

### MAN AND REASON IN THE THOUGHT OF HALEVI AND PASCAL

by THÉODORE DREYFUS

A comparison between the thought of the 12th century Spanish Jewish philosopher, Judah Halevi, and that of Blaise Pascal, the 17th century French mathematician and religious philosopher, is desirable from at least two points of view:

1) Formal: Both thinkers avowedly dealt in apologetics as their admitted purpose. The full title of Halevi's best-known work, the *Kuzari*, is "*al-Khazari — A Book of Replies to the Arguments against a Despised Religion, and Arguments in its Defense.*"<sup>1</sup> This already alludes to the two main components of apologetics: a response to attacks, and proofs or arguments in defense. Pascal had planned a work to have been entitled *Apology for Christianity*; his *Pensées*,<sup>2</sup> which were published from his *nachlass*, consist essentially of fragments of that same great book.

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Translation by Jonathan Chipman.

1. Quoted from the title-page of the excellent contemporary Hebrew translation of the *Kuzari* by the late Yehuda Even-Shmuel, Tel Aviv, 1973. The English quotations below are taken from the translation of H. Hirschfeld, New York, Schocken, 1964.

2. All quotations from *Pensées* are accompanied by two numbers: the first refers to the Brunschvicg edition, from which the English translation was taken; the second, in parentheses, refers to the Lafuma edition. English taken from the translation by W.F. Trotter, New York, E.P. Dutton, 1968. (In cases of discrepancy between this edition and Brunschvicg, the number within the latter is indicated within square brackets.)

2) Contents: In both cases, there is an explicit wish to confront philosophy from the point of view of the believer, in an attempt to clarify the status of reason. We do not intend to discuss here the literary aspects of the *Kuzari* or of the *Pensées*, but to focus upon the status of reason in both thinkers. Each of these two approaches is well known in itself. If there is anything new here, it is in the act of comparison, which enables us to bring out the similarities and differences in the outlooks of Halevi and Pascal, and to possibly draw certain general conclusions about philosophy today.

Following the Greek model, Halevi distinguishes among inert, vegetative, animal and human (speaking) forms of existence, as follows: "Intellect is man's birthright above all living beings. This leads to the development of his faculties, his home, his country, from which arise administrative and regulative laws . . . Which is the next highest degree? . . . I only mean that degree which separates those who occupy it from the physical point of view . . . This is, indeed, the divine or seraphic degree, if it exists at all. It belongs to the province of the divine influence, but not to that of the intellectual, human or natural world."<sup>3</sup> Thus, according to Halevi, there is an additional level, above that of ordinary man, identified with that of the prophet.<sup>4</sup> There is a qualitative difference between the prophet and the ordinary human-being, analogous to that between different categories, such as that between man and animal, and not merely a distinction of quantity. The following passage<sup>5</sup> complements and explains the previous one: "For Adam . . . was granted by the Creator . . . the divine power (beyond intellect) of such high rank, that it brought him into connection with beings divine and spiritual, and enabled him, with slight reflection, to comprehend the great truths without instruction."<sup>6</sup> What is striking here is the unqualified assertion that there is a quality above the intellect which enables one who possesses it to cleave to God and to spiritual beings, and to perceive truth without study or discursive examination, in a primary stage of thought. This quality is explicitly a divine, supernatural quality; that is, it bears no relation to the ordinary person and to his human characteristics. As we have seen above, there are divine powers existing above the intellectual powers, which may be reached — or at least approached — in two different ways. One is sudden, a flash, analogous to light: like it, it enlightens and shines, and like it, is extremely fine, penetrating to the innermost depths of a human being, "as a smooth mirror receives the light."<sup>7</sup> It should be emphasized here that the mirror must be fine — that is, despite the sudden nature of this path, a prior effort is re-

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3. *Kuzari* I: 35, 37, 39, 42.

4. *Ibid.*, 43.

5. *Ibid.*, 95.

6. On the "divine principle" see also: I. Goldziher, "Le Amr ilahi chez Judah Halevi," *Revue des Études Juives* 50 (1905), pp. 32-41, and in J. Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism*, Philadelphia, 1964, p. 132 and p. 428, n. 171.

