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IMAGELESS REFUGE FOR ALL IMAGES: SCHOLEM IN THE WAKE OF PHILOSOPHY

It is not customary to think of Gershom Scholem, the great historian of the Kabbalah, in terms of his philosophy or as a philosopher. If anything, he cast himself as a painstaking philologist whose efforts were devoted to returning to Judaism those mythic energies that its liberal, philosophical apologists of the previous generations had banished. Here is Scholem, outlining his path in 1937:

I was struck by the impoverishment of what people were fond of designating as the philosophy of Judaism. The only three authors I knew—Saadia Ga'on, Maimonides, and Hermann Cohen—annoyed me, in that they saw their primary function as setting up antitheses to myth and pantheism and disproving them. It would have been more beneficial had they attempted to raise them to a higher level within which they would be negated. . . . It is not difficult to prove that myth and pantheism are mistaken. . . . It seemed to me that here [in the Kabbalah] . . . there was a realm of associations that should touch on our most human experiences.¹

Given the last sentence of this quotation, it is easy to cast Scholem's Kabbalah as somehow the "other" of philosophy, as a recuperation of experience and of the irrational, as a rejection of demystification and the reign of reason. And yet we should pay special attention to Scholem's crypto-Hegelianism here, for he is arguing that the philosophers have *not gone far enough*, have not sublated pantheism; that is, they have not negated it while taking it to another level.

In fact, as the same text from 1937 shows, Scholem viewed philology as the most authentic guise philosophy can take:

It may, of course, be that fundamentally history is no more than an illusion. However, without this illusion it is impossible to penetrate through temporal reality to the essence of things in themselves. Through the unique perspective of philological criticism, there has been reflected to contemporary man for the first time, in the neatest possible way, that mystical totality of Truth [des Systems] whose existence disappears specifically because of its being thrust upon historical time.²

Again Scholem's crypto-Hegelianism should be clear. While he argues in a platonic vein that the historical is mere appearance and

inessential, he also indicates that it is precisely the medium of history that allows the truth to appear in the first place. But this appearance is dialectical: by becoming manifest in time, the truth as a totality disappears. So what is needed is a mode of representation that will take time into account while at the same time negating it. This difficult double play can be performed by the discipline of philology, which seems to be the only way to pursue true philosophical interests in the present day.

In the pages that follow, I will argue that one of the reasons Scholem turned to the Kabbalah was to find a solution to philosophical problems. I will maintain that if Scholem wanted to save Judaism from the rationalism of Hermann Cohen, the great neo-Kantian philosopher of Marburg, he wanted to save reason from Cohen as well. For, in spite of my comments about Scholem's crypto-Hegelianism, he was not, strictly speaking, a Hegelian. As Michael Meyer pointed out more than three decades ago, it is hard for a Jew to be a follower of Hegel.³ Hegel's pantheistic monism, his commitment to immanence, conflict mightily with the Jewish belief in the transcendence of God. For that reason, Kant was always more popular than Hegel with German Jews. But what is a Jew to do who wants to go beyond the strict Kantian reduction of experience to the sensible? The answer seems to be to use Kant to go beyond Kant, to come up with a dialectics that refuses synthesis, that always stays just this side of sublation.

We know from Scholem's autobiography that during the second decade of this century he joined his friend Walter Benjamin in an attempt to move beyond the strictures on knowledge placed by the Kantian ban on metaphysics, and beyond the neo-Kantian reduction of the object to logical construction, while still remaining true to the transcendence of the noumenal. This project can be seen most clearly in "The Program of the Coming Philosophy," a text from 1917 in which Scholem quite credibly claims to have had a considerable hand.⁴ This is a notoriously difficult essay, in part because of its sheer torturous density and in part because its project, in its own terms, proved to be untenable.

While Benjamin celebrates Kant's stress on the justification of knowledge, he criticizes Kant's limitation of knowledge to the scientific. He rejects Kant's limitation of experience [*Erfahrung*] to the empirical:

All genuine experience rests upon the pure "epistemological (transcendental) consciousness" if this term is still usable under the condition that it be stripped of everything subjective. The pure transcendental consciousness is different in kind from any empirical consciousness, and the question therefore arises of whether the application of the term "consciousness" is allowable here. . . . The task of the future epistemology is to find for knowledge a sphere of total neutrality in regard to the concepts of both subject and object; in other words, it is to discover *the autonomous, innate sphere of knowledge* in which this concept in no way continues to designate the relation between two metaphysical entities.⁵

