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► **To cite this version:**

Frank Alvarez-Pereyre. Playing Hide and Seek: Is There a Jewish Way to It?. Agata Paluch. Representing Jewish Thought. Proceedings of the 2015 Institute of Jewish Studies Conference Held in Honour of Professor Ada Rapoport-Albert, 21, Brill, pp.218-233, 2021, IJS Studies in Judaica, 978-90-04-44614-4. 10.1163/9789004446144_010 . hal-03877111

HAL Id: hal-03877111

<https://hal.science/hal-03877111v1>

Submitted on 19 Dec 2022

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Playing hide and seek : Is there a Jewish way to it ?

Frank Alvarez-Pereyre

The task of depicting Jewish thought is a tricky one. One is supposed to account for the very way Jewish thought models itself, makes itself be what it is. This implies that we should be able to report about the internal categories and about the internal processing that together lead to what Jewish thought appears to be.

By the moment one tries to face such a challenge, two methodological options might be chosen, each of them being linked to distinct theoretical perspectives. According to one of these options, we should look for the very way Jewish thought expresses itself on the subject. We should collect every explicit theorization that Jewish thought would produce about itself, and then organize an inventory of these internal statements. Such a option has got an obvious bias yet. Collect and organize being on the side of the scholar, trying to account about Jewish thought in its very own words seems quite difficult. If going along the second option, the scholar would refrain from conveying any internal self-definition. He would depict its object on the basis of its usual set of tools, taking a totally external stand towards its object of investigation. He would report about what he can observe, measure and analyse as an historian, or as an anthropologist, a musicologist, a linguist or a philosopher. But then, how would this scholar be certain that his work is fully relevant ? Would his findings match the internal categories that are recognized by the Jewish thought itself ? More than that : who is to account for the internal categories ? How do we get to it ?

Each of these options has got further limitations. As for the first one, by the moment it focuses about self-definitions, it firstly presupposes that such self-definitions are totally satisfactory, and that they account for any phenomenon, content, structure, and strategy. It presupposes also that everything can be properly labelled through language, when the very elaboration and developpement of Jewish thought encompasses many dimensions, the nature of which does differ from the very linguistic way of processing. As for the second option, its limits begin when one realizes that the independant work of the musicologist, philosopher or linguist cannot face the very complexity of the objects. These objects are to some extent an object for the linguists. To some extent, and not in the same way, these objects are an object for the anthropologists, the historians, the sociologists or the philosophers. Each of these scholars will have a restricted look at the material, inside the limits of the analytical

considerations that are recognised by each discipline when dealing with the objects that are said to be the relevant ones for any of them.

In the following pages, we shall try to report about the ways Jewish thought does what it does taking the following theoretical stand. We shall consider that the two above mentioned options should be considered equally and articulated. Parallely, the above listed limitations should not hamper our investigation. They should lead to specific considerations in terms of methodology. Thus, we firstly propose that the external approach to the objects for investigation should combine - and not separate - the available academic fields in order to account for the very complexity of the selected objects, be it in terms of structure or in terms of dynamics. We propose an interdisciplinary approach to the facts under study. The two domains that have been selected for our survey - namely Jewish liturgy and the Jewish languages - logically call for a combined movement where linguistics, anthropology, ethnomusicology, and history have their say. Secondly, we propose that one should surely aim at eliciting the internal categories knowing that, fundamentally, such internal categories express themselves in different and complementary ways, and not solely through explicit linguistic statements. More than that : if they express themselves, it is often through a constant process of hide and seek. And if such a process proves to be a necessary one, we have to take such a factor into account when considering the methodology to be used. To sum it up, we suppose that an interdisciplinary approach to ritualised performances and to language behaviors might lead us to reach and elicit internal categories that would find parallel and complementary expressions through other channels : be it in the biblical, the midrashic or the legal corpuses, be it in the paraliturgical repertoires, or any cultural object or social behavior where Jewish thought might be at work.

