In his book The Paths of Chassidism, the writer and essayist Arnold Mandel suggests that in forging the term *judeity* I was inspired by the notion of *négritude*.¹

It is not impossible that the Negroses' effort to define themselves and the crystallization of their anxieties and hopes in this concept of *négritude* may have encouraged me in my own researches. For although historically these efforts were preceded by reflection on Jewish identity, which remains a besetting worry for every intellectual Jew, I have been too preoccupied by the awakening of the dominated peoples, for it to be excluded.

Reciprocally my own itinerary may contribute towards sharpening and refurbishing the methodological tool of *négritude*, which after having been praised so much for its utility, is still sometimes decried by the new generations of Negroes.

'African culture is not served by fastening oyster-like to notions which history has passed by. The concept of *négritude*, revolutionary during the years 1940–50, is fit today for the literary museum.'²

Such severity is excessive for a concept which still has its uses. I believe, however, that salutary precision and rejuvenation could be achieved by recasting and exploding this concept of *négritude* into three others, as I have been constrained to do for the term 'Judaism'.

It is not my purpose to write at length on these three notions of *judeity, judaicity* and *judaism*, which I have been brought to propose and define. I just recall very briefly that having decided to make an inventory of myself as a Jew, I quickly found the need for a word to express, to the exclusion of other meanings, the fact of being a Jew. I noticed with astonishment and embarrassment that it did not exist; or to be more exact that the word Judaism possessed too many different mean-
ings for it to be used with an unequivocal precision. Thus I had to adopt and if necessary forge a specific term: I proposed *Judeity*.

It seems to me necessary to insist that there was, to begin with, no pre-judgment of the content of this fact of being Jewish; on the contrary it was a question of a methodological need and of tackling better equipped a complex reality which was still eluding me. In trying to be explicit about the reality of Jewish existence, I was forced to seek an exclusive and adequate definition of Judeity in order to distinguish it from other dimensions; to define each dimension separately in such a way that its principle should not be contradicted by those divergences of interpretation inevitable in a domain where disquieting experiences are always arousing the most intense passions and the most varied reflections. In fact we had the greatest need for a kind of filter for this tumultuously confused subject matter. Even today I am not sure that these three definitions have exhausted the three dimensions of Jewish reality, and I readily admit that they may be contested; but I have convinced myself that they had to be distinguished and differentiated.

One did not have to ponder long to note that the term *Judaism*, was too rich and too vague, constraining and ineffectual, for use in researches demanding simple exactness and objectivity. The term sometimes signified the entirety of traditional values, religious and moral, ruling the collective life of Jews; the Jewish community, as when one spoke of ‘French Judaism’; the belonging of an individual Jew to his group; the measure of his attachment to traditional beliefs, and, ever since Zionism, his fidelity to those Jewish values which would not be considered strictly religious. Is it not obvious that it was more worthwhile to assign to Judaism just one of these senses, even if one had to propose other terms for the other senses? A little order could only be salutary even at the price of an apparent improverishment of vocabulary. It has in any case seemed to me that for ‘Judaism’ the more adequate sense must be that of the entirety of cultural and religious traditions.

There is no doubt of the need to push further ahead in precision, as I realized when I tried to make a more complete inventory of the Jewish condition. Thus should one not distinguish, in this cultural ensemble, between the properly religious heritage and the ethical prescriptions which constitute Jewish moral philosophy? In any case, the most urgent and immediately obvious was to be able to consider separately Jewish ideology and its works on the one hand, and on the other, the Jewish individuals and groups who more or less participated in this ideology, lived it and actualized it, in order to be more able to refer to them and study them.

To designate expressly the Jewish group, I proposed therefore the term *Judaicity*. In this connection I was to make another little discovery: at first I vaguely believed that the word, if not the precision of the term, already existed, and that above all I had to bestow on it one unequivocal meaning; but in fact it is not to be found in any dictionary. Besides it had to be given a legal status (which I propose moreover at the same time).

