the results for all possible items put under the variables.

When something is fully described it becomes to be accounted as *this* thing. *This* thing is a thing that in every situation can be distinguished from any other thing. What appears to be *this* thing is what is or perceived to be completely fixed in a way. To fix something means to indicate it, or put a sign on it that distinguishes it from anything else. To put a sign on something is

to signify it as *a* thing or as *the* thing. When by putting a sign on something we *refer it to* a series of items we make it to be *a thing* within the series, and when by putting a sign on something we *name it* that is mark it as something unique we make it to be *the thing*. For example, when I make a choice I distinguish *a* thing among a series of somehow similar things, but when I have already chosen a thing I make it to be *the* thing of my choice. However, it is not yet *this* thing, because when I, for example, have chosen an item in a series – which is actually, for instance, the fifth one in the series – I still do not know whether the item I have chosen is the fifth one or, say, the fourth or the sixth one, because to know which item is the fifth one I have previously to know *each* item in its relations to all other items of the series. In other words, to make a choice I have to know *everything* from which and on the basis of which I am choosing. To put it differently, I have to know the whole context of my choosing. And it is this very knowledge of such a context that, being put in relevant signs, constitutes a full description of a thing making it thus to be *this* thing. To know a thing means to have a full description of it, and to have a full description of it means to be sure every time you meet the thing that it is *the same* thing you know. It follows that only *this thing* can be the thing a tradition deals with. (This is what is said by “I am which I am” [Ex 3:14].)

With someone’s *decree* put on it as a sign of her or his possession the thing becomes to be *signified*. When something is signified it becomes fixed, and it is fixed in the way it is signified. To be completely fixed and thus completely described means to be completely signified. To be completely signified means to be completely covered by a sign. In other words, there must be complete correspondence between the signified and the sign applied to it. To put it differently, the sign put on the signified is to be figured exactly as to fit to the figure of the signified.

It follows then that a completely covering sign is to be either a complete picture of the signified or an all-embracing formula that approximates the place occupied by the signified.

If we then abstract the figure of both the sign and the signified substratum it can be considered as a *repeatedly* presented form, first, in the sign and, second, in the substratum (or the other thing around). Thus we get a *recurrence*

of a form. Such a form could be called recurrent form. (Let us notice, for instance, that matter is nothing else as universal recurrent form). In relation to a series structure, recurrent form is to be considered as an item that is met as many times as there are items in the series. What I intend to state here is that the *recurring meeting* of one figure both in the substratum and tightly covering it sign is the essence of *tradition*.

As it was shown above, things are composed as series structures. A series is a number of items disposed in a special way. To dispose items means to put certain distance between each two of them and orient each of them in such a way as none of them could violate an established *status quo*. A *status quo* can be preserved only through a tradition of preservation which structurally fits to the structure of the *status quo*.

To become traditional, disposition must be reproduced again and again. Since every disposition is a *ratio*, we can conclude that tradition is *ratio* reproduced again and again.

Things differ as far as they are distanced from each other and in the way they are oriented towards each other. The distances between things combined with their orientations can be described as their relationship, or *status quo*. The *status quo* is that *end* of things which none of them can transcend. Things come to each other as nigh as that end permits them to do. The end is originally attached to them being thus the *law* of their existence. All *reality* is determined by the law. The relation itself (the law), however, is not a thing. Nevertheless, it is presented in a thing as its condition to be *the* thing. The condition consists in the keeping and reproducing of a set of relations. The keeping is a procedure or process of transition within some limits. The thing is a set of relations fixed and reproduced in a certain way. A set of relations fixed in a way is a *ratio*, while this very *ratio* being reproduced again and again constitutes a tradition. This is why in every case the law is perceived through a thing, while a thing is perceived through the law of recurrence. This is why everything has a *sense*: it is perceived as a recurrence (of a form or structure). Thing and law indicate each other: every appearance of law constitutes a thing, and every appearance of thing constitutes a law. Making sense is reproducing some *ratio* within some limits that form an end and thus form some things as something limited by the end and attached to it in a way.

To deal with a thing means to make contact with it in some way. To contact with a thing means to approach, or to reach the thing, that is to come to the thing as nigh as to get from it something that would be considered as the end of the dealing. On the other hand, what is got here becomes to be a part of the person who gets it and thus makes her or him to be different as comparing to what she or he was before. According to Aristotle, the difference can be substantial or accidental. If it is substantial, the reaching of an end leads to a change in substantial qualities of the person, because what was reached by her or him becomes to be attached in a way to her or him changing thus her or his substance. This is what traditionalism is at pain to avoid.

