

If I Should Forget You, Thessaloniki...

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In the 15th-century, the Jews of the Iberian Peninsula began a diaspora after the Edict of Expulsion enforced by the Catholic Monarchs. Beyazid, the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, offered hospitality to these Sephardic Jews, who settled in cities such as Thessaloniki, Izmir and Istanbul. Thessaloniki thus became a very important trading and cultural port, a unique place of exchange promoted especially by the networks of trust established by these Sephardic Jews. The golden era in the city continued with the emergence of printing and lasted until the 19th-century, with the arrival of a privileged group of Livorno Jews who acted as transmitters of western trade. After the Greek invasion of Thessaloniki in 1912, a new diaspora began towards the West that meant the end of Sephardism as such. However, its fruits, from Marranism to the Turkish *Dönhem*, survive in the origin of the great currents of modernity that we currently find in the Mediterranean and that make up its plural identity.

I am not a Sephardic ethnologist, or a specialist in erudite studies on this subject, but I became interested in it because of a book I wanted to write as a tribute to my father after he died. To talk about him, I talked about his ancestors and, of course, beyond personal ancestors, the whole history of the Sephardic Jews was glimpsed, which took me back to Spain. Since then I have read and reflected on it greatly and, the more I read, the more profoundly Mediterranean I feel. I consider myself to be French but I also believe my culture is very Mediterranean. I am a defender, and a militant, of the Mediterranean idea.

In the Roman Mediterranean, even before Titus forced the dispersion of the Jews of Palestine, there had already been a diaspora. Testimony of this are the epistles and speeches of Saint Paul, who at first addressed the Jews of Thessaloniki, Corinth, Rome... It

seems that this diaspora was very important in the Iberian Peninsula.

In the 15th-century, Spanish Jews represented one third of the total population of the Peninsula. Other more modest estimations affirm that there were between 200,000 and 400,000. We must also take into account the conversions. And, given the tolerance of the Islamic powers – towards Jews and Christians – and the Catholic Monarchs until 1492 – towards Jews and Muslims –, there were many Muslim farmers in the lands re-conquered by the Catholic Monarchs. The most important characteristic of Granada's glory is that it was a kingdom that brought together three religions that lived in harmony. There had been some small attempt to persecute the Jews by the Berber sovereigns in the 11th and 12th centuries but they were brief and superficial. In 1397, more sponta-

neously than encouraged by the authorities, revolts against the Jews began, undoubtedly caused by economic difficulties. The people blamed the Jews. In that period there was a wave of conversions. The converts, that is, the Jews who had become Christians, mostly chose Christianity out of fear, although some also did so from conviction. Many of the converts who Christianised out of fear continued to secretly practise Judaism within the family.

The Inquisition began, ordered by Isabella I of Castile, and, contrary to what is believed, before the Edict of Expulsion in 1492. It was created in 1480 to unmask Christians who secretly practised Judaism. It is known that one of the great inquisitors, Tomás de Torquemada, was of Jewish origin. In accordance with a well-studied process, converts – luckily, not all – were the most violent inquisitors. We must recall that Saint Paul pushed the Jews into conversion and that he was responsible for Christianity's break with Judaism. There was a rabbi who transformed into Pablo de Santa Maria to become the Bishop of Burgos.

Therefore, at that time the ethnic or social problem was not important. They were, above all, issues of religious purity. The key event occurred, of course, in 1492. The Edict demanded conversion or expulsion. Some Jews and Muslims converted; others left. In Andalusia, many Muslims worked on the farms of the lords who tolerated the practice of Islamic worship in secrecy. They did not allow minarets, but they knew they used houses that, in fact, functioned as mosques. Until the early 17th-century, Islamism was practised in the rural world. For Jews, in contrast, it was more difficult because they lived above all in urban areas. It is more difficult

to practise Judaism in secrecy in cities. In the 17th-century, a wave of repression carried out by the Inquisition would definitively sweep the Muslims from the Peninsula. Many were forcibly shipped to North Africa.