A last important point should be clarified in these preliminary statements. We suppose that the expression « Jewish thought » refers to a complex set of principles and developements, of concepts, contents and processes that have been shaping the life of the Jewish people throughout the centuries, whatever the domains of activity one focuses upon, whatever the types of persons, whatever the institutions. If so, we should then examine different settings and practical activities, so as to account for the possible, and perhaps necessary, complementarity between the concepts, the contents and the processes at work. In other words, one should turn to distinct practical social and cultural settings or activities in order to report about possible specific concepts, contents and processes that would have an equal importance, and a genuine *raison*

d'être. The preceding arguments explain that the present paper will focus on two types of activities pertaining to Jewish life. It remains to be seen to what extent such diverse concepts, contents and processes are themselves bound together at a higher hierarchical level of understanding. It remains also to be seen which status should be attributed to visible evolutions throughout history. In other words, what are the nature and the implications of such evolutions through time? Does an evolution really change something to any model or principle that would have been valid so far? Does it ultimately reveal something about the models and the principles, and about the way Jewish thought deals with time, change, and variation?

Jewish liturgy

When speaking of Jewish liturgy, we are facing differing series of situations, and very varying types of material. Do we mind the liturgical calendar, or the evolution of the prayers, their text and music, throughout the ages? Do we focus about the protagonists of the liturgical occasions, about one or another of the regional variants, about the differences between liturgical and paraliturgical repertoires? Whatever the element we would choose, we would have to ask the following question: beyond the common identification of the repertoires, protagonists, circumstances and materials, how are the different elements modelled and organized inside the Jewish world? Is there a Jewish way to it? A question that would be echoed by such parallel question as « Does each of the monotheistic faith handle things differently and to what extent? ».

Actually, we shall focus on one phenomenon, namely the ritual cantillation of the biblical text. This is a central moment inside the liturgical activity itself. It is shared throughout the Jewish world, and it has been a compulsory phenomenon throughout the ages. At some point, we shall also turn to the cantillation of portions of the talmudic text: an aspect that has been rarely documented, but that greatly helps us understand the ways Jewish thought depicts itself (Adler 1995, Idelsohn 1992).

Taking an ethnographic look at the biblical cantillation, one comes to an inventory of what could be labeled its compulsory constitutive elements. We have got abundant sets of texts, an important musical material, gestures at some point, together with a serie of conditions that determine their ritual definition and linking, but also the number of the participants, their quality and their relationships, and finally the temporal and spatial organisation of liturgy. To sum it up, we are confronted to the

following question : what is at stake behind what appears to be a highly sophisticated process where very different types of constitutive elements come together ?

At some point of the usual Shabbat service in the synagogue as well as on holydays, and also on Mondays and Thursdays yet with a shorter portion of text to be read, a Torah scroll is taken out of the Holy Arch inside of the synagogue. The scroll having been opened, a man comes to read out of it, with someone on his left handside, and someone on his right handside. On the right hand side will stand in succession seven men or youngsters aged at least 13 on Shabbath - and five instead of seven on holydays -, to begin with a Cohen and then a Levy (or any other person in the case there is no Cohen and Levy). After the reading of the weekly portion of the Torah (namely out of the five books of Moses), a portion taken out the prophetic texts will be read by an additional person, on Shabbath and on holydays. This prophetic portion is, in the very big majority of the cases, not read out of a scroll.

What happens now when considering the one who reads, and the one who is standing on his left handside ? The one who reads out of the scroll reads and sings altogether. The one on his left handside does follow on a copy of the biblical text, and may perform different hand gestures parallel to the reading and singing of the biblical text. It may happen that this very person, or another person who is attending the service, corrects the one who reads and chants out of the scroll. What is now to be understood under the terms text, music and gesture ? And what is to be understood when considering the relationship between the protagonists ?

Let us have a look at the scroll by the moment the reader in charge is acting. There is no musical score on it, but the musical performance that is produced by the one who reads is systematic and quite elaborated. As for the text, one realizes that only its conconantic aspect is to be found on the scroll. No visible vocalization is available on the parchment. No punctuation either. The individual words of the texts are separated from each other, but you cannot see where a verse begins and when it ends. Yet, the one who reads and chants systematically produces a full text, in terms of vocalization, internal punctuation of the verses, discursive organization of the verses as they come one after the other. On the scroll, the biblical text remains a very minimal one.