It should be noted also that to reach an end in dealing, means to put the person who gets it at a position different somehow from that she or he had occupied before. And the difference equals exactly to the way between the beginning and ending points of the deal. The difference is the point of the deal as of a whole. To reveal the point is to catch the sense (*ratio*) of the deal. And this revealing of the sense of a deal is the end of rationalism and beginning of traditionalism.

In traditionalism, we have to deal with a media structure which is substantially different from that we have deal in rationalism. The media structure is here a source of all creatures. One cannot reach her or his end here immediately, but only through her or his appeal to the source. An appeal to the source, as traditional mode of mediation, is a means to complete a deal.

The source is both a means and an end. This is why there is not one sense which is to be reached, as rationalism presuppose, but at least two senses, and the situation of dealing with many senses at once is to be regarded, from a rational point of view, as nonsensical.

To expound tradition is to put it in rational terms. As we could see, terms are rational if they structured as a series, that is, if a strict order of sequence is applied to them. However, to be preserved within a rational structure, tradition must be revealed by this structure. A revelation of a tradition by a rational structure applied to it as a system of ruling signs appears in a proper articulation of the signs.

As an example of such an articulation, one can consider a well-known passage from *Menahot* 29b. The articulation here is a means and form of Revelation.

The passages 27a and 27b of *Menahot* present an allegory in which descriptions of sacrifice meal offerings and letters are corresponded in such a way as to reveal a structure. Due articulation of letters is compared here with due procedure of preparing and delivering the meal offerings.

And then appears a passage (29b) which reveals us the meaning of those prescriptions that precede and follow it.

Rab Judah said in the name of Rab, When Moses ascended on high [to receive the Torah] he found the Holy One, blessed be He, engaged in affixing coronets [wreaths or crowns] to the letters³. Said Moses, "Lord [Master] of the Universe, Who stays Thy hand?" He answered, "There will arise a man, at the end of many generations, Akiba b. Joseph by name, who will expound upon each tittle heaps and heaps of laws". ["Who put upon each tittle...": who will introduce the way of correspondence when to one item of a series correspond heaps of items of other series.] "Lord [Master] of the Universe", said Moses; "permit me to see him". He replied, "Turn thee round". Moses went and sat down behind eight rows [and listened to the discourses upon the law]. Not being able to follow their arguments he was ill at ease, but when they came to a certain subject and the disciples said to the master "Whence do you know it?" and the latter replied "It is a law given unto Moses at Sinai" he was comforted. Thereupon he returned to the Holy One, blessed be He, and said, "Lord [Master] of the Universe, Thou hast such a man and Thou givest the Torah by me!" He replied, "Be silent, for such is My decree". Then said Moses, "Lord [Master] of the Universe, Thou hast shown me his Torah, show me his reward". "Turn thee round", said He; and Moses turned round and saw them weighing out his flesh at the market-stalls⁴. "Lord [Master] of the Universe", cried Moses, "such Torah, and such a reward!" He replied, "Be silent, for such is My decree".

Considering the passage in the context of surrounding passages, we can see that letters here are to be understood as a substratum which as such is something incomplete. And we remember that only a complete form must be considered as rational and thus sensible; therefore, every incomplete form

must be considered as nonsensical, which does not mean, however, that it is necessarily senseless, for being senseless it could not be a matter of tradition: it would be simply impossible. The letters are the forms to which God affixes coronets as the signs designed to reduce these forms to a state of completeness: God *adds* to each letter a design of a coronet that corresponds in a way to the letter. By doing this He adds “heaps and heaps of laws”. That means that by putting new signs He establishes new meanings. However, these new establishments does not make entirely new creatures, they are just *completions* of those that already exist. This is why it is said that “It is a law given unto Moses at Sinai”.

The signs added here have a special function: they designate the rules of articulation which must be applied to the letters in the biblical text in order to complete its conception. Every letter is a combination of 1) its shape, 2) its location among other letters in a series common for them as to make a word, 3) a tittle attached to the letter as an expounding sign, 4) the person (Moses) who presented the construction in its initial form, 5) the person (Akiba b. Josef) who completed it with the coronets, 6) the “eight rows” of those who followed Akiba b. Josef including Rab Judah who “said in the name of Rab” and Rab himself in the name of whom Rab Judah said, and 7) God Himself Who, as the Master, by His own hand (stayed on the signs making them thus to be articulated) and by His own decree puts all the elements together applying them to each other as expounding signs by which procedure each of the elements gets its *real* meaning and significance. All this (a series composed from such seven items) taken together is (as a series) to be conceived as a *revealing* of a law. A law is revealed by completing of its original form with a form of its expounding. Only such a complete form can preserve the tradition of revelation of law.