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For the Jews, the first diaspora from Palestine scattered over the ancient and, especially, Roman world. Later, a new diaspora began in Spain. Today, we still do not know the number of exiled people, but they were probably over 100,000; perhaps one day historians will agree. Some Jews went to Portugal, where, in 1498, six years later, an edict of expulsion of the same type was enacted. Again there were conversions and exiles. This diaspora was aimed at Provence, the north of Africa – especially Morocco – and the Netherlands, although the Middle East was also an important destination. It is worth recalling that Constantinople fell in 1453 and that the Ottomans conquered a part of the European territory comprising Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania and Hungary and reached the very gates of Vienna. This Empire extended from Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine and Egypt to Tunisia. Sultan Beyazid II offered hospitality to the Sephardic Jews and many of them settled in Thessaloniki, Istanbul and Izmir. This diaspora is very important because these people moved based on a pull effect; they were received as guests. Later there was another migration towards Tuscany. Indeed, the Great Duke of Tuscany accommodated religious refugees, mainly in Livorno,

where he wanted to develop an important economic activity. These religious refugees were Catholics from England and Sephardic Jews who arrived as converted Catholics and re-Judaized themselves under these conditions of safety. Livorno is not a city with a ghetto like Venice but quite an open place which became the most important port in the 17th-century. We should also add that in the 18th-century the Great Duchy of Tuscany became a very important centre of Enlightenment philosophy and, in its turn, of secular thought.

Thessaloniki, which had been ravaged by the Goths, the Huns and the Bulgarians, and sacked in the 12th-century by the Normans of Sicily, was taken by the Turks in 1430. Totally depopulated, it was a city in ruins. In 1492, 20,000 Sephardic Jews settled there. Thessaloniki is geographically well located with respect to the Ottoman Empire. The city became the port that enabled it to be linked to the interior, that is, the current Serbia, Hungary and Romania. It was in this port where trade and exchanges with the West were concentrated. Its vitality began with the exchanges that, in that period, were mainly focused in Venice. Venice and Thessaloniki maintained a very intensive economic activity during the 16th-century.

Thessaloniki preserves the marks of the Sephardic micro-cosmos of the city because the migrants took refuge around the synagogues, which bore the names of their places of origin. There was the Catalonia synagogue, the Aragon synagogue, the Castile, Andalusia and Majorca synagogues; moreover, and this enables us to see that the newly arrived also came from other places, there was the Provence synagogue, the Mograbi synagogue (of Maghrebian people), the

Calabria synagogue and also the Ashkenazi synagogue, frequented by those arriving from northern Europe. The extraordinary thing is that the Castilian language acted as a mechanism of integration for all these people from diverse origins. However, in Spain, Catalans spoke Catalan; Galicians, Galician, and so on. But when they arrived in the city as migrants, they all integrated through Castilian.

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This language was called *Djidio*, which in Spanish means “the language of the Jews”. According to an anecdote, in the late 19th-century, several Spanish priests arrived in Thessaloniki eager to discover this place where old Spanish was spoken, and many natives from Thessaloniki exclaimed: “look, Jewish priests!” For them, it was unbelievable that others spoke this language, the 15th-century Castilian language that the Jews had taken with them and to which they had added some Turkish words.

The population of Thessaloniki was a kind of genetic fruit salad, given that its residents came from diverse places. It should be stressed that in Spain, in the Iberian Peninsula, in the time of the great invasions, many women were raped, which resulted in a great genetic mixing. It should also be added that, until the 17th-century, like the Turks, the great families had slaves of Christian origin, who were Judaized upon completing their service and freed. This explains why the

appearance of the residents of Thessaloniki is so varied that it is not possible to provide any morphological idea of them.

Thessaloniki was a kind of autonomous city. The population belonged to the Empire, of course, but was subject to the intermediation of religious authorities, in charge of collecting taxes, establishing relations with Istanbul, and so on

I mention this because it is the city where my grandparents and my father were born. In fact, it is an interesting micro-cosmos. The case is unique: this Sephardic population who spoke Spanish had been a majority since the beginning, and continued to be until the year 1912 and even a little later.