We shall now turn to what the man on the left handside reads. It is a « normal text », in a « normal book ». This meaning that a good proportion of what appears to be lacking on the scroll is now available. Each word appears with the consonants and their vocalization. The verses are visibely isolated from each other in a visible way. And every word has got graphic signs under or above, and these are supposed to

represent the musical side of the chanting, or to guide it. But what is the relationship between a graphic sign and a musical motive? The more so that the gestures that the man on the left might perform appear to be the equivalent - a physical, a spatial and a visual representation - of the graphic signs, and of their musical rendering.

At that point we have to admit that the one who is facing the scroll is performing a complex action, the elements of which are largely absent when considering the practical basis for it, namely the scroll. On the other hand, the man on the left hand side altogether makes sure that the reader does not do any error in the reading and the chanting, namely that the reader is well aware of the vocalisation of the words, of the punctuation of the verses, and of the musical rendering of the text. Fundamentally, the one who « reads » out of the scroll adds what appears to be an oral knowledge of the text to what lies in front of his eyes.

When going to a specific inquiry of the musical material that is orally conveyed by the one who reads out of the scroll, we learn that the musical motives and their succession help indicate the word accent for the words of the texts. They also help establish the separation of the successive verses, and the internal organisation of each verse. Ultimately, the musical motives function as a syntactic device for the verses. They add a supplementary organization for the syntax of the text to what would be considered the most basic formal organisation of the verses from a mere syntactic point of view. Such a supplementary organization has got an importance in itself. For it is totally linked to the interpretation or hermeneutics of the biblical text.

To sum up at that point, we shall say that there is no fully accurate and complete materialization of any of the basic constitutive elements of liturgy. On the contrary, there seems to be a constant shift, a constant drift. The text that appears on the scroll is lacunary. The music materializes vital aspects of the text. The gestures signal something of both the textual and the musical dimensions. And all this goes along a strictly ritualized performance, with a tight interplay between an oral and a written side.

The ones who are familiar with the history of the biblical and non biblical texts, and with the massora, will have understood that the ethnography of the liturgy is but another image of a well known phenomenon. And the ones who are conversant with some aspects of the Jewish thought surely felt also at home. What is the point here? And what is the use of ethnography if answers are already available elsewhere, if existing concepts and internal categorisations are already self-speaking?

History tells us that two graphic systems - for the accentuation and punctuation of the verses - have been materialized in the first centuries of the Christian era, in conformity with a thorough elicitation of the linguistic organisation of the verses inside the biblical text. Yet, the graphic systems would not find their way into the scroll. It had to remain outside of it. These graphic systems corresponded to a linguistic analysis as such, but it could not physically enter into the scroll. The same with the musical motives. These ones already existed but no musical representation of the chant would enter the scroll. What has been called the Written Law, inside of the Jewish thought, had and has to remain fundamentally linked to an oral set of elements and phenomena that guarantee the full identity of the text to be conveyed.

Some parallel development happened on the side of the Oral Law. The huge collection of the interpretative texts - including their legal processing - has been fundamentally an exclusive oral corpus. And then the Talmud and lots of midrashim were written down during the first centuries of the Christian era. But such a switch had to comply to one basic condition : the written text of the oral law should appear solely under its consonantic aspect. No vowel should appear on the paper. More than that, no visual cue to the different aspects of punctuation should be available. This meaning that any « reader » of the oral law had, and still has to know how to organize the flow of the written text when considering its punctuation, when considering the basic sentences, but also the minute discursive organisation of these sentences. To that end, complex systems have been established inside the Jewish communities, systems that again belong to the domain of oral transmission. Such systems could be named the hidden *teamim* for the reading and the studying of the Mishna and the Gemara. They are extremely sophisticated but they have to remain invisible at the surface of the written and lacunary « text ». As a matter of fact, many insiders are largely unaware of the hidden structural rules that govern the cantillation of the Oral Law, and the scholars did not really pay attention to them neither (Alvarez-Pereyre 1990, 1994).