To be revealed, law must be articulated. In the passage, such an articulation is symbolized by Moses’ observation that God’s hand is stayed on letters affixing coronets to them and making thus a *delay* in processing through the text. This delay is inscribed within the structure of the letters by the very God’s work of affixing coronets to the letters. (*This* delay is not a stop but a transfer to another sphere of sense which presents a way of an expounding of the matter at hand by providing different means for it). Therefore, the structure of the text signifies the very business of God which consists in articulation

of letters by adding to them special signs that complete the text making it to be now fully articulated. And it is this very God's business of articulating that is now – with God's decree – designed to be transmitted by the text in which this articulation is inscribed. Due to such a structure of the text those who read it can now contact God through His business with the affixing presented in the text by the signs of *this* affixation. The contact can be realized through the readers' articulation of the text which intends to reproduce again and again this God's business. By articulating elements in a proper way the reader merges into the very rhythm of God's procession through His movements and delays inscribed into the text.

What we learn from the context of the passage is that the articulation is a kind of sacrifice offering. Like an offering, a traditional text must be delivered to the Holy One in a very special way prescribed by rules of its articulation. Articulation here is symbolically compared to the preparation and delivery of the meal offerings as they are described in *Menaḥot*. What is most important for an offering is that it must be delivered completely; otherwise it will not be accepted. The same is true for the text as well. However, it is not always possible to provide and to get something without dividing it onto parts. And the ceremonies of offerings as well as those of speaking, hearing, and reading are designed such as to make all the necessary partitions without the whole to be lost. And this is a main mystery of tradition.

In the case when what is offered and accepted is a text, the partition means articulation. An articulation is at once offering (giving) and accepting (taking). This is why articulation is symbolized in the passage both by the work of Moses through whom Torah *was given* by God and by the work of Akiba b. Josef through whom it *is to be taken*. (As the passage tells us, Moses cannot himself *take* what was *given* through him and what now Akiba b. Josef is talking about, and maybe *this is why* God has *chosen* Moses and Akiba b. Josef for fulfilling such different but nevertheless complementary functions, and maybe this is why Talmud made them to meet at Akiba b. Josef's classroom where Akiba b. Josef teaches Moses Mosaic teaching, and Moses conceives nothing in this teaching except that it is referred to him and named after him). His work consisted in expounding (offering) all the possible articulations of the text as to reveal all the meanings concealed in it, and his recompense for

the work was “weighing out [partition of] his flesh at the market-stalls”. As we remember, the recompense is also an articulation by which God’s decree is transmitted. (“This is My decree [literally: what *came to* my mind; what *was delivered to* my mind]”). What is the meaning of this decree (of what is delivered) presented in such kind of partition? It is twofold: first, this decree expresses the sense of the tradition: the *matter* for articulation can be anything (even the body of the most distinguished by its knowledge and teaching skills scholar); second, any articulation is an offering, and the right articulation is the right offering, which is symbolized by the life and death of Akiba b. Josef. Life and death of a human being is an articulation of a text made by God (and in this sense it is a revelation given to this very human being, as well as it is a revelation given *through* the life and death, *through* the soul and flesh, *through* the words and deeds of this very human being), and accepted or not accepted by Him (as a delivery that is to be and that necessarily will be offered back to Him by/through the same human being – as the whole of articulation of her or his life and her or his death – to whom He revealed her or his life and her or his death in the world by creating her or him as a living creature and supplying her or him with all of the world He decreed as necessary for her or his life and her or his death and put on her or him as through articulation of His decree). What is given and what is offered by the work of articulation is a life in all its structural constituents and in the order of their delivery.

In Jewish philosophy, from its very beginning, a symbolic articulation, as the means for transmitting of Jewish tradition, was presented as an issue which should be thoroughly investigated. It seems that the first Jewish philosopher who made an attempt to match the rational and traditional means was Philo of Alexandria. It is in Philo’s concept of God’s design as *Logos* presented in his interpretation of the Holy Scripture Jewish traditionalism was for the first time mingled with Greek rationalism⁵. According to his doctrine, God reveals His design for the world as expressed through His *Logos* presented in every particular case as *logos* which is a symbolic relation of some elements. Such a relation when applied to different situations creates different sensual appearances but retains its substantial meaning. That meaning can be understood by humans only due to an appropriate applying to every situation described in the Scripture as a paradigmatic one an allegoric method of interpretation which,

according to Philo, is inscribed in the Scripture and designed such as to reveal the substantial meaning hidden behind the sensual appearances, and which is to be one and the same whether one investigates the nature or the Scripture which both are embodiments of the *Logos*.