Knowledge no longer based on experience (as we shall see, the neo-Kantians, such as Cohen, seemed to have pointed the way to this possibility) would lead to experience with no experienter. Accordingly, the purification of reason would open a space for theology, for metaphysics, for a truly pure transcendental consciousness, for God. Hence philosophy in this new key will supply doctrine—*Lehre*. That is, it will be not merely critical but also dogmatic. It will base itself not on empirical experience but on the rational construction of what truly is and what, accordingly, serves as the condition of possibility for empirical experience:

there is a unity of experience that can by no means be understood as a sum of experiences . . . only in teaching [*Lehre*] does philosophy encounter something absolute, as existence, and in so doing encounter that continuity in the nature of experience.⁶

Doctrine provides a new grounding for our impoverished notion of experience because it allows us to approach the absolute without impinging on its independence, without relativizing it by referring it to our sensations. Thus doctrine points the way to the future of philosophy, provided that it can be justifiably constructed.⁷ This reinscription of metaphysical transcendence within the transcendental turn of Kantian philosophy will bypass the Hegelian temptation towards immanence—toward reduction to a single substance on the one hand and sublation on the other. Instead, a concept “of a certain nonsynthesis of two concepts in another” will become open to thought “since another relation between thesis and antithesis is possible besides synthesis.”⁸

This prescription is clearly a reversion to dogmatism. In order to perform an end run around the dependence of idealism on subjectivity, Benjamin and Scholem want to get rid of subjectivity altogether and install the objectivity of truth in its place. Their attack is not aimed so much at Hegel (although the discussion of synthesis indicates that Hegel is one of their targets) as at Hermann Cohen.

Cohen sought to restore to Kant the purity of logic by recovering the dignity of thought in its a priori constructions and the dignity of science in its basis in mathematical physics.⁹ Cohen seemed to answer the post-Kantian difficulty of the relation between intuition and understanding by reducing intuition to understanding, that is, by concentrating on the way the categories allow construction of the objects of their knowledge.¹⁰ Cohen begins with the categories rather than with sensibility, or the experience of objects. He shows how concepts render themselves concrete as principles by way of the imagination. In the end, we can say that the brilliant peculiarity of Cohen’s solution to the problems of idealism lies in its literal counterintuitiveness. For Cohen, the sensible object is the deductive *result*, not the beginning, of cogni-

tion.¹¹ It should not be assumed that Cohen's work marks the victory of subjectivism: Cohen's commitment to logic and mathematics and his hatred of psychologism all mean that his theory is transcendental, not empirical. To that extent, Scholem and Benjamin are willing to follow him. But Cohen still maintains an opposition, no matter how abstracted by logic, between the subject and the object. Furthermore, by shutting out ontology, Cohen—to the minds of Benjamin and Scholem at least—shuts out metaphysics, the knowledge of what truly is, that is, what they call the "true" sphere of knowledge.

By the same token, though, Benjamin (through the 1920s) and Scholem (for the rest of his life) remained faithful to the transcendence encoded in Cohen's Kantianism. They avoided as best they could all immanence, every threatened collapse into an immediate knowledge of the metaphysical. It is easiest to trace this for Benjamin. In the justly famous and just as famously opaque preface to his great *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin argues again that all truth wants to be doctrine and that all doctrine wants to be expressed in the form of the treatise. In our period of historical abjection, of radical secularization, however, neither doctrine nor treatise is possible.¹² Instead, truth has to be represented indirectly, by means of what Benjamin calls "constellations," the organization of articulated fragments that form a pattern through which the truth can appear.¹³ Truth can be seen as the figure described by the gaps in the immanent. Through representation (and thus sensibility), Benjamin makes the transcendent available for knowledge without reducing it to the stuff of representation and sensibility.

Benjamin has obviously adopted and adapted Cohen's notion of the correlation here. According to Cohen, philosophy's object is not "the existence of things, nor even in their relation to the subject; it is the determination of knowledge as a necessary totality which is its goal."¹⁴ Philosophy maps this totality by way of correlations, that is, the mutual dependence and illumination of concepts. It arranges the categories in their mutual implication. Of course, it is important to remember that Cohen's correlations are logical. They are made of concepts, not things, while Benjamin's constellations are made of the mortified fragments of the world. Benjamin is interested in a transcendent, ontological truth toward which the constellation points.