7. *Kuzari* III: 17, p. 152.

quired on the part of the individual to refine and purify himself in order that he be ready to receive the divine light. The second path, by contrast, is gradual; the person or nation ascends slowly, “by degrees”;<sup>8</sup> the commandments in general are tools which facilitate this ascent, while certain of them, in which the concept of the covenant between God and His people is renewed — such as the Sabbath and circumcision — have the specific purpose of bringing man closer to the divine element. In the one case, the divine element may be interpreted as a kind of intuition,<sup>9</sup> “the beginning of thought, without study or reflection,” which bypasses the discursive process. At the same time, that which we discuss here is not an “inborn trait” which either exists or does not in a given person without his having any control over the matter; it is always potentially present, and everyone is able to bring about its realization in accordance with his own ability and will. The existence *in potentio* of this divine matter among the masses of the people of Israel is rooted in the creation of Adam<sup>10</sup>; from him, it passed down through a chain of individuals, including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all of his sons, culminating in Mt. Sinai.<sup>11</sup> Thus, every Jew is born as a son of Jacob, in the image of his forefather, and may be transformed — if he so wishes it — into a son of Israel. Thus, the “son of Jacob” is seen as the model for the ordinary human being, while the “son of Israel” possesses a super-intellective quality, if not a divine-intellective one, as we shall see below.

In several respects, “the heart” in Pascal is parallel to the “divine quality” or “divine matter” in Halevi. We shall now attempt to understand the exact meaning of this term in *Pensées*. A key sentence on this point is the famous statement, “The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know.” Pascal continues in the same passage: “We feel it in a thousand things. I say that the heart naturally loves the Universal Being, and also itself naturally, according as it gives itself to them; and it hardens itself against one or the other at its will. You [the dissolute man] have rejected the one [love of God] and kept the other [love of self]. Is it by reason that you love yourself?”<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that the term “heart” in Pascal is not a synonym for the emotions; Pascal recoils from emotion as such, as there are no certain criterion by which we may distinguish between emotion and imagination. According to him, the heart is the innermost part of our being; it is not only the organ of feeling and of the moral life, but a partner in the process of awareness; it is itself the basis of all intellectual activities: it is, in the most

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8. *Ibid.* II: 50, p. 114.

9. See below for the role of the “heart” in Pascal’s approach; there is no doubt that the heart also has a definitely intuitive character, as stressed by the commentators. See below, n. 13.

10. *Kuzari* I: 95.

11. On the question of Halevi’s supposed racism, see Even-Shmuel, *op. cit.* Introduction, p. 30, n. 21.

12. *Pensées* 277 (224). Material in brackets added by this author.

literal sense, a kind of intellectual instinct.<sup>13</sup> That is to say, the heart is a natural, intellectual faculty of a direct, spontaneous, intuitive character. The definition of the heart as a “kind of instinct for the truth”<sup>14</sup> seems quite close to us to “the beginning of thought” of Halevi mentioned above. We also ought to mention the pertinent comment of J. Steinmann: “The heart is the ability to perceive, at one glance, the primary principles upon which thought is based, the ability to brake the endless chain of doubts and inferences . . .”<sup>15</sup> Finally, J. Chevalier states on this same question: “The heart is unmediated perception — by the consciousness and emotions together — of (basic) principles.”<sup>16</sup> In the same context, another point of similarity between Halevi and Pascal appears in the two thinkers almost word for word: while the Jewish thinker, relying upon Psalm 34:9, “Taste and see that the Lord is good . . .” speaks of prophetic vision which, from the point of view of the conviction which it brings in its wake is infinitely superior to conviction based upon speculation,<sup>17</sup> the Christian thinker uses the expression “seen not by the eye, but by the mind.”<sup>18</sup>

Notwithstanding all the points of similarity between them — both those we have mentioned as well as others we shall discuss below — one must note the dissimilarity between the two outlooks. While for Halevi there are two separate domains — intellectual perception and spiritual vision — Pascal states that reason relies upon the heart, and that the heart, as it were, provides reason with all the principles that enable it to act in all fields. Thus, the heart is not only a partner to the perceptive process, but is the very basis upon which the entire process is built. In other words, Pascal develops a theory of knowledge whose source transcends reason: the heart determines the very axioms of wisdom upon which reason draws. This being so, reason is not independent in the way that it is, for example, in the thought of Descartes.