The meaning of the Scripture as a traditional (in pair with the nature) account on God's Revelation (*traditional* means here transmitted by the way of some kind of revelation as making something to become open in a place which becomes to be fit to accept the something by the very act of its opening, and not by a simple, non-symbolic transferring of the something to the place; in order something could get to a place, an appropriate symbolism must be added to the something, that which would inscribe that into this place), can be revealed by applying to it a rational procedure of decoding of the symbolic names and their relations which it, according to Philo, consists of. In the process of application of Philo's allegorical method of interpretation to the Scripture the true meaning of all names and their relations is to be revealed, and the whole meaning-structure of the Scripture as an expression of God's design (another expression of it being the structure of the world of things) is to become fully conceivable for humans.

Such a concept of the meaning-structure of the text is inseparable from a certain concept of language. The Philonean concept of language is based on a set of assumptions which can be stated as follows: 1) all that was created by God has one common structure (*Logos*) which is 2) presumed to be logical (rational), or meaningful; 3) since the structure is meaningful, it can be considered as a depositary that contains an information designed for some kind of delivery; 4) delivery is a kind of communication; 5) the means for communication is language (everything that is communicated is communicated through some kind of language); 6) each language is a way of communication, or delivery of meaning; 7) all the meanings (*logoi*) are the appearances of one common meaning structure (*Logos*); 8) all the creatures, as well as their relations, are the elements, or aspects of the structure, and this is why they can be regarded as *logoi*; 9) the meaning of the structure is common for all its elements (*logoi*) and expressed in every its aspect; 10) the meaning is ordinarily hidden from humans since their reason is dominated by their passions which prevent the reason to be used, or applied rightly by them; 11) the meaning can

be revealed to humans (or, in other words, be brought to the zone they can reach or catch it) by the allegorical way of interpretation of the names and their relations that can be found in the Scripture; 12) every name corresponds to an ethical attitude towards a situation, and this correspondence is basic for the meanings revealed by application of the allegorical method; 13) the ethical attitude towards a situation means that everybody who has such a kind of attitude (and Philo believes that everything has, and even more, that all the relations are just different symbolic expressions of a certain set of standard ethic attitudes) puts a meaning on the situation making thus a symbolic impact on it rendering it into some other sort of being; 14) every symbolic impact is a real impact, as far as something really *is* only to the extent it is *meant* to be a something; 15) to reveal the meaning of a situation, therefore, means to realize a) who, under what circumstances, and in what way has taken part in the making of the situation by putting a meaning on it, and then b) abstracting the meaning (*logos*) from the situation (purifying the meaning from everything that is not substantially appropriate to it getting thus what could be called “a *pure* meaning”) and then c) considering (applying) it in (to) the context of the whole meaning-structure (*Logos*) thus making the *Logos*, first, to be conceived, or perceived within the mind of a human, and, second, to be expressed in a concrete appearance of a symbol.

To summarize all this, one can say that, according to Philo’s teaching, *Logos* is to be actually articulated in the *logoi*. However, in many situations in which humans are involved it is not the case, because they are governed by their passions and not by their reason. As a proper way of articulation, Philo regards only sensible articulation which is the right understanding of those symbolic meanings which are presented in the Scripture as names. The allegorical interpretation of the names proposed by Philo is to be understood as his version of how the proper articulation is to be revealed.

Another way to the proper articulation transmitted in Jewish tradition is presented in *The Book of Doctrines and Beliefs* by Saadia Gaon⁶.

According to Saadia, articulation is making of a meaning, by recognizing, or choosing meaningful elements as such. Only those elements exist which are meaningful, and only those are meaningful which are akin to the chooser. Humans by their very nature perceive phenomena in that way in which those

constitute a meaning for them. This is why only meaningful phenomena are perceptible for them, and *vice versa*. Meaning is not added to things rendering them into meaningful articles. Things simply do not exist without meanings; they come to existence by uttering, or articulating of meanings.