As for the comprehensiveness of this concept, designated by the word ‘Judaicity’, I propose here again to leave it open to discussion. Taking into account the demographic physiognomy peculiar to the Jews, one had in any case at least to distinguish a broad sense and a narrow sense. Judaicity would thus designate either the Jewish demographic totality, in short, world Judaicity – or bearing in mind the dispersal of this Judaicity in multiple communities throughout the world, each of these local Judaicities, e.g. French or American Judaicity. But the essential thing is to keep to this demographic sense. *Judaicity designates a body of Jewish*
persons.

Finally, *Judeity* would be exclusively the way in which a Jew is a Jew, subjectively and objectively: the manner in which he feels himself Jewish and reacts to the Jewish condition. I had to forge a totally new word to express an indisputably basic fact.

Of course, it would be absurd to suppose Judeity to have some separate existence of its own, as it would be absurd to consider in isolation Jewish values which evidently do not exist except in association with the Jewish group, and more precisely with the evolution of the combination of socio-historic circumstances which have constituted its particular destiny. In this regard, I shall say readily that Judaism is the ideology and the institutional entirety of Judacity. And almost always Judeity contains a reference more or less affirmed, more or less conscious, more or less extensive, to Jewish traditional values. In relation to Judacity, it is a degree of belonging, objective and subjective, more or less elevated. And to complete the triangle, it is clear that belonging to a group can rarely be reduced to a simply mechanical and purely negative solidarity in the face of danger; belonging to a group is always to some degree also the recognition of its values.6

It follows in any case, and that is what I want to say above all else, that Judeity is *variable* from one individual to another, in its intensity and even in its elements, which may be present more or less according to each subject’s particular constellation. This is why we have been able to talk with my collaborators of a coefficient of Judeity.7 With the precautions which one must take with such a mathematical expression of so rich and so changing an experience of reality, we have even tried to state precisely the criteria for calculating this coefficient. Whatever it may be, it is necessary to be able at least to consider separately the Judeity of each subject.8

In brief, it seemed to me necessary to distinguish clearly that which was only confusedly distinct:

1. The Jewish group, or Judacity.
2. Its values, or Judaism.
3. The degree of a Jew's participation in his group on the one hand, or in its values on the other, of Judeity.

I have given elsewhere a detailed commentary on these three notions. For ease of memory, here are just the definitions:

‘Judacity is the ensemble of Jewish persons, either in the broad sense the totality of Jews throughout the world; or in the narrow sense a given Jewish grouping, geographically located, e.g. French Judaicity or New York Judaicity.’

‘Judaism is the ensemble of the doctrines, beliefs and institutions of the Jews, fixed or not, written or oral; in short, the values and the organization which constitute or rule the life of a Jewish group; or again, the Jewish culture in a broad sense: collective customs, religion, philosophy, jurisdiction and arts.’

‘Judeity is the fact and manner of being a Jew: the ensemble of the characteristics, experienced and objective, sociological, psychological and biological which make a Jew; the manner of living of a Jew, at the same time his belonging to Judacity and his place in the non-Jewish world.’

II

We now come to this parallel with Negritude. It is interesting to note that the situation presented itself to me in the same manner as for a Negro. I had to describe, set limits to and define my own Jewish personality among others by reference to the collective personality of the group of which I was part. Now the Jewish group lived in a peculiar and distorting condition, that of being dominated, from which arise special difficulties of ob-
jective self-understanding: illusions about oneself, created by the accusations of others; and from self-rejection, and the counter-myths opposing those accusations. All these were generated by an objectively abnormal condition, evidently not comparable to that of people, masters of their own destiny, among whom the relations between religion and culture, for example, were in quite another style. The notion of Negritude responded in short to the same need: it took cognizance of the separation of the Negro, summarized it conveniently in one word, and presented itself like a flag, for one's self-liberation and self-reconquest.

It would have been surprising if such a notion as Negritude, claiming to express and illustrate the condition of the Negro with his riches and his deficiencies, his revolt and his aspirations, should not at the same time conceal all his troubles and difficulties. It suffices to browse through some incontestable texts (since these are signed by those who invented Negritude and still defend it), to discover there not only the same intensity of passion but also the same confusion from excess of meanings.