Let us now reflect briefly about the situation when considering the classical understanding of such notions as « text » and « music », or the written and oral evidences. On the basis of what ethnography tells us, the written text is lacunary and its only through its oral rendition that it comes to its full existence. The formal and semantic aspects of the text come to an existence under the condition that music and intonation - and even hand gestures - are fully involved in the context of the oral rendering. Such fundamental principles are equally governing the transmission and study of both the Written and the Oral Law. But in such a way that the respective

identity of both of them is kept, in order to maintain their necessary articulation. At that point, we can come back to the question of the use of any ethnographic approach. We could say that the ethnographic approach matches what we know about the principles that the tradition of the Sages stresses in its own words : that a sharp distinction, and a vital complementarity, should be kept between the Written and the Oral law. We can add that such principles do not remain principles in the context of liturgy, and in the context of the study of Talmud. They are turned to a highly ritual performance, that makes such principles literally live through the effective rendering of the texts in all their aspects. This ritual performance not only makes the principles be a living reality. It also embodies what has been called earlier the principle of a constant shift and drift. The ones who perform cantillation « perform » the principles, and also what these principles are supposed to convey more essentially (Alvarez-Pereyre 2006).

At that point, and interistingly enough, it might be worthwhile to briefly turn to a comparison of the three monotheistic faiths on the same issues. The problematics of the relationship between a written and an oral side is shared. It is shared on the basis of a minute set of material evidences and also on the basis of strict ritual rules that echo what we have already encountered on the side of Jewish liturgy. Yet, there are clear differences on these very points. What type of an issue do such convergences and differences manifest ?

On the side of Christianity, the available languages (latin, greek, romanian, french, and so forth) do not enable to play with the two consonantic and vocalic sides of a language, contrarily to what happens with Hebrew and Arabic. The potential separation of the two sides in the case of these two languages is a key resource in the case for Judaism and Islam when coming to the practical « acting » of the differences and relationships between orality and its written counterpart. It is not the case for Christianity.

When considering the discursive organisation of the texts, Greek orthodoxy has developped three different graphic systems that each function for a specific need and that are made visible on the written text : internal punctuation of the verses, discursive ponctuation of the successive verses, indication of the nature and status of the different liturgical texts inside the tradition (Flender 1988).

Islam did not indicate the vocalization of the words on the written text of the Coran for a period of time, nor the boundaries between the successive verses. Then it introduced a graphic indication for some of the short vowels and it introduced the

graphic indication of the verses' ending : all these elements appearing on the text of the Coran as it is read during the liturgical event. As for music now, it is not only impossible to find any trace of it on the text of the Coran but, on the principle, no written representation what so ever should be given of the cantillation as it is performed orally by the one who reads and chants. Still, the oral rendering of the « written » text remains the medium through which the minute syntactic organisation of the latter is made effective (Ben Otmane 1995).

The very linguistic parameters which serve as the base for the oral rendering of the Coran parallel in nature the linguistics parameters that serve as a base for the study of the Michna and the Talmud. More generally, such linguistic parameters are to be found valid for the oral rendering of the Biblical text. Yet, a sharp distinction should be made if speaking of the functions of the parameters. The Talmudic corpus is bound to argumentation and interpretation, and to the legal implications of it. The Biblical « text » and the Coran do serve a quite different purpose. They convey the sacred word, or the words of the Prophet. They are properly the materialization, through the human expression, of the divine expression.

Here really lies the crucial point, philosophically, legally and cuturally speaking. The divine verb has to be made audible as such. Such a necessity, yet, implies what we have called the principle of a constant shift or drift through which it is made clear that the human expression is by no means the equivalent of the divine one, and that the divine expression cannot find its proper vehicule through the human expression. Liturgy makes God's presence effective, it is a living enacting of God's expression. The rites that are attached to liturgy underline how far such an enacting is binding. No less binding, yet, is the legal and the philosophical impossibility for humans to fully represent God's expression. More than that : the ritual has to show that there is a profound separation and distinction between God's expression and man's expression. When coming to a comparison between the three monotheistic faiths on the basis of their liturgy and to their practical differences, one would propose that such differences relate to their varying understanding of what is called the Divine Presence and Verb, and also to their internal and respective understanding of the concept of idolatry.