60% of the population spoke old Spanish. There was 10% (later 20%) of Turks, 20% of Greeks and some Bulgarians and Macedonians. Everybody lived to the Jewish rhythm; in other words, the shops and the public buildings closed on Saturday; this did not prevent Muslims from going to the mosque on Friday, or Orthodox Christians going to church on Sunday. The population was a sample of all social classes, from the upper levels to the stevedores and workers. Moreover, socialist ideas were introduced in the Ottoman Empire through a newspaper that the stevedores read, *La solidarité ouvrière*. It was in Thessaloniki where the early trade union organisations were founded.

The city enjoyed internal autonomy because, in 1523, the Sultan had enacted a



Jews of Thessaloniki, 1917.

charter called *Liberation*. Thessaloniki was a kind of autonomous city. The population belonged to the Empire, of course, but was subject to the intermediation of religious authorities, in charge of collecting taxes, establishing relations with Istanbul, and so on. This was applicable to all religions. The territorial division had not been imported by the Ottomans, who had established a religious administration. As there was no territorial separation, the people of different religions could live in the same cities. These communities lived together and related with each other frequently.

The networks of trust enabled Sephardic Jews from ports such as Thessaloniki, Izmir, Alexandria or Istanbul to have exchanges through their relatives or friends of relatives settled in the western world

Moreover, what had been a reason for coexistence and cordiality became the cause of a tragedy in the Bosnian war. Thessaloniki was, therefore, a small republic whose autonomy was under religious rule. It was the golden era of the Ottoman Empire, under Suleiman the Magnificent, a great emperor.

French became widespread among the Sephardic populations. There had been an alliance between Ferdinand I and the Turks to contain the power of Charles V, whose empire comprised Spain, Austria and Germany. It was a kind of counterweight policy. There was also the regime of capitulations, a legacy of the Crusades. Turks permitted Franks – the word *frank* was maintained in Thessaloniki, where there was a Frankish district – to teach religion and travel to the holy places. The children of some

Islamic Turkish families and those of some Sephardic families followed that Frankish education. Thus, France was present in the golden Ottoman era.

Trade exchanges between the East and West were made from Venice to Thessaloniki. Thessaloniki not only experienced a golden trade era but enriched all the inland cities: Uskub, Skopje, Sarajevo, and so on. Along with Venice, it traded with other cities in Italy, the Netherlands or North Africa but above all it became a hub of trade thanks to the Sephardic network of trust. Sephardic Jews maintained family relations with people who converted to Christianity in Spain, Bayonne, Bordeaux and other regions. These existing networks of trust came from old family relations. This always brings about a development of the economy, mainly in very dangerous times. Sephardic Jews trusted each other: there were verbal agreements. The networks of trust enabled Sephardic Jews from ports such as Thessaloniki, Izmir, Alexandria or Istanbul to have exchanges through their relatives or friends of relatives settled in the western world. It should be noted that at that time the cloth industry began.

The economic power of Thessaloniki was so great that an event unseen in history took place: in 1565, the Jews decided to boycott Ancona. The Pope had authorised the burning in Ancona of around ten converts, who, victims of the Inquisition, practised Judaism in secrecy. Eminent figures, with a good position in the Sultan's court, intervened to ask for other Sephardic cities to boycott Ancona. For the first time in history, Jews were not boycotted by non-Jews but rather the opposite. Although it did not last because economic interests carried more weight, it is certainly a very curious historical event.

The golden era is also cultural because in 1515 printing arrived in Thessaloniki and works were published in Spanish, while in the Ottoman Empire it dates back to 1728, two centuries later. Many learned people, trained in the major universities of Salamanca and Toledo, lived in Thessaloniki. They knew Latin, Arabic and Hebrew and contributed the great culture of that multicultural Spain. They also knew Greek because it was through Arabs that Greek culture reached La Sorbonne via Fez and Spain. The golden cultural period began to weaken in the 17th-century with the disappearance of that ancient multicultural strength.