Aimé Césaire, who to my knowledge was the inventor of the term Negritude, had given it some approximations in magnificent but essentially poetic language. It fell to L. S. Senghor to try to formulate definitions of it. When Senghor defined Negritude as 'the ensemble of cultural values in the black world, as they are expressed in the life, the institutions and the works of the Negroes', it corresponds in brief to what I have proposed to call strictly Judaism. It concerns the cultural and religious traditions, such as continue to be lived today, not by men, individuals or structured groups as such. Thus when Senghor adds: 'Our one care has been to adopt this Negritude, and by living it, to deepen its meaning', it becomes a matter of the equivalent of Judeity, i.e. a manner of living and of treating these values.

When the Dakar Meeting is presented by the organizers as the 'States General of Negritude' (Alíoune Diop), they mean apparently that it concerns a gathering of men, and even an exhaustive gathering, at least in its representativeness. The proof is that the discussions there bore precisely on this point. Thus the meeting concerned something more akin to Judaicity than to Judeity.

When another organizer declares that 'Negritude must be defended and illustrated', one does not know whether the reference is to men or to values; probably this time to values; to which besides the official title of 'Festival of Negro Arts' corresponds better although this appellation itself is quite restrictive, if one admits that a culture cannot be summarized in the arts. In the same way that one speaks equally of 'Negro humanism' and of contributing to the 'civilization of the universal' (Senghor), let us at least admit that we have here an oscillation between men and culture.

Of course, let us not drive our methodological naïveté to exaggeration; in fact more or less confusedly, Negritude embraces at the same time the ensemble of black men, the values of the Negro world, and the participation of each man and each group in this world and its values. And, as I said of the conceptual trilogy concerning the Jews, we do not in reality have to deal with three closed compartments, each one concealing well limited contents. But is it not even more necessary to have at one's disposal tools adequate for each perspective? For each manipulation of the black man's existence?

It is clearly seen, in any case, through the malaise and anger of the young generations of whom I spoke above; in talking so much of Negritude and black humanism, they say with indignation, men are beginning to be forgotten in favour of values! Furthermore all
Negroes are far from being free nationally and in the new black nations all Negroes are far from being free socially. After the colonialist or alongside him, or even with his complicity, 'today Negroes exploit the Negroes', today 'we live in the era of Tschombé!

It is undeniable that the constitution of large sections of the black world into nations has meant the retreat of black negativity, just as the foundation of the State of Israel has so happily blurred Jewish negativity, to such an extent that certain Jews, too easily forgetful, doubt whether it ever existed. And one can understand that the peoples of Senegal and the Ivory Coast, henceforth masters of their destiny, politically at least, want to insist upon the unique positiveness of their values and of negro arts. Henceforth only the affirmative and even glorious aspect of Negritude is to be retained. It is also true that if the oppression of the Black World has relented, it has not disappeared. And such euphoria may seem premature and a little detached, if not insulting, for those whose Negritude remains more a burden than a source of congratulations. That is the origin of the troubled dissatisfaction which was felt by numerous participants in the Dakar Meeting: one saw there the outline of another version of the conflict between the haves and have-nots, this time both black peoples. One can understand why the organizers preferred not to invite certain people: the South Africans, for example, or even the Guineans or Cubans; they are people who would probably persist in recalling the negativity of the black condition which still remains.

Hence the young people's revolt against this euphoric totalization, and their temptation to an equally global condemnation. If affirmation of the positiveness of black values may veil the negativity of the black man’s miseries, these pseudo-values must be denounced. 'Culture turned towards the past!', 'Petrified past', 'The tom-toms of Cesaire-Senghor Negritude sound like cracked cauldrons'. The Dahomey High Commissioner in the end said just this: 'Negritude will liberate or do nothing.' In his bitter revolt against the whole black condition, the black American writer LeRoy-Jones goes so far as to contest the existence of any black culture: 'Black culture does not exist.'

