

Robert Gordis, professor of Bible at Jewish Theological Seminary of America, is a scholar I've known and admired for 35 years. Among his achievements is the proving of a common ancestor for the two biblical language streams, Semitic and Greek. He's against Jewish ecumenism of structure [parallel the Christian term, "uniformity"] and for fellowship and creative interaction among the Jewish fellowships, which he refuses to call denominations [parallel Christian term, "unity"] (28 NYT 3Apr76)....This thinksheet invites you (1) to meditate on the spread of Jewish emphases-fellowships, (2) to philosophize about this spread as typical of the human socio-condition, and (3) to interface this spread with your own spiritual heritage and your present religious community.

1. ORTHODOXY's value: "the steadfast attachment to the development of Jewish law." Let's call this principle developmentalism, or straight-lining.

2. CONSERVATISM's value: "loyalty to the tradition linked to universal values." Let's call this humane conservatism.

3. REFORM's value: "the freedom to innovate and experiment." Let's call this progressivism.

4. RECONSTRUCTIONISM's value: "the insistence upon asking the right questions both on ultimate issues and on practical problems." Let's call this radicalism.