The following quotations may serve to clarify the two positions. First, a clear and unequivocal sentence from Halevi: “The meaning of *Elohim* (God) can be grasped by way of speculation, because a Guide and Manager of the world is a postulate of reason . . . The meaning of *Adonai* (The Lord), however, cannot be grasped by speculation, but only by that intuition and prophetic vision which separates man, so to speak, from his kind, and brings him in contact with angelic beings, imbuing him with a ‘new spirit,’ as it is written, ‘Thou shalt be turned into another man’ (I Sam. 10:6) . . .”<sup>19</sup> There are two distinct stages here: one en-

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13. See Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. M. Autrand, Paris, 1966, p. 103.

14. See J. Mesnard, *Pascal*, Paris, 1962, p. 141.

15. J. Steinmann, *Pascal*, Paris, 1954, p. 310.

16. J. Chevalier, *Pascal*, Paris, 1922, p. 307.

17. *Kuzari* IV: 17, p. 224.

18. *Pensées* 792 [793] (585).

19. *Kuzari* IV: 15, p. 222.

tirely human, and the other characterized by attachment to the angelic order, by separation — as far as is possible — from human nature. Pascal's stance is radically different from that of Halevi, and no less clear: "We know truth, not only by the reason, but also by the heart, and it is in this last way that we know first principles; and reason, which has no part in it, tries in vain to impugn them. For the knowledge of first principles, as space, time, motion, number, is as sure as any of those which we get from reasoning. And reason must trust these intuitions of the heart, and must base them on every argument."<sup>20</sup> In other words, according to Pascal, reasoning without heart lacks its very basis, while in Halevi the ascent from reason to spiritual vision is seen as an ascent from one level to another, the former being possible, if not desirable, even without the latter.

At the same time, without contradicting what has been said until now, one may point to a common denominator of both thinkers: namely, that both of them ascribe to reason, to the intellectual qualities, a limited status only. Halevi's theory of graduated stages speaks for itself: it is clear that a person must transcend the level of the intellect insofar as he wishes to attain perfection and to realize his full potential. Pascal, on the other hand, states: "Two extremes: to exclude reason, to admit reason only."<sup>21</sup> Or, in another pungent formulation: "The last proceeding of reason is to recognise that there is an infinity of things which are beyond it. It is but feeble if it does not see so far as to know this. But if natural things are beyond it, what will be said of supernatural?"<sup>22</sup> From this viewpoint, that of the limited status of reason, there is a rather interesting parallel between the position of Pascal as compared with that of Descartes, and that of Halevi as compared with Maimonides, despite the fact that Halevi preceded Maimonides in time. It must be said immediately that neither Halevi nor Pascal were opposed to philosophy as such, but that each of them wished to control it and not allow reason unlimited rule. What we speak of here is, in fact, one of the most important, and perhaps the most important, conflict within Western culture: that between, on the one hand, exclusive reliance upon the *ratio*, which seems to us to be of Greek origin; and, on the other, an understanding of man as a totality, in which one gives consideration to his complex nature without giving preference to one component over the other. We shall return to this problem towards the end. Whatever the case may be, these two alternatives — a fundamentally Jewish approach or a fundamentally Greek one — must be present to us when we attempt to understand the words of Pascal and of Halevi:<sup>23</sup>

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20. *Pensées* 282 (214).

21. *Ibid.*, 253 (368).

22. *Ibid.*, 267 (373).

23. See R.J.Z. Werblowsky, "Judaism, or the Religion of Israel," in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Living Faiths*, Boston, 1959, p. 40, in which he points out the closeness of Pascal and Halevi in their common distinction between the God of Aristotle and the God of Abraham.

I believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, who led the children of Israel out of Egypt . . . who fed them in the desert and gave them the land . . . and sent Moses with His law.<sup>24</sup>

God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob — not the god of the philosophers and the learned scholars!<sup>25</sup>

In order to grasp the full weight and significance of the parallel between these two thinkers, we must add that in the continuation of his argument here, the Kuzari expresses his surprise that the rabbi did not use the formula which had been used by both the Christian and the Muslim, who were apparently influenced by their philosophical contemporaries and, unlike Pascal, did not note the cardinal significance of the distinction drawn by Halevi. The Kuzari states: "Shouldst thou, o Jew, not have said that thou believest in the Creator of the world, its Governor and Guide, and in Him who created and keeps thee?" We should take note of the rabbi's reply, which is remarkably fitting to Pascal's approach: "That which thou dost express is religion based on speculation and system." So that we make no mistake Halevi continues in the same sentence, "Now ask the philosophers . . ."<sup>26</sup> Halevi thus indicates that he chose this particular formula in order to draw a clear distinction between "religion based upon speculation" and religion based upon a belief in God who is the partner in history of the Jewish people. Similarly, Pascal argues that he does not believe in the religion of the philosophers and the learned men, who are influenced exclusively by reason.

We must now define more exactly the meaning of the expression, "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" in Pascal. First, we must remember that *Pensées* has an explicit apologetic purpose: as such, the belief in the Bible as the most dependable source runs through it like a scarlet thread. It is known that Pascal spent a great deal of time reading and studying the Bible, at times making use of a French translation of one of the Jewish commentaries.<sup>27</sup> Of the Bible, he writes: "The Jewish religion must be differently regarded in the tradition of the Holy Bible and in the tradition of the people. Its morality and happiness are absurd in the tradition of the people, but are admirable in that of the Holy Bible. (And all religion is the same; for the Christian religion is very different in the Holy Bible and in the casuists.) The foundation is admirable; it is the most ancient book in the world,

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24. *Kuzari* I: 11.

25. From the famous *Mémorial* (11.13, 1654), in Lafuma (737). (It should be mentioned that S.H. Bergman, in his article, "Hitgalut, Tefilah u'ge'ulah be-Mishnato shel Franz Rosenzweig," in *'Al Franz Rosenzweig bi-melot 25 shanah lifirato*, Jerusalem, 1956, p. 48, chose — not accidentally — this passage from Pascal as the opening to his discussion of the meaning of revelation in Rosenzweig's thought.)

26. *Kuzari* I: 11-13.

27. See *Pensées* 446 (537).

and the most authentic . . .”<sup>28</sup> This being so, it was entirely natural for Pascal to use the words “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...” in such a decisive moment in his life. On the other hand, it is striking here that he bases himself upon history and its facts, while intellectual proofs are rejected as irrelevant, as these haven’t the power or authority to decide one way or another in questions of faith and belief. “Any religion which hasn’t the ability to present historical proofs of its truth is mistaken.”<sup>29</sup> Following this principle, Pascal compares the Bible with the Koran, contrasting the fulfilled prophecies in the one with the absence of prophecies in the other. Mesnard states authoritatively: “All of Pascal’s apologetics are based upon this great principle: God can be perceived through facts and not through reason.”<sup>30</sup> This approach is extremely close to that of Halevi: the God of the philosophers — and only He — can be understood by reason. The true God is known to us by historical facts; this is the moral which we derive from the passage quoted above: “...who took the children of Israel out of Egypt and fed them in the wilderness... and gave them... and sent Moses...” One cannot compare *Elohim*, who orders and guides the world and fulfills the requirements of the human mind but is strange to man as such, to *Adonai*, who creates and loves man as His creation. In other words, the distant “God” (*Elohim*) against the proximate “Lord” (*Adonai*), the personal God in the full sense of the word, through whom Judaism is transformed into an explicitly anthropocentric world-view.<sup>31</sup> In this approach of Halevi, one hears an echo of Pascal’s words: “The Knowledge of God is very far from the love of Him!”<sup>32</sup>