It is difficult for a non-Black to intrude in one of the gravest internal conflicts which can agitate a present-day Black. And if I permit myself to open my mouth in such a discussion, it is not only because I believe in the virtue of a certain rationality, even in the most passionate debates: it is simply, I repeat, because it seemed to me not without interest to compare on this point the Black condition and the Jewish condition. And in the hope that the methodological proposition, which has been of great help to me in one case, may inspire a similar one: it may be necessary to dissect the concept of Negritude, as I was obliged to do with Judaism.

Thus Negritude is still largely negative, and must be seen as such, unless it is to become a source of mystification. The end of self-rejection is certainly still premature for a Negro. But inversely would it not also be catastrophic to refuse at one stroke all Black values, if they exist, past or being built up, because the black condition remains wretched? The danger can be seen when one reads in the declaration of the same Dahomey High Commissioner that Africa needs 'the worker’s hammer before the sculptor's chisel... Africa will sing its most beautiful song only when it is free'. In this he is probably not altogether wrong. But he cannot see that we have here two different plans, certainly closely linked, but which one must take care not to confuse? That it is necessary to distinguish between cultural values, past, present or future, the different black communities with their different socio-political problems, and finally the manner in which each black individual approaches these values, sees them and contests them,
the manner in which he places himself in the community, conforms to it or revolts against it? Is it not indispensable to name and to define separately what I propose to call Negritude, Negrism and Negritude.

Negritude would be the ensemble of black persons, groups and peoples.

Negrism would be the ensemble of the black people’s traditional and cultural values.

Negritude, finally, would be reserved for the manner of feeling and of being black, by belonging to a group of men and by fidelity to these values.

III

It is, of course, not my ambition in these few pages to wish to satisfy complex methodological needs, which depend as much on epistemology as on the sociology of knowledge. It would be enough for me to have been able to indicate a direction for research and incidentally have added an argument to this hypothesis of a certain resemblance between most conditions of dominance. And can I report in passing, that the same need, born of the same confusion, is found in the domain of Islam? For the same term, ‘Islam’ signifies sometimes the ensemble of believers in the religion proposed by Mahomet, sometimes the religion itself, and the ethical values which ordinarily accompany it? And then it is perhaps time to operate with the same distinctions?

Of course these parallels do not at all suppress the specificness of each terminology and content, for the major reason that beyond the resemblances, the differences between conditions and tradition are of extreme importance. Oppression of the Jews does not coincide with that of the Negroes, nor with that of the colonial peoples. Nor that of each Negro with that of all Negroes. And armed with these blue-prints and common tools, it is for the Negroes to make their own inventories. One can only suggest the questions: how to characterize the contents of Negritude, or more exactly henceforth of each Negritude. If it were understood, as I propose, that Negritude is only the degree of each Negro’s participation in the group’s collective personality, one conceives that it will be an essentially dynamic notion with several variables. On each occasion what will be the share of negativity and of positivity? Can one manage to describe and at the limit determine a coefficient of Negritude, like the coefficient of Judeity?

Perhaps it will equally be seen that if the dialectic of the negative-positive is of enormous importance within each Negritude, it becomes less preoccupying in relation to Negrism, i.e. to black cultural values.

In fact, strictly speaking, a culture could not be negative; it can be insufficient, decayed, ill-adapted to new needs, even contradictory and dispersed depending upon geography and the different influences to which it is subject, but it cannot be affected by the minus sign. That is why I have proposed not to speak of the negativity of Judaism, or now of Negrism, or of Islam, which would be absurd, but to distinguish between tradition and culture. So that it may be possible to place oneself in a perspective of more or less complete fidelity to the past, or in a functionalist attitude with regard to values; to refer oneself to relatively fixed religious, ethical or aesthetic norms, or to reject them, or at least to wish to pass beyond them in the name of a permanent recreation of rules and of works more absolutely adapted to the needs of contemporary man. Such a versatility of reference permits one to pass beyond the false problem of all or nothing, of complete acceptance or absolute rejection.