Jewish languages

In the course of time, starting already before the tenth century of the current era or around it, the Jewish communities of the Diaspora have developped languages that have been specific to them and that were not shared by their non Jewish neighbours.

Parallely, the Jewish people inside these communities systematically got acquainted with the languages of their neighbours, whatever the places they lived. Linguistic intercourse with the non Jewish neighbours has been a necessity, and it was also vital for the Jews to have a language of their own, for their own purposes. But what type of a language ?

The scientific interest for the languages that were used inside the Jewish communities arose around the middle of the XIXth century. At that time, the specialists of the German or the Spanish languages did find in the written testimonies of the Jewish communities a very usefull documentation they could not find elsewhere, as they were studying the history of Spanish or German, for example. For the historical shaping of the linguistic and social standards for these languages had meant a sharp diminution of their regional or local peculiarities, their long standing social disqualification and the absence of a systematic scholarly interest into it. For reasons that were internal to the Jewish communities and that relate to the obligation of keeping track of the encounter with the non Jewish world through time and space, the active memory of what makes the identity of the non Jewish world had led to the preservation of many linguistic testimonies for the co-territorial languages the Jews would find wathever the place they lived. Parallely, still during the finishing XIXth century and the beginnings of the XXth century, lay persons or scholars would aim at collecting the Hebrew elements that were to be found inside a given Jewish language according to its regional variants, or that would appear inside the national co-territorial languages or local dialects the Jewish people would encounter and master.

From 1970 onwards - starting with the pioneering work devoted by Max Weinreich (1973) to the Yiddish language - the different Jewish languages have come to be a fullfledged scientific object (Paper 1978, *Pe'amim* 1979, Gold 1981, Wexler 1981, Benabu and Sermoneta 1985). It was then supposed that they shared a lot and the question arose quite quickly of their common characteristics. Three essential features were listed as such at this initial phase.

First of all, these languages were thought to be exclusively Jewish when considering their usage : they would serve the specific needs of the community, be it the day to day conversation, be it the translation of the biblical text or of the prohetic portions called haftarah (for those who would not master the Hebrew language sufficiently), be it for commercial or legal purposes. Besides of this sociolinguistic feature, two features were clearly identified on the linguistic side.

The Jewish languages were created by mixing together language elements that would come from varying existing foreign and co-territorial languages. They all would have a Hebrew and Aramaic component, and then also Spanish in the case of Judeo-Spanish, but also some Greek, or some Turkish, or some Arabic and French, according to the very place the Judeo-Spanish speaking Jews have lived throughout the centuries. In the case of Yiddish, we have Hebrew and Aramaic, together with German, but also Polish, Ukrainian, or Russian, whenever the case and according to the regions where the Jews have been living in the course of time. As for Judeo-Arabic, we have Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic, but the nature of the Arabic material might differ according to the very dialects that were spoken in the different places where Jews have been living throughout the centuries in a close relationship to Muslim people. The second linguistic feature that has been shared lies in the writing system. All of the Jewish languages have been written down with the Hebrew alphabet. As a matter of fact, the two mentioned linguistic features turn to have decisive implications on the sociolinguistic side. The above listed traits lead to a highly singular medium for communication that is shared only inside of the Jewish community, with no possibility for the foreigners to have access to it (*Histoire, Epistémologie, Langage* 1996 ; Alvarez-Pereyre et Baumgarten 2003).

What is now the rationale behind all this ? Does such a phenomenon have any relevance from the point of view of Jewish thought, and more precisely when considering its practical elaboration ? At that stage, we can say that the Jewish languages have been elaborated on the basis of a strong common objective : to ensure that the Jews would maintain their own identity, throughout the generations and whatever the place they lived. Interestingly enough, it is when we turn to general linguistics and to linguistic typology that we learn more about the Jewish languages, about their structuration and even about their anthropological signification.

Reading Max Weinreich's seminal work on the Yiddish language, we learn that the Jewish languages would be the result of a threefold operating principle : selection, fusion and convergence.

The term selection refers to the fact that the linguistic material that would be thought potentially relevant inside the non Jewish languages is taken from these languages in order to enter the Jewish languages. This implying that not everything is coming into the Jewish languages.