We shall now turn to certain aspects of the doctrine of man in Halevi and Pascal, which will make clearer the status of reason under discussion here. First, let us mention that which they had in common — namely, the emphasis each one placed on man’s self-rule. The idea of self-mastery, even if shared, takes on its own nuance in each of them. “. . . Never, even at the height of ecstasy, does clear reason lose its rights,”<sup>33</sup> writes Mesnard about Pascal. Pascal himself says: “One must know oneself. If this does not serve to discover truth, it at least serves as a rule of life, and there is nothing better.”<sup>34</sup> It has rightly been noted that Pascal was a contemporary of the heroes of Corneil, whose distinctive trait was their complete self-mastery. In his description of the *hassid* (the pious man), Halevi writes: “The pious man is nothing but a prince, who is obeyed by his senses, and by his mental as well as his physical faculties, which he governs corporeally, as it is writ-

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28. *Ibid.* 600 [601] (450).

29. Mesnard, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

31. See J. Guttman, *Dat u-Mada'*, Jerusalem, 1955, p. 264ff.

32. *Pensées* 280 (727).

33. Mesnard, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

34. *Pensées* 66 (120).

ten, ‘He that ruleth his spirit [is better than] he that taketh a city (Prov. 16:32).’”<sup>35</sup> Further on in this passage, Halevi depicts in detail how the pious man gradually subdues his passions and his anger, his senses, his imagination and instinctive judgment, his thoughts and his memory and, finally, his will power. When he achieves total control, insofar as this is possible, he is ready for his final challenge, the crown of the entire process, which is “in reaching the higher or divine degree, which is to be found above the degree of the intellect.”<sup>36</sup> It is very important to take note that he nowhere here speaks about negating the powers of the passions, but of “subduing” or directing them, “keeping them in bonds, but giving them their share.”<sup>37</sup> This ascent is not only desirable, but also possible, divine revelation providing man with the means for accomplishing this. By contrast, Pascal sees man as divided and as subject to contradiction, indicative of a dual nature which Christianity alone knows how to explain and to overcome.<sup>38</sup> “*Contraries*: Man is naturally credulous and incredulous, timid and rash. Description of man: dependency, desire of independence, need.”<sup>39</sup> “*Contraries*. *After having shown the vileness and the greatness of man.* — Let man now know his value... Let him hate himself, let him love himself; he has within him the capacity of knowing the truth and of being happy, but he possesses no truth, either constant or satisfactory.”<sup>40</sup> In Pascal’s opinion, man is simultaneously an unfortunate creature and the most noble of beings. “Man’s misfortune is first and foremost his lack of strength. this is a consequence of his nobility,” writes Mesnard.<sup>41</sup> Man is thus a dual and divided creature, at once miserable and noble. Were he not noble, had he not the need and longing for an elevated life, he would not feel his misery but would be like every other creature. The tension between these oppositions is that which transforms man into a unique creature; there is an imbalance, both in the physical and the intellectual realm, between the human being and the natural world, so that man’s pretenses of understanding nature are but vanity and emptiness.<sup>42</sup> Thus, we arrive at Pascal’s famous formulation: “Man is but a reed, the most feeble thing in nature; but he is a thinking reed... All our dignity, then consists in thought.”<sup>43</sup> According to Pascal, only divine grace, the free gift of God, gives man the tools enabling him to overcome his misery to live a life which truly reflects his nobility. An extremely important comment is

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35. *Kuzari* III: 5, p. 137.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.* See Aristotle, *Ethics*.

38. Mesnard, *op. cit.*, p. 142; Cf. *Pensées* 424 (248): “All these contradictions, which seem most to keep me from the knowledge of religion, have led me most quickly to the true one.”

39. *Pensées* 125 (239); 126 (158).

40. *Ibid.*, 423 (234).