Whatever one may make of these problems, passion-rousing as they are, the most important thing, I feel, is
this movement of *distinction*, which alone will permit the bursting of a fallacious and stifling unity, at several levels of Black reality. (It was not a chance of the cultural and social history of the Christians that they made use rather early of the concept of Christiandom side by side with that of Christianity. In any case, this was assuredly beneficial to them).

The Black must keep the right to contest his tradition; and he must have the right to keep his distance from the group. For this, he must be able to distinguish this tradition and the manner of living it, i.e. to consent to it or to refuse it, or more exactly to consent to it or refuse it in a variable manner. He must be able to affirm himself sufficiently, without being stifled by his tradition or his group, or embarrassed in his revolt; and he must be able to refuse himself sufficiently without being forced to deny himself totally. And for all that, he must be supplied with adequate tools.

Finally I do not exclude that the terms I propose here be judged inelegant and that others are chosen. It is the concepts which seem indispensable to me, however they are expressed. I do not even exclude that these concepts may have only a temporary use. For example, exclusively until the constitution of all the Blacks into independent nations, leading perhaps to the definite bursting of Negrity, which will then be dissolved in humanity. And because Negrity, fundamentally and in spite of appearances, corresponds not so much to a community of race but to a community of condition, which is a condition of oppression, under the mythical pretext of race. Negrity is nothing but the ethnic response of the Blacks to the ethnic accusation of the Whites. One finds the same global and probably provisional response among most colonial peoples, who often react with racism coupled with pseudo-ethnic solidarity, exaggerated self-assertion and ethnic rejection of the colonizer.

Perhaps finally the very concept of Negrism will be judged altogether hazardous if not useless. Can one speak of a cultural community of Blacks of the whole world? Now that the blacks are divided among moslems, christians, catholics and protestants, fetishists and even some jews, what is this ‘Black Humanism’ of which Senghor speaks? Unless it be that principally and always the reference is to the colour of the skin. For some years, to pass beyond or to enrich this too precise and narrow ethnical reference, most African leaders insist on the original geographic community of all the Blacks. Africa, of which we hardly know if it will remain a poetical myth of the past or become a political project. On the eve of his death, Malcolm X, the dissident chief of the American Black Muslims dreamt, it seems, of a veritable convergence of world negrity towards the African homeland. For Aimé Césaire, poet of the West Indies, mother Africa furnishes an extraordinary matrix of common dreams. But, I repeat, it is still the business of the Blacks to determine and to define precisely their relations with Africa, real or mythical, and the exact subject-matter of the debate for us; from the moment they talk of this cultural community, imagined or really alive, they must have at their disposal a concept and at least one unequivocal word to designate it.

And if one day a reclassification of this terminology proved itself still necessary, I should not be surprised or regret it, as I believe in a dynamism of all human groups and happily of all conditions, and so, by correlation, in an inexorable dynamism of all concepts and even perhaps in their periodical death and their inevitable replacement.
1. Arnold Mandel: *Les Voies du Hassidisme*, Calmann-Levy, 1965, p. 226. 'The Term “Judeity” invented and used by Albert Memmi is intended apparently to indicate the Jewish equivalent of “Negritude”.' Arnold Mandel writes less happily when he continues: ‘(It seems that Judeity) indicates a Jewish way of life, an abstraction compounded of spirituality and Jewish culture’. For the relationship between Judeity and Jewish culture I would refer to the last chapters of my *Portrait of a Jew* (Gallimard 1962). Also the second part of *The Liberation of the Jew* (Gallimard 1966). It will be seen there that one of the dimensions of Judeity is assuredly the relative determination positive or negative, in companion with Jewish culture and tradition.


3. I should like to express my warm gratitude to Prof. Maurice de Gandillac who has kindly helped me to step safely in this double demarche, both linguistic and conceptual.