The same could be said for Scholem, as his "Candid Letter" makes clear. And one could argue that the great and enduring symbol of post-Zoharic Kabbalah, the tree of Sefirot—both the systematic (and hierarchical) arrangement of God's attributes, potencies, and names, and their mutual interaction—is, in fact, a constellation that outlines the life and being of the godhead without limiting it. To understand precisely how the Sefirot do this, and to discover what is at stake in such a

claim, it is best to follow the arc of one of Scholem's essays, "*Shi'ur Komah: The Mystical Shape of the Godhead*."

The problem Scholem addresses here is central to the theology of Judaism: how can one speak of or imagine a transcendent God? The biblical injunction against graven images is nothing less than an assertion of God's absoluteness, His complete difference from His creation. From this rises the problem that so exercised Maimonides, the corporealization of the godhead:

Any discussion of God must . . . use the imagery of the created world because we have no other. Anthropomorphism . . . is as intrinsic to the living spirit of religion as is the feeling that there exists a Divine that far transcends such discourse. The human mind cannot escape this tension.¹⁵

The dialectic, as Scholem goes on to call it, between the recourse of representation to the immanent and the transcendence of what is being represented does not preclude a further problem, that of God's actual form. For it does not necessarily follow that the transcendent God has no image or form. After all, He does appear both visually and orally in theophanies throughout the Bible (pp. 16–18).

Jewish mysticism will make much of both of these aspects, and they will be spiritualized as history goes on. In early mystical texts, the descriptions of God's appearance (based on Ezekiel and the imagery of the Song of Songs) emphasize His physical majesty and go to grotesque lengths to attribute size to all His parts (pp. 23–25). But the dialectic between immanence and transcendence operates even here at the least spiritual stage of mystical speculation. The stress on divine dimensions renders God practically unimaginable:

In reality, all measurements fail, and the strident anthropomorphism is suddenly and paradoxically transformed into its opposite: the spiritual (p. 24).

The sublime blockage produced by the sheer magnitude of the Almighty is relieved through a displacement from quantity to quality, from numbers to a doctrine of the name. The oral aspect of theophany gains precedence with this emphasis on the name, and the form of God is conveyed not by measurements but by esoteric names that resemble Him and body Him forth:

The doctrine of the *Shi'ur Komah* contains both a teaching of the name of the Creator—which is a *configuration* representing God's ungraspable, shapeless existence—and of the sensory shape in which the Creator appeared to Israel as a handsome youth by the Red Sea . . . (p. 27; emphasis added).

In the Jewish mysticism of the first centuries of this era, God has two shapes. One consists of names and is apparently symbolic, while the other is apparently literal and physical. By the later Middle Ages this human shape has come to be read symbolically as a mystical shape (p. 38).

In Judaism there has always been the danger of reading anthropomorphisms literally or reading symbols pantheistically—of taking all of reality as the configuration of the divine and thus eliminating the breach between the immanent and transcendent. The Kabbalah of the Middle Ages overcame this by locating the all-important breach within the divine itself:

Ein-Sof, the Infinite—that is, the concealed Godhead—dwells unknowable in the depth of its own being, without form or shape. It is beyond all cognitive statements and can only be described through negation—indeed as the negation of all negations. . . . By contrast, the Active Divinity has a mystical shape which can be conveyed by images and names (p. 38).

The concealed and the active sides of the godhead are intimately and dialectically bound. The theophany of the active is made possible by the concealed that it bears within (or more properly, beyond) it. God, who turns towards His creation is also turned away from it.

His constant recourse to the notion of a noncognitive and unrepresentable aspect of God leads Scholem to make apparently paradoxical claims, such as the statement that “there is no thoroughly shaped image that can completely detach itself from the formless” (p. 41). This fascination with what Scholem calls “mystical nihilism,” the negative theology of pure transcendence, can be translated back into the language of the idealism that Scholem was—at least according to my argument—attempting to revise. While negation is the mark that transcendence wears when viewed from the point of view of the immanent, the transcendent is actually the ground for the immanent. The *Ein-Sof* is the condition of possibility par excellence for reality. In many ways, Scholem is using Kabbalah to take a Kantian point to its conclusion. If God is necessary for thought, if He is not only a regulative but also a constitutive principle, then we must posit Him, at minimum, as the concealed God of the infinite, as the absolute and receding horizon toward which thought must tend but which thought can never achieve. And it is this infinitude, this negation in all positivity, that reminds us that the other aspects of God, His manifestation as attributes and names, are a *representation*, a configuration that refers back to what is concealed. You cannot have the concealed without the unconcealed, nor vice versa. Were we to rest with the *Ein-Sof*, we would deprive ourselves of all knowledge. And were we to forget the *Ein-Sof*, we would easily mistake the immanent for the transcendent. Like his Kantian forebears, Scholem, through the medium of the Kabbalah, wants to maintain the possibility of knowledge. He wants to go beyond these forebears, as I have indicated above, by extending the borders of experience and, therefore, of knowledge. Hence the mysticism that Scholem presents is no cloud of unknowing. Rather, it balances knowledge