The Netherlands represented the free world: all religions were tolerated. Moreover, in the 18th-century the works of the philosophers of the French Enlightenment were printed in secrecy in the Netherlands, the nation of freedom

The 18th-century was the period when many Spanish and Portuguese converts, apparently Catholics, left Portugal or Spain for Holland, Italy and Thessaloniki. Uriel da Costa, sacristan in a church in Portugal, went to Amsterdam and persuaded the synagogue that he was a Jew. His case is quite interesting because once he was recognised as a Jew, he acted in such an impious and secular manner that the synagogue expelled him. The terms of the expulsion were terrible: “Damn you when you work tomorrow! Damn you always!” It includes a series of frightening curses. The ill-fated Uriel da Costa, sentenced to expulsion, repented, was self-critical and converted to Judaism again. But he continued to behave like an unbeliever and when they excluded him again,

he committed suicide. Another convert had enough strength not to kill himself and remain outside all religions: Baruch Spinoza. During that same century, some descendants of my French family re-Judaized in the Netherlands, which they left to move to Livorno and, later, to Thessaloniki. The Netherlands represented the free world: all religions were tolerated. Moreover, in the 18th-century the works of the philosophers of the French Enlightenment were printed in secrecy in the Netherlands, the nation of freedom. At the same time, Tuscany was another bastion of the Enlightenment. The Netherlands, Livorno – and all of Tuscany – and the independent republic of Thessaloniki were the points where this Jewish emigration was concentrated.

In reality, the reasons for this late diaspora remain unknown. For some it was the fear of the Inquisition, but in other cases it was more complicated than that. The history of the Cardoso brothers is a clear example. In the 17th-century, Fernando Cardoso was a court doctor. A friend of Lope de Vega, he wrote poems and was officially recognised. One day he went to the Venice ghetto and asked to be recognised as a Jew. The Rabbinic authorities accepted him on the condition that he would be the doctor of the poor. He published in Spanish *De la excelencia de los hebreos*, where he stated that Moses’ law is higher than Christ’s. This was his theme. His brother, Miguel Cardoso, went to Livorno, where he became the disciple and theoretician of the Messiah Sabbataï Zevi, a very strange case for the Sephardic Jews of the Ottoman Empire, but which had some repercussions throughout the country.

Sabbataï Zevi, a very pious young man, had mystical ecstasies: he used to dance in

the synagogue as King David did, and he believed it had been revealed to him that he was the Messiah announced by the prophets of Israel. His mission was to free the Jews and, by extension, humankind. It should be pointed out that Messianism prevailed in Thessaloniki. When the converts arrived, as they were not circumcised and had dietary habits that did not respect the law, the rabbis had great difficulty recognising them as Jews. Moreover, in the cemetery of Thessaloniki, on its headstones, the inscriptions were engraved in Latin characters rather than Hebrew characters, a language that they did not know. The converts, sometimes, re-Judaised. Saint Paul explained the rupture with Judaism with these words: "What matters is faith, not law." This was the case of these converts who said: "We are Jews by faith and not by law." With these people who had come from abroad, the climate was hysterical, mainly when the Kabbalah became more prominent than the Talmud. Kabbalists advocated the idea that the universe was born as a result of the divine exile and that, since God withdrew, the bases of perfection disappeared and the world is in decay. In this somewhat agitated atmosphere the idea of the arrival of the Messiah took root.

In a decadent world in which good is mixed with evil, the mission of the Messiah was to go to the kingdom of evil to collect the portions of good, join them together and reach again the end of times.

Sephardic Jews changed their mind about this conception of the divine exile as a reflection of their own exile, and the *Marranos* (Spanish Jews forced to convert to Christianity) said that they were doubly exiled, as they were also exiled within the

Catholic faith. For Miguel Cardoso, Sabbataï Zevi, the Messiah who converted to Islam under the Sultan's threat, was the real Messiah they were waiting for, as he had to convert to a *Marrano* like all the *Marranos* who had recognised him: Marranism, which is a kind of exile, enables people to reach the new world of redemption.