According to Saadia, divine knowledge as a whole is transmitted through Revelation. However, to receive the knowledge means to assimilate what is being transmitted. And the assimilation can be due not only to the following the traditional precepts but also to an application of human reason. The results of the two ways of getting to and assimilation of the knowledge must coincide. That means that there must be a *meeting structure* (*a place for meeting*) between reasoning and revelation. The place is to be structurally appropriate both for revelation-deliverance of the knowledge and reason-probing of what is acceptable and what is not for the common sense. The place is human language-thinking. The divine truth is revealed to us being structured within the Holy language as the place in which the divine design is (generally) situated, and we receive this message as far as we adopt the language. On the other hand, our thoughts are valid in so far as they are duly articulated. The articulation is discerning and recognizing of meanings (which are the groups of grammatical- and sense-elements as genetic material for synthesizing of different kinds of the linguistic-and-sense wholes) as the levels of sense imbedded in the multilevel structure of language. Therefore, an articulation is a work of reason. And as far as revealed truth is to be adopted it is to be adopted only through an articulation, and to that extent to which the articulation is the work of reason.

The limits of thought and language are those of articulation. Only that can be perceived which is articulated in the way correspondent to the way of perception. Perception and articulation meet in one. The way one perceives is the way one articulates.

A speech thus is an articulated meaning. Therefore, every tradition is a tradition of articulation. Articulation can be transmitted in a way. Jewish tradition consists in keeping Israel within the boundaries of a prescribed way of sense-articulation that presuppose a possibility for transmitting of this way of articulation through time and space which is of crucial importance for the survival of Jewish people as such.

Therefore, the revealed knowledge is inseparable from the way of its articulation encapsulated in the Scripture together with the traditionally selected exercises for adoption of the skills and habits necessary for adoption of the prescribed way of such an articulation. Such an adoption means assimilation within human usage of language. As far as it is done it becomes to be reasonable, because for Saadia to be reasonable means to be comprehensible, or acceptable for sensible articulation.

Tradition is to bring Jews to a level of comprehension of validity of God's Revelation in which comprehension must be adequately expressed in their words and deeds. However, there is the danger of decline from the tradition which was demonstrated at that time by the movement of the Karaites who rejected the role of Talmud as the standard demonstration of how the sense of the Torah can be realized through the traditional work of approaching of more and more exact articulation of its expressions in sayings of the sages.

According to Saadia, without learning of the due way of articulation Jews would inevitably err in their personal attempts to attain the truth because there are so many ways of articulation and thus of making meanings which appear to be in conflict with each other in an untrained and not attuned to the due way of articulation mind preventing it thus from getting to the sense of the world. There is just one sense, and there are many meanings, and those err who are entangled with meanings being thus kept far away from the sense. This is what philosophy – and Jewish philosophy, in particular, – always tried to prevent.

¹ One of the most evident expressions of this concern is found in the work *Avodat ha-Kodesh*, written in 1531 in Turkey by Meir ben Gabbai [Avodat ha-Kodesh (Lemberg, 1857), I, chs. 21 and 22; also III, chs. 20-24]:

The highest wisdom contains as the foundation of all emanations pouring forth out of the hidden Eden the true fountain from which the Written and the Oral Torah emanate and are impressed [upon the forms of the celestial letters and signatures]. This fountain is never interrupted; it gushes forth in constant production. Were it to be interrupted for even a moment, all creatures would sink back into their non-being; for the gushing forth is the cause of God's great name appearing in its oneness and its glory. On this fountain rests the continued existence of all creatures; it is said of it (Ps. 36:10): "For with Thee is the fountain of life." And this is a life that has no measure and no end, no death or dissolution. Now, since the nature of the original source is also preserved in

