

Dr Sandra Valabregue; Fellowship report

I had the privilege to be a French Consulate fellow, during the month of November and December 2013. During that period, I have been a visiting scholar in France at the EHESS Center for Jewish Studies directed by Anne-Sylvie Goldberg.

The CEJ (Centre des Etudes Juive at