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The prediction of Sabbataï Zevi, who proclaimed himself Messiah, caused great enthusiasm. In Thessaloniki, the traders, convinced that it was the end of time, were waiting for him after having destroyed their account books. Boussuet himself was surprised by the hustle and bustle of the Jewish districts of Alsace. The Jews of Hamburg quickly travelled to Palestine to follow the events. The Sultan, faced with the mass agitation, decided to exile such an irritating character in an isolated castle.

Two hundred believers continued to sing, dance and have fun while waiting for the message. The Sultan, politically restless, finally asked for the conversion to Islam of Sabbataï Zevi, who, dressed in Islamic clothes, went to pray in the mosques. Finally, the Sultan exiled him to Albania.

Some Sephardic Jews, mainly in Thessaloniki and Izmir, converted to Islam, although in secrecy they continued to be disciples of the Messiah. In private, they continued reciting the typical Saturday prayers,

waiting for him to return, because he had to return. Out of the approximately 20% of Turks who were in Thessaloniki, 10% were, until the early 20th-century, of Sabbath origin. They are the *Dönhem*. We must note that there were ramifications of Sabbatism everywhere, even in Austria-Hungary.

In the 20th-century, some Livorno residents who were the transmitters of the expansion of western trade settled in Thessaloniki to trade, among other things, in the durum wheat grain from Macedonia to Italy, although they also traded with France and England, which had manufactured products, and so on. They enjoyed extraordinary privileges because they were consular protégés. Indeed, in the 18th-century, France, England and Austria-Hungary posted consuls in the ports of the Ottoman Empire. At the beginning, they were trade exchange agents. They were French and English, but, because of the excess of work, they soon had consular protégés, mainly from Livorno. Depending on the agreements with the Turks and the western powers, these protégés were subject to Turkish laws and taxes, but also to Rabbinic prescriptions and taxes. They also had a very particular status. They were *Neo-Marranos* because they were no longer Christians but secularised. The first were the consular protégés of Austria-Hungary; later were those of France and Belgium, a country that needed French-speaking people in its service, as in the case of Livorno Jews. When Italy became independent in 1860, they automatically acquired Italian nationality and practised endogamy with each other, so that the families preserved their privileges.

In Thessaloniki, these Livorno Jews traded in durum wheat grain and flour, but also all kinds of crafts, such as tobacco factories.

They also founded the modern bank and secular schools based on the French model. It can be argued that through this economic and secular revolution, the 18th-century of the Enlightenment and the 19th-century of techno-capitalism entered Thessaloniki hastily. The resistance of the religions and the rabbis was very skilfully handled and exceeded by all the enterprises created by these eminent families who enjoyed a privileged protégé status.

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With modernity, French was an increasingly widespread language. The inhabitants of Thessaloniki spoke Spanish; those of Livorno, Italian; and German was also useful because the development of the German economy was increasingly important in the second half of the 19th-century. My father studied in the French-German school of Thessaloniki, where both languages were taught. It was also a period in which European customs spread: the fashion was to be clean-shaven instead of having a beard. Forgetting the strictures of Islamic food enabled coexistence, cordiality and communication: you could go to a tavern with non-Jews, Greeks and Turks, have lunch and coexist...

This evolution was notable not only in Thessaloniki but also in Alexandria and Izmir. Traders travelled to France. Youths studied in France to become dentists and doctors; some of them even began to settle

there. The train and gas in the city favoured economic activity in general. It was a new golden era.

It can be argued that the active agents of all this inter-Mediterranean communication were the Sephardic Jews, encouraged mainly by the Livorno Jews. All this happened in the era when the Ottoman Empire was falling apart and national feelings became nationalist. It was the moment of the emergence of Greece, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria. Western imperialism weakened the Ottoman Empire further: England occupied Egypt and snatched it away from the Turks, France took possession of Tunisia, the Italians took Tripolitania. In 1912 the war broke out between Turks and Serbians, Greeks and Bulgarians, the three latter formed an alliance to obtain Macedonia. Greeks were the first to arrive in Thessaloniki and occupied it. Instead of creating a multiethnic empire, national states were formed under tragic conditions because each state had problems of dispersed minorities. This was the case of Greece and Turkey. Greece populated Thessaloniki with Greek refugees from the first war against Turkey, and Turks were expelled from Thessaloniki. The second war, which took place in 1922, resulted in the mass exodus of the Greeks who were in Anatolia, in the islands that had become Turkish. On both sides, some more or less concealed Turks remained. This process of Hellenisation of Thessaloniki hastened the migrations of Sephardic Jews to the West because, where the state-nation was very solid, Sephardic Jews were in a minority.