The term fusion indicates that any material coming from whatever non Jewish language is mixed together to make a fullfledged Jewish language of its own, together with a substantial Hebrew and Aramaic component.

The term convergence indicates that selection and fusion go along converging patterns and follow similar processes, according to a principle of coherence that has something to do with the internal needs of the different Jewish communities, whatever the place and time they do live.

Max Weinreich's *History of the Yiddish language* does refer to the many Jewish languages that developed over the centuries. It is when dealing with Yiddish specifically that Weinreich endlessly reports about the highly sophisticated and manifold way through which the above mentioned threefold principle works and operates. It appears that such a principle has been the leading, the shared - and the totally implicit - force that lead to the rise and development of the so-called Jewish languages.

Weinreich's work insists on another major factor that is common to all Jewish languages : namely the central presence of the Hebrew (and Aramaic) component. Such a presence is statistically impressive. More than that, the Hebrew component divides itself between the Hebrew evidences that are inserted as such inside the Jewish languages and the Hebrew linguistic elements that undergo phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic or stylistic modifications (Morag 1992, Bar Asher 2003).

The linguists who dealt with the Jewish languages in the three last decades of the XXth century generously contributed to the investigation of the Hebrew component whatever the Jewish languages under consideration. They confirmed the two paths through which Hebrew made its way inside the Jewish languages. They hinted to the hierarchical importance of the Hebrew and Aramaic component from the point of view of the linguistic structuring of the Jewish languages. They made it clear that Hebrew and Aramaic would serve linguistic and non linguistic purposes, with a double track development in each and the same Jewish language : keeping in line with the most essential messages of the cultural and religious tradition ; developing itself through a large variety of local peculiarities (be it on the phonological, the morphological or the semantic plane), and through a large scale linking to the other linguistic components.

Towards the end of the XXth century and by the beginning of the XXIst century the following points became clear to the linguists. First of all, the structural

organization of the different Jewish languages was shared to a very high degree. This point is fundamental when we know that, when considering each of the Jewish languages, the non Jewish languages that have been a partial source for them do belong to differing linguistic families. In other words, languages that have been structurally different between themselves, and different structurally from the Hebrew and the Aramaic language (with the exception of Arabic) have come together into one and the same language, or into parallel languages, that have been sharing their most profound characters between themselves. All possible Jewish languages developed parallelly, being bound to similar purposes and building themselves on the basis of strongly shared internal and implicit patterns.

Secondly, it appeared that there has been a hidden model that governed the threefold operating principle revealed by M. Weinreich. It was understood that the guiding model for the structural building of the Jewish languages has been the Hebrew language. Not only the Hebrew language as such and what it bears in cultural and philosophical terms, but also the Hebrew language as is has been systematically structured inside the biblical text and, equally, as it has been transmitted through the literal translations - a word by word translation i. e. « Humesh-Taytsch » or « Ladino » - into Spanish, German, Arabic or Persian. The translation process as a whole would have been a practical and leading filter when considering the very making of the Jewish languages (Varol et Szulmajster 1994).

Thirdly, it was made clear that all the Jewish languages were pursuing a double and parallel objective (Bornes-Varol 2008). For there has been a constant balance between the linguistic characters that were directly depending on the Hebrew and Aramaic languages, and the ones that were depending on the non Jewish source languages. This explaining the very strong similarity between the Jewish languages, as well as the reality of variation, inside a given language, and between these languages. But what for ?

On the one hand, it would be possible for the people of the Jewish communities to deal with their own needs and interests, and to be constantly emerged into the hebraic heritage through the medium of language. On the other hand, the Jewish languages would serve, inside of the communities, as a medium that would enable the minute analysis of the foreign societies and cultures and the day to day acquaintance with these societies and cultures. This meaning that a double awareness was made possible through one and the same Jewish language : an awareness, a sense of belonging, enabling more generally a capacity to be a full insider on the side of the

Jewish heritage ; and also a clear knowledge of and the practical capacity for differentiation when considering the non Jewish society and culture.