with what cannot be known, and makes the symbolic the figure of the numinous (p. 42). At the same time, it tries to maintain the transcendent without conceptualizing it, through the doctrine that God reveals Himself through His ineffable name. In short, Scholem praises the most rigorous aspects of the Kabbalah that preserved a tension, a dialectic between shape and shapelessness, concealment and revelation, immanence and transcendence. Kabbalah thus “grasped the imagelessness which, as a great modern thinker has put it, is the refuge of all images” (p. 55).

That great modern thinker is, of course, Benjamin, and the quotation is taken from a lovely aphorism, “Too Near,” first published in 1929. In it, Benjamin suggests the nice paradox that true closeness reveals the absoluteness or the distance of the other. This infinite proximity lies beyond both representation and possession while serving as their ground, their condition of possibility. Scholem is attracted to Benjamin’s use here of the negative, which he takes as the sign of the transcendent base of all immanence.¹⁶

Central to Scholem’s depiction of the Kabbalists, therefore, is that “certain nonsynthesis” that Benjamin referred to in his “Program.” Scholem insists on the Kabbalah’s use of negation. He sees negation, which is made a permanent principle by the *Ein-Sof*, grounding all positivity. He shows that at their most rigorous, the Kabbalists—and here Moshe Cordovero comes in for particular praise¹⁷—will not allow any sublation, any subsuming of the parts, any collapse of the world into God or God into the world. The Kabbalah seems to promise a balance that Kant claimed to be impossible and to which Benjamin in his “Program” aspired, but could not achieve. The Kabbalah jealously guards divine transcendence while opening the possibility of the knowledge of God. Kabbalah achieves this through the configuration of the Sefirotic tree, a constellation that tells us of God’s activity, which it also studiously negates through its constant awareness of the unassailable distance of the concealed, imageless, and unimaginable God.

I am, therefore, suggesting that Scholem attempts to go beyond the firm Kantian demarcation between metaphysics and experience through recourse to a dialectic that holds firmly to the negative moment and thus slips by the pantheistic trap that catches Hegel and, as Scholem freely admits, so many Kabbalists. It is this dialectical attention to negation that Scholem describes “as the narrow boundary between religion and nihilism.”¹⁸ Of course, for Scholem, religion and nihilism—or rather, what he means by *nihilism*—are not that far apart. In his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* Scholem argues that religion marks the shattering of man’s mythic and narcissistic identification with the cosmos:

Religion's supreme function is to destroy the dream-harmony of Man, Universe and God, to isolate man from the other elements of the dream stage of his mythical and primitive consciousness. For in its classical form, religion signifies the creation of a vast abyss, conceived as absolute, between God, the infinite and transcendental Being, and Man, the finite Creature.¹⁹

Religion entails awareness of the abyss, of the absolute otherness of God, that appears to the finite creature in the guise of negation, as nothing, as the abyss. Mysticism, according to Scholem's account, is the attempt to bridge the gap between the human and divine without ever forgetting that the gap, the mark of the negative, remains.²⁰ Mysticism is the self-awareness of myth, its move to the next level.

Thus the *nihil*, the mystical nothing of pure transcendence, predominates in all Scholem's discussions of what he takes to be authentic or living religion. Scholem deployed his notion of the nothingness of God's revelation in his polemic against Schoeps in the early 1930s, then in his debate with Benjamin over Kafka. He subsequently repeated it in several of his Eranos lectures, as well as in articles such as "Ten Unhistorical Aphorisms on the Kabbalah." Scholem adopts the Kabbalistic view according to which the revelation God vouchsafes in the Torah is not exoteric, is not law as such, but esoteric. God reveals Himself. Because He is transcendent, though, He cannot do this directly or immediately. The word of God is not communication of a single meaning but the opening up of the possibility of meaning.²¹ This becomes clear in his "Open Letter to the Author of *Judaism in Our Time*," in which Scholem argues against Schoeps's Barthian attempt to effect an immediate return to the Bible, to the revealed word:

Revelation, and this old deep truth is given short shrift in your writing. . . . Revelation with all its uniqueness is still a *medium*. It is the meaningful as an absolute, as meaning-giving but meaningless in itself, that articulates itself in relationship to time, in Tradition. The word of God in its absolute symbolic fullness would be destructive if it could also be meaningful in an immediate (undialectical) way. Nothing . . . requires concretization when applied to historical time more than . . . the word of revelation. Indeed, [the word of revelation] whose absoluteness causes its endless reflections in the contingencies of fulfillment cannot be fulfilled. The voice that we perceive, is the medium in which we live, and where it is absent, it is hollow.²²

The complete transcendence of the Lord is revealed in the absoluteness of the word, which needs the mediation of tradition in order to be understood, let alone fulfilled. If it were pinned down in the immanence of the world to one single meaning, it would be relativized and, as such, made contingent on other meanings. It would no longer be absolute. The word needs history in order to become concrete, but each concretion, each ascription of meaning is undone by its own limitation in the face of the infinity of the divine.

In order to put a hedge around transcendence, then, Scholem empties revelation of all meaning and reduces it to its condition of possibility, the moment that is necessary and that precedes all interpretation. He explained it this way in a letter to Benjamin in 1934:

You ask what I mean by the “nothingness of revelation.” I understand by it a state in which revelation appears to be without meaning, in which it still asserts itself, in which it has *validity* but *no significance*. A state in which the wealth of meaning is lost and what is in the process of appearing (for revelation is such a process) still does not disappear, even though it is reduced to the zero point of its own content, so to speak.²³

To put it in other terms (ones that Scholem might not accept), the nothingness of revelation is its pure form: revelation without specific content, but in which all content is still possible. Or, as Scholem phrases it several years later, “Itself without meaning, it [Revelation] is the essence of interpretability.”²⁴ If there is to be interpretation, then there must be some ambiguity that needs to be interpreted, some room in the text for dispute. Scholem locates that room, not in the history to which the word is submitted, as a Gadamer might, but in the word itself, in its original negativity. He does not posit a language that grows emptier over time: he posits one that begins (to our eyes, at least) as empty.

The stakes of Scholem’s position become clearer when one looks at the debate he held with Benjamin over Kafka. In his great essay on that writer, Benjamin argued that Kafka saw modernity as a form of prehistory whose secularism does not mark the victory of enlightenment over myth, but a regression to a point that precedes even the most primitive animism. Revelation for Kafka is destitute, a distant rumor about a lost law that can no longer render any meaning. Scholem disputed this reading completely: “Kafka’s world is the world of revelation, but of revelation seen of course from that perspective in which it is returned to its own nothingness.”²⁵ According to Scholem, Kafka understood revelation completely—he did not see its meaninglessness as a sign of historical abjection, but as the very condition of possibility of interpretation in the first place. Kafka does not describe the plight of *modern* man, but of the interpreter *throughout history*. It is not that the revealed law has lost the fullness of its meaning. It never had it in the first place.

Scholem’s notion of revelation as interpretability, as the degree zero of meaning, militates strongly against the kind of nostalgia that Benjamin proposes. It also makes a claim against the legalism of the orthodoxy, the ethical prophetism of liberal Jews (such as Cohen and Baeck), and the moody stress on personal experience that one finds in Buber. It grants legitimacy to all periods:

If the conception of revelation as absolute and meaning-giving but in itself meaningless is correct, then it must also be true that revelation will come to un-

fold its infinite meaning (which cannot be confined to the unique event of revelation) only in its constant relationship to history, the arena in which tradition unfolds.²⁶

This notion does more than extend a hand to some of the finer forms of heterodoxy, those that grow directly from tendencies within the normative tradition(s), that Scholem wants to include within an extended vision of Judaism. It also grants a philosophical rigor to the category of revelation by preserving transcendence as its very ground without sacrificing that transcendence to any single moment of interpretation.