4. I should not omit that there was also the term Juiverie. But (a) it has a pejorative meaning, which rightly caused it to be avoided by Jewish publicists and by every scholar anxious to discard from his vocabulary every normative and above all negative dimension. (b) It was as ambiguous as Judaism, although more limited in meaning: it meant sometimes a Jewish group (e.g. ‘The Jewry of Marrakesh’) sometimes a manner of being of the individual Jew, sometimes a manner of being of a Jewish group. (c) These different meanings were already contained in the term ‘Judaism’, to which it added nothing, except the pejorative aura, and it was scarcely more precise.

5. Do we always have to use the same word Judaism for the renewals and inventions of contemporary Jewish thinkers and essayists who, taking up a position in a certain manner in the prolongation of this cultural tradition, give it almost a new physiognomy? It is a grave problem, for the specialist at least, to know which is the exact domain of the Jewish heritage, whether it possesses a definite and in some way jealous unity, which would exclude excessive innovators, or whether it should comprehend an evolutionary dynamism which, while enriching it, transforms it in the course of history. In the same way, in order not to multiply the working concepts, I have thought it well for the moment to include under the same heading the institutions which organize the Jews’ collective lives and which derive in part from their values, but which to my mind also inspire them in return.

6. I have said that I did not propose to elaborate here this concept of Judeity. One would also have had equally to consider the reference to non-Jews, which is very important because it is at the source of its negative aspect. It is this dimension which has particularly struck J. P. Sartre in his *Reflections on the Jewish Question* probably because he was surrounded by Jewish friends and collaborators who believed that they scarcely any longer had any positive attachments to the Jewish group.


8. This is why I can only regret that very esteemed writers such as G. Friedmann and R. Misrahi continue to confuse Judeity and Judaicity, which in their writings signify sometimes the Jewish group and sometimes the manner of being Jewish.

Finally one may absolutely reject any distinctions in the Jewish reality and may for example affirm that one cannot even conceive a Judaicity which does not totally adhere to Judaism, which is always identical with it, and that a ‘true’ Jew is one who is in 100% solidarity with his group, positively and negatively, and who coincides exactly with traditional beliefs and thoughts and who respects their practical consequences in their entirety. But this is to speak in the name of an ideal Jew and of an ideal Judaism and to forbid oneself any concrete examination of the living Jew. Besides, may I point out that this extreme and in fact normative and unscientific position may nevertheless be included in the proposed categories: by deciding to limit oneself to speak only of individual Jews having a coefficient of Judaicity equal to 1?

9. For all this, see my *Portrait du Colonisé* (new edition 1966, J. J. Pauvert, collection ‘Libertés’).

10. I have been told that in the review *Tropiques*, where the first texts on negritude appeared, Aimé Césaire’s more precise formulas may be found. Unfortunately I have not succeeded in procuring them for myself. In any case, there is no contradiction on this subject between Aimé Césaire and L. S. Senghor.

11. Definition printed most recently in *Liberté* 1, ‘Negritude and Humanity’, Édition du Seuil, 1966. The interventions of the Festival of Dakar have not changed any-
thing in it.

12. Besides the Blacks are completely scandalized when they meet this thesis among the Whites even when they are their sure friends. This is what happened to Sartre. In one of his last essays, Black Orpheus, this author – without omitting however all reference to a black culture – insisted exaggeratedly to their taste on the negativity of Negritude. He made numerous Blacks indignant, who nevertheless admired him and were grateful to him for helping them to define themselves. But Sartre wanted above all to denounce the oppression from which the Blacks suffered; he was thus led to insist upon the part of Negritude concerned with relations with non-Blacks. It is in the same way, I believe, that his Reflections on the Jewish Question must be read. He spoke as a white and non-Jew, and did not have to preoccupy himself so much with the positive content of Judeity or Negritude.

13. Thus one of my West Indian friends tells me that the term 'Negrism', which was said to exist already in West Indian speech if not in the written language, had a slightly pejorative sound. He suggests replacing it by 'Negrism'. In the same way, I had the choice between Negrity and Nigrity, i.e. between the Latin root nigr- and the French root negr-. If it depended only on me, I would have chosen the Latin root and proposed: Nigrity. But since Negritude already existed, and not Nigrity, I preferred to keep to the same line.

14. Another parallel with the Jewish condition.