A new diaspora took place to the West and the Americas because the Spanish language enabled people to quickly adapt to Latin

America. There had already been converts who, to avoid the pressures of the Inquisition, finally joined the Jews who had preferred exile instead of conversion with some decades of delay. They had settled in Mexico and Argentina, and had often forgotten their origins. France was also a place of privilege because, along with the language, known by many Sephardic Jews, it maintained the republican traditions of universalism and hospitality. Since the start of the century, this country easily integrated migrants.

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Finally, the nation-state represented the end of a multicultural civilisation as in Thessaloniki. It meant the victory of purity, not religious as in the times of Isabella I of Castile but, in the first place, radical, typically Nazi, and later, ethnic or national. The national state always brings with it two diseases: purity and the sacralisation of the borders that no longer exist inside the states of big multiethnic empires. The national state, like the one imported from the West to the East, has almost always caused catastrophes.

Sephardism died out in the 19th-century. There have been three types of death. The easy death was through integration, as in France, where the Spanish language had been forgotten. It meant the death of Sephardism although some people still preserve it, such as Professor Haïm Séphila, who teaches Judaeo-Spanish, which is no longer spoken in homes but only in the Department

of Linguistics of the Higher Education College. Another sweet death is secularisation through mixed marriages.

The atrocious death was extermination, because, at least in Greece, the Nazis almost completely eliminated the Jewish population. They could not do this in Bulgaria, where there were also many Sephardic Jews, because they were protected there. There were also Sephardic Jews in Turkey, but they chose the diaspora.

Nostalgia, the exile in a world that has become mediocre, is what we find in Don Quixote by Cervantes, whose origins are those of a convert

The third death was undertaken through Israelisation. All those who went to Israel could preserve their language, albeit at a folkloric level, but they also merged with Israelism. This is the tragedy of the Sephardic culture.

I will put now forward what I believe are four very important conclusions.

- First, we could argue that Sephardism maintained the inter-Mediterranean communications between the East and West, even though there was, on the one hand, a world under Islamic Ottoman rule and, on the other, the world that for a long time was Christian and later secular. From the period of splendour of Thessaloniki, it was always through the networks of trust and family or tribal relations that the flourishing trade could be established in all Mediterranean countries, thanks to the possibility of communication.
- The second positive factor is Marranism itself. Many see Marranism as a Jewish

form of living in secrecy, seemingly maintaining Christian conventions, or a way of becoming authentically Christian by remembering Jewish ancestors. In my view, Marranism became apparent differently in the West. It brought about something new based on the clash of two religions within the same spirit.

The *first fruit* of the clash between the Mosaic faith and the Catholic faith was the mystical birth. Two major converts represent European mysticism: Teresa of Ávila and, above all, Saint John of the Cross. Teresa of Ávila contributed an ecstatic spell because of her love relationship with Christ, who she addresses with these sublime words: “I am in you as you are in me.” It is not possible to go any further. For Saint John of the Cross it is the mysticism of the night because, for him, the more we know, the less we know. Here we could recall Sabbatai Zevi’s Neo-Marranism.

The *second fruit* is nostalgia, perhaps under the influence of the Kabbalah. In the Kabbalah, not only is there the exile of the divinity, of the male god, but also an allusion to his wisdom, which is a feminine principle. Nostalgia, the exile in a world that has become mediocre, is what we find in Don Quixote by Cervantes, whose origins are those of a convert. This great novel can only be explained based on Cervantes’ profound feeling for this source, although he was apparently Catholic. He was no longer a Jew, but he felt as if he lacked something. He sought an image, Dulcinea. Who is she?