what was formed from it, it necessary follows that the Torah, arising out of this source, also never has an interruption within itself. Rather, its fountain always gushes forth, to indicate the source whence it was formed [literally: “hewed out”]. We learn this from the prayer which designates God as The One Who “gives the Torah” [present tense]. For that great voice with which He gave it has not ceased. After He gave us His holy words and caused us to hear them as the very essence of the whole Torah, He did not cease to let us hear its details through His prophet, the trusted one of His house [i. e., Moses]. This is what Onkelos meant when he interpreted the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy 5:19 on the voice of God at the revelation as “a great voice that did not cease speaking”. That great voice sounds forth without interruption; it calls with that eternal duration that is its nature; whatever the prophets and scholars of all generations have taught, proclaimed, and produced, they have received precisely out of that voice which never ceases, in which all regulations, determinations, and decisions are implicitly contained, as well as everything new that may ever be said in any future. In all generations, these men stand in the same relationship to that voice as the trumpet to the mouth of a man who blows into it and brings forth a sound. In that process, there is no production from their own sense and understanding. Instead, they bring out of potentiality into actuality that which they received from that voice when they stood at Sinai. And when the Scriptures say: “All these words God spoke to your congregation, a great voice that does not cease speaking, everything is thus contained in it. . . .Not only did all the prophets receive their prophecy [out of this voice] at Sinai, but also all the sages who arose in every generation. Everyone received that which is his from Sinai, from that continuous voice, and certainly not according to his human understanding and reckoning”. And this is so because the completion of the unity has been entrusted into the hands of man, as the Scriptural verse says (Isa 43:10): “If ye are my witnesses, says the Eternal One, I am God”. All words that can ever be said in a new way have thus been placed into this fundament which is the divine voice; the master of the world desired that they receive actuality through men of this earth who form and fulfill God’s name. That great voice is the gate and the portal for all other voices, and that is the “fence of unity”, and the reference of the verse in the Psalms: “This is the gate of the Lord”, the gate representing the Oral Law which leads to God, Who is the Written Torah, guarded by the Oral Torah. This is the reason for the fences and limitations with which the scholars enclose the Torah. But since the voice is never interrupted and thus fountain always gushes forth, the deliberations of the scholars in the Talmud were necessary; Rabina and Rab Ashi, its redactors, refrained from interrupting that stream. And this is also the path walked by scholars of all generations, and there is no fulfillment of the Torah except on that path. If new teachings are produced daily, this proves that the fountain ever gushes and that the great voice sounds forth without interruption. For that reason, the deliberations upon the Torah may not suffer any interruptions, nor the production of new teachings and laws and incisive discussion. But the authority of the prophets and scholars who know the secret is nothing but the authority of that voice from which they have received all they have produced and taught, which in no way arose out of their own mind and out of their rational investigations (III, ch. 23).

² The question on “hidden” or “secret” ways or modes of articulation which is connected with

the question on “hidden” or “secret” names is, of course, of great interest and importance but it cannot be considered here.

³ These are the *Taggin*, i.e., three small strokes written on top of the letters שׁטטטגג in the form of a crown.

⁴ R. Akiba died a martyr’s death at the hands of the Romans during the Hadrianic persecution. V. Ber. 61b.

⁵ For a more detailed account of Philo’s exposition of the *logical* structure created by God, see Dymereťs R. Komunikatyvno-medyatyvni aspekty vchennia pro Logos u Filona Oleksandrijs’kogo // Liudyna. Svit. Suspil’stvo (Do 175-rycha Filosof’s’kogo fakul’tetu – 2009: Mizhnarodna naukova konferentsia (21–22 kvitnia 2009 roku). Kyiv, 2009. P. I. Pp. 18–20; for an account of relation between religious tradition and logic as presented in the work of Philo, see Dymereťs R. Religious Tradition and Logic: The Case of Jewish Philosophy // Ukrainian Orientalistics: Special Issue on Jewish Studies / Ed. by V. Chernovanenko. Kyiv, 2011. Pp. 55–56.

⁶ Saadia Gaon. The Book of Beliefs and Opinions / Trans. S. Rosenblatt. New Haven, 1948.

Abstract

In this paper, an attempt is made to define characteristic features of philosophical traditionalism and rationalism as well as to analyze some characteristic examples of their paradigmatic appearance in certain pieces of Jewish philosophical thought, in particular, Talmud, Philo of Alexandria, and Saadia Gaon.

The paper shows that the structure of Jewish philosophical thought is built up not on the basis of a derivation concept or that of predication of meanings to the subjects different from those the meanings were abstracted from, but on that of implementation of double-sided articulation of names: on the side of the Creator, in the revealed Scripture and in the world of things which designate and penetrate human existence. On the side of humans, this appears in their appealing to the Creator in their ritual-articulation actions to which each human expression is in a way related. Via such an expression a human gives back to God that part of what she or he was able to take from Him and, therefore, is able to return, designating each time this very ability of him or her by an adequate personal attitude towards Him to Whom she or he thus appeals. This structure is based not on sensible entities which pure rationalists

would lay, as a priori elements, into the basis of a derivation system from which those entities afterwards, by applying methods of abstraction and generalization, can be reduced to the status of ontological entities, but on appealing to the higher source of all the creatures which can reach the source just by precise reconstruction of the structure of God's creation represented by different symbolic articulations-events which revealing is comprehended in works of Jewish philosophy.