By this point, the outline of my argument should be clear. Although Scholem was a connoisseur of heresy, he was not that much of a heretic himself, in spite of his fascination with more radical forms of antinomianism. While his conception of revelation renders the status of the law somewhat enigmatic, he does not fall prey to the most seductive of temptations, to what Steven Schwarzschild called the lure of immanence, of pantheism.²⁷ Scholem guards against this by constant reference to the transcendence of the concealed God, to what he calls religious nihilism. In a similar way, he appears to be a heretical Kantian because he wants to step beyond Kant's strictures against metaphysical experience and knowledge, but he does not, for a moment, sin against Kant's dualism and its commitment to the transcendence of the noumenal. Because he wants knowledge *and* transcendence, representation *and* the nonrepresentable, Scholem has recourse to an ontologizing version of Cohen's correlation, which never claims to be a direct representation of the godhead. This same tension runs through all his thought and can be rightfully called a "nonsynthesizing synthesis" or rather a dialectic that resists sublation. In the hands of another of Benjamin's friends, the philosopher T. W. Adorno, this same insistence on transcendence and negation comes to be called "negative dialectics."²⁸

I would like to suggest, then, that Kabbalah was so fruitful for Scholem because it solved two sets of problems. On the one hand, it presented a kind of Judaism that used myth and speculation to answer Jewish questions and Jewish needs without falling into either complete superstition or complete abstraction. It promised a Judaism that was not completely consumed by the minutia of the law, nor etherealized into universalist ethics, nor lost in the emotionalism of immediate experience. At the same time, Kabbalah spoke to the philosophical interests that Scholem pursued during the First World War. It remained true to the rigors of Kantian dualism while trying to make good on Kant's claims for the constitutive status of the ideas of God, freedom, and the immortality of the soul. In the end, if his readers have missed Scholem's *philosophical* point, it is probably because

Scholem's greatest works were written after his emigration, after he had given up on his German identity, his German past, and the intellectual legacy that it represented.

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NOTES

1. Gershom Scholem, "A Candid Letter About My True Intentions In Studying the Kabbalah (1937)," *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time & Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Philadelphia, 1997), pp. 3–5. See also Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1946), p. 38.

2. Scholem, "Candid Letter," p.5.

3. Michael Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew* (Detroit, 1967).

4. Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: History of a Friendship*, trans Harry Zohn (New York, 1983), pp. 58–60.

5. Walter Benjamin, "On the Program of the Coming Philosophy," *Selected Writings*, ed Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1996), Vol. 1, p. 104 (emphasis added).

6. Benjamin, p. 109.

7. Benjamin, p. 110.

8. Benjamin, p. 106.

9. A. Philonenko, *LEcole de Marbourg* (Paris, 1989), pp. 8 and 28–29; Andrea Poma, *The Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen*, trans. John Denton (Albany, 1997), pp. 19, 64, 84–85, and 93–99; Steven S. Schwarzschild, "The Title of Hermann Cohen's 'Religion of Reason' out of the Sources of Judaism" in Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, trans. Simon Kaplan, 2d ed. (Atlanta, 1995), pp. 9–10.

10. Frederick Beiser, "Introduction," *Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (New York, 1996), pp. 10–19.

11. Philonenko, p. 33.

12. For Benjamin's view of modernity as abjection, see Gillian Rose, "Walter Benjamin, Out of the Sources of Judaism," *Judaism & Modernity* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 175–210.

13. Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London, 1977), pp. 26–56.

14. Quoted in Philonenko, pp. 28–29.

15. Scholem, "*Shi'ur Komah: The Mystical Shape of the Godhead*," *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts of the Kabbalah*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York, 1991), p. 15. All further references to this text will be incorporated parenthetically in the essay.

16. Benjamin, "Short Shadows (1)," *Selected Works*, ed. Michael Jennings (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), p. 269.

17. David Biale, "Gershom Scholem's Ten Unhistorical Aphorisms on Kabbalah: Text and Commentary," *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1985), pp. 78–79.

18. Scholem, "Candid Letter," p. 3.
19. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 7.
20. Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 8 and 11.
21. This point—the openness of revelation—is important for Scholem because it accounts for the particular shape of Jewish heresy, such as Frankism and Sabbatianism, and also allows for what he takes to be the dialectics of Jewish history, particularly the antinomianism of the modern Reform movement.
22. Scholem, "Offener Brief an den Verfasser der Schrift *Juedischer Glaube in dieser Zeit*," *Bayerische Israelitische Gemeindezeitung*, Vol. 8, No. 16 (1932), p. 243.
23. *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem*, trans. Gary Smith and Andre Lefevere (Cambridge, 1992), p. 142.
24. Scholem, "Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories," *The Messianic Idea In Judaism* (New York, 1971), p. 295.
25. *Correspondence*, p. 126.
26. Scholem, "Revelation and Tradition," p. 296.
27. Steven Schwarzschild, "The Lure of Immanence," *The Pursuit of the Ideal*, ed. Menachem Kellner (Albany, 1990), pp.61–82.
28. T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York, 1973).