The *third fruit* is doubt. The two religions destroy each other to produce doubt. And here we find Montaigne. He stated, rightly, that his maternal ancestors were Jews and, therefore, converts. His paternal origins have

never been studied in depth; it is known that they were herring traders and bore a Portuguese name. They settled in Bordeaux, a region where there were many converts from Portugal and Spain. In my view, if Montaigne is inexplicable, it is because of his origins. Because, how is it possible to explain that in a period of wars of religion and fanaticism he manifests in his *Essais* such great freedom of spirit? He does not cite Christ one single time! This is, at least, surprising. Of course, Montaigne had sided with the Catholics during the wars of religion, but he acted out of prudent conformism because he was also a friend of La Boétie, who was one of the most subversive and radical thinkers of the time. In *De la servitude volontaire*, La Boétie argues that if tyrants rule it is not only because they are tyrants but because they intimidate the people who, in the end, prefer to accept tyranny. It is a book of extraordinary strength. Montaigne, despite paying tribute to La Boétie and publishing his friend's works posthumously, never published *De la servitude volontaire* because he knew it was an explosive text. Moreover, the Huguenots used this book.

Spinoza rejected all religions after having been excommunicated. But he did so with an unusual boldness that consists of suppressing the God the creator of the world to place divinity within the world

The most mysterious aspect is that, in a letter to his father, Montaigne speaks of the death of La Boétie (his friend dies young because of the Black Death). At the moment when he receives the last rites from a priest, La Boétie says: "I die in that faith that Moses planted in Egypt, which was

transported to Judea, and which through our parents was gradually passed from one to the other until it reached France." This sentence amazed me. Jean Lacouture, in his essay on Montaigne, cites it as banal. However, it seems that La Boétie had converted origins but did he feel the need to say on his deathbed that, to some extent, he was loyal to his origins? I leave the question on the table. Why does Montaigne explain this detail to his father? This indicates once again that for Montaigne that famous friendship, "because it was he, because it was me," was perhaps because they did not recognise each other: two people living in secrecy who were no longer Jews but were aware that they had a mixed background, something that they shared common secretly. The most important thing is doubt, that radical spirit that we will later find in post-*Marranos* such as Freud or Marx.

A *fourth fruit* is of course Spinoza, who rejected all religions after having been excommunicated. But he did so with an unusual boldness that consists of suppressing the God the creator of the world to place divinity within the world. In modern science we must wait for Laplace for someone to dare disregard God the creator of the universe. This idea lies in the origins of modern thought. This means that the world has been self-created by a creative strength that it possesses itself. It is the idea that we find in Hegel's philosophy.

Marranism is at the origin of the major currents of modernity. And we must emphasise these two currents of Mediterranean origin. One comes from Spain and is the product of the clash that took place with great strength through forced conversions. The other came from Italy through the Italian

Renaissance. Both meet in the 17th-century in the only free city, Amsterdam.

- The third positive factor is what I will call Livorno Judaism or Neo-*Marrano* secularisation. Its introduction into the secular world is a very important phenomenon in the Westernisation of the East under Ottoman rule.

Sephardism is not only a kind of residual of the diaspora of the Iberian world but an influence that has often been important in terms of weakening, contradiction, dual identity and multi-identity

- Finally, the fourth positive factor is the *Dönhem*, those Turks who were secret disciples of Sabbataï Zevi who, although they had become Muslim, rapidly secularised. The clash of the two religions,

Islam and Judaism, played an important disintegrating role for both religions. In this major current of secularisation – mainly in Thessaloniki – the families sent their sons to study in French or Swiss universities. They entered the current of secularisation as Turks and Muslims. The revolution of the young Turks emerged in Thessaloniki and had within it a large number of *Dönhem*: Mustafa Kemal, transformed into Kemal Atatürk and founder of the first secular state in the Muslim world, trained in a school of *Dönhem* in Thessaloniki. Thus, it can be argued that the *Dönhem* branch played an important role in the secularisation of Turkey. Sephardism is not only a kind of residual of the diaspora of the Iberian world but an influence that has often been important in terms of weakening, contradiction, dual identity and multi-identity.