At that point, we should understand that behind such a complex and yet essential picture, two strong features are operating, that have been recognized as crucial for the definition of Jewish culture in action through history : translation and interpretation on the one hand, memorization on the other hand. These features date back to the historical and philosophical emergence of the Jewish People, and they did fully operate throughout history, before and after the Exile.

In their own terms, the Jewish languages enact these features for the sake of the Jewish communities that are facing two top and intertwined priorities at any time : perpetuating the Jewish identity, and coping with the outer world and patterns. It has to do so with a due consideration for the varied sectors, layers and components of the communities themselves ; with a due consideration for each of any other local environment ; and with the characteristics of any given period of time. Keeping due memory of the linguistic non Jewish environment explains itself in this context, together with the ongoing threefold process of selection, fusion and convergence where Jewish thought - massively through Hebrew and Aramaic - may ensure its perpetuation. It does so by means of a systematic and continued confrontation between the Jewish world and the non Jewish world (Alvarez-Pereyre 2018).

Let us take a step further and compare the Jewish languages to those institutions that have been so vital for the effective perpetuation of the Jewish communities and the Jewish heritage throughout time and space. The synagogue and the beit midrash on the one hand, the system of rules that defines casherout and the rules governing purity inside the family on the other hand have been recognized as having enabled such an active identity and its continuation up to now.

Besides of these elements and factors, the Jewish languages have been a highly unified medium that made it possible for the Jewish people to build themselves as individuals and as a collective body : ensuring that their core values and needs be constantly elicited and transmitted and that their vital but complex relationship to their non Jewish counterpart be constantly elicited. These languages have been a tremendous and especially powerful two track pedagogical tool. They served as a day to day medium that has been shared by all layers of the community, without blurring the internal differentiations between the layers.

Concluding remarks

Jewish liturgy and the Jewish languages have been very long standing realities. Through them, very essential issues have been processed, each time in a highly intricate way that itself speaks for the importance of the two objects we have been considering.

One might have noted the quite overt character of the liturgy, and the strong covert character of the languages. The overt character of the liturgy is to be found in the very material we can observe directly in the context of continued liturgical performances. Yet, the meaning of it is not at all delivered as such. The covert character of the Jewish languages is a condition for something that cannot be deciphered easily. More than that, with these languages, we are dealing with casual languages and day to day communication channels. And these appear finally to operate in a close relationship to vital issues for the Jewish people.

In both cases, we have been going through a systematic external consideration for the facts at hand. In so doing, and in the same time, we have been processing the evidences going well beyond the most classical approach when considering the different disciplines that were logically involved. Parallely, we have been asking ourselves about the anthropological implications of our interdisciplinary analysis. It is at that point that we could match the results of the scientific approach with what could be called the internal cultural categorizations. These do not come to you as such, and there is no short cut to it. It is when you inscribe yourself into the very world you are describing that you might one day get a sense of it, a partial, a quite partial sense of such categorizations. Obviously there are different types of immersion. The one we refer to means acting inside, acting and observing, with a double intention : access to the internal categories as they are elicited in their most natural manner, and look for the internal categories on the basis of an anthropological perspective when such internal categories do not tell about themselves in a direct way.

In its own terms, liturgy is one phenomenon inside of a large serie of instances that elaborate - each in its own way - on the topic of the veiling and unveiling of God, its presence and manifestations : be it concepts, be it interpretations, be it other types of ritual phenomenon. In this context, we have proposed that liturgy aims at manifesting the Divine presence yet without having it represented as such. More precisely, liturgy is built in such a way that, on the human plane, the Divine Verb is transmited together with the principle and formal impossibility of representing it.

The languages of the Jewish communities appear to function in a close relationship to the topics of identity and belonging - in the broadest understanding of the terms -, their making on the daily basis, their preservation and teaching, in the casual conduct of life with its different registers. The Jewish languages are bound to assist the individuals and the collective body - with all its layers - preserve endogamy and cope with the outer world : both sides being a condition for the other one.

Two very different domains have been chosen for the present investigation. Each of them illustrates highly original processes. They together account for the high degree of plasticity through which Jewish thought makes itself effective. They even enable us to identify in a subtle way how Jewish thought establishes its own agendas and makes them actual throughout time and space.

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