41. Mesnard, *op. cit.*, p. 174; see that entire section.

42. See *Pensées* 72 (390).

43. *Pensées* 347 (391).



called for on this point: generally speaking, Pascal's line of thought on this subject is determined by the Christian view of original sin that, without the gracious help of God, man would be left helpless in his predicament. Thus, there are two contradictions within human nature, and man — that is, his free choice — is helpless to determine between them. Divine aid and help are indispensable in order for man to uplift himself, if he so wishes.

Halevi's understanding of the matter is different: it is clear that man is generally in need of divine help; however, no special intervention by God is needed in our case. The tension referred to above is interpreted as a war among man's various inclinations, and man has the freedom to choose among them without any limits other than the very fact of his being human; this being so, he must decide between his inclination towards good and that towards evil and must bear the full responsibility for the running of his life. The original sin of Adam in no way limits man's independence. According to the Jewish conception, man's way of life clearly changed as a result of that sin, but there were no limitations placed upon his activities, either physical or spiritual. To the contrary: according to some interpretations<sup>44</sup> the spectrum of choice only became broadened after the sin. While Pascal's outlook states, "In order to be freed of his misfortune, man must relinquish his self,"<sup>45</sup> the Jewish approach, as presented by Halevi, states that man must return to himself in order to realize all of his possibilities. On the other hand, Halevi does not suffer from the extreme polarity which we find in Pascal. There is thus a profound distance between the anthropology of Pascal and that of Halevi, one rooted in the basic principles of Judaism and Christianity, as we explained above.

The approaches of these two thinkers to ascetism also ought to be viewed in light of this same perspective of fundamentally different lines of thought. Pascal sees it as a positive element within man's spiritual path; "The true and only virtue, then, is to hate self (for we are hateful on account of lust) and to seek a truly lovable being to love . . ." <sup>46</sup> Pascal's ascetic tendency, both in the ideological and the practical realm, which is reflected in his pessimistic approach to everything concerning man as such, contrasts with the healthy, bright optimism of Halevi: according to him, man's true, pure joy is no less a part of the development of the spiritual life of man by which he may come to cling to God than fasts and self-afflictions. "Our law, as a whole, is divided between fear, love and joy, by each of which one can approach God. Thy contrition on a fast day does nothing the nearer to God than thy joy on the Sabbath and holy days, if it is the outcome of a devout heart . . . and if thy joy leads thee so far as to sing and dance, it becomes worship

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44. See, for example, *Genesis Rabbah* 9:9.

45. Mesnard, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

46. *Pensées* 485 (699).

and a bond of union between thee and the divine influence.”<sup>47</sup> By expressing himself in this way, Judah Halevi transformed his pen into an instrument expressing Jewish optimism, which not only overcomes disasters and persecutions, but also conquers time and ascends to the dimension of eternity. This same optimism is doubtless one of the foundations of Jewish survival.

In our summary, we shall expand the perspective somewhat. Within the framework of this discussion, there has been no opportunity to discuss the subject exhaustively. Our primary purpose has been to point out a specific direction and to draw attention towards the substantial differences between thinkers such as Halevi and Pascal and philosophers such as Descartes and Aristotle. In our opinion, it is possible to see Halevi as a precursor of Jewish existentialism. The various aspects of his thought which I have stressed above strengthen this argument. On the other hand, the closeness between Pascal and modern existentialism has long been noted.<sup>48</sup> It is not our purpose here to examine the question of Pascal’s existentialism as such, nor to take sides in the dispute between those who deny his connection to this movement, such as Morot-Sir, and those others, who are the clear majority, who affirm it. It is desirable, in my opinion, to interpret the term “existentialism” broadly, without entering into shades of meaning and subtle distinctions. We would like to suggest the definition of J. Beaufret, known as one of the experts in the teachings of Heidegger: “In a very general way, we may designate as existentialism any philosophy which confronts human existence directly, in order to clarify — within the framework of the actual flow of life — the mystery that man constitutes to himself.”<sup>49</sup> That is to say that the center of interest of the existentialist philosopher is man, as he is from the day of his birth until his death, in all phases of his life and all aspects of his development. This centrality of man is striking in Halevi, who stressed the importance of the actions within the life of each man, while noting the “levels” he was capable of reaching: speaking being, *hassid*, prophet. To Pascal as well the entire man, in the full range of his expressions, is important — from the most unfortunate to the most noble.

However, the fact that both Pascal and Halevi may be numbered among the forerunners of modern existentialism does not exhaust their importance to the “New Thinking.”<sup>50</sup> Of greater significance is the fact that both of them saw man as an “organic unity” of mind and feeling, having a specific past, preparing for a future, etc., and not only as a rational creature. As I have already suggested above, there are two different approaches confronting one another here, which

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47. *Kuzari* II: 50.

48. See, e.g., E. Mounier, *Introduction aux existentialismes*, Paris, 1946, pp. 9ff.

49. J. Beaufret, *Introduction aux philosophies de l'existence*, Paris, 1971, p. 10.

50. The title given by Franz Rosenzweig to his philosophy-theology; see selections from his essay “The New Thinking,” in N. Glatzer, *Franz Rosenzweig, His Life and Thought*, New York, 1961, pp. 190-208 (German text in his *Kleinere Schriften*, Berlin, 1935, pp. 377-398).

are not necessarily in conflict, but are separated by a vast gap: a distinction of great importance to us in our own day. It may be demonstrated that Pascal's way of thinking — and in particular the relative position that he ascribes to reason — makes him a partner in not-unimportant ways to the Jewish approach, as represented by Halevi, and at the same time separates him from Greek thought.<sup>51</sup>

As for the essence of the matter: one must relate seriously to the polarity of "Athens-Jerusalem"<sup>52</sup> and penetrate its meaning more and more deeply. Without hyperbole, this problem constitutes a central challenge to contemporary Jewish and Israeli thought.<sup>53</sup> To reinforce this statement, we shall conclude by quoting the words of the French philosopher Yvon Belaval, which relate to the philosophical, although not the Jewish, aspects of our problem: "Western philosophy today confronts a crisis: it cannot escape decay except at the price of a fundamental change by which it shall adjust to a world in which science rules. In practice, one change has already taken place: since Hegel philosophy has oriented itself towards Marxism. One may, perhaps imagine another change, one which started with Mendelssohn, in which it would become reoriented towards Judaism."<sup>54</sup> In these words, one hears a call directed towards the Jew in general, and the people living in Israel in particular. It is as if Belaval says to us: "We, the spiritual heirs of the Greeks, have done what we could. Now, with our unparalleled triumphs in the field of science, we have come to a dead end in the realm of philosophy. Thus, the time has come for a changing of the guards; let you, the heirs of the ancient Hebrews, try your hand!" Further on, Belaval states that the prospects for success in creating a new philosophical path are encouraging, as unique conditions are present in Israel to facilitate such a renewal: there are people here with an enormous wealth of Jewish knowledge who have returned to the land of their fathers having fully experienced Greek thought and its scientific application. By contrast with Spinoza and Bergson, who were devoted to non-Jewish philosophy, they can return to their ancestral roots with the cultural wealth that they acquired in their exile, in order to attempt to create an original philosophy. We would suggest listening to this call, and to other similar calls, which may at times correspond to an inner need existing among us.<sup>55</sup> We must confront the challenge of creating an original Jewish philosophy, with the goal of responding to what is one of the most significant challenges of our day.

*Immanuel* 15 (Winter 1982/83)

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51. On the similarities and differences between Pascal and Descartes, see Mesnard's balanced discussion, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-158.

52. See the interesting work of L. Shestov, *Athens and Jerusalem*, Athens, Ohio, 1966.

53. See M. Schwarcz' introduction to the Hebrew edition of Rosenzweig's *Kokhav ha-Ge'ulah*, Jerusalem, 1970, p. 35, 42.

54. Y. Belaval, "Reverie sur l'Idée de Philosophie Juive," in *Mélanges André Neher*, Paris, 1975, p. 14.

55. All of E. Amado Lévy-Valensi's philosophical work has for years tended in this direction. See "La philosophie des philosophes ou le secret perdu," in *Mélanges André Néher*, *op. cit.*, p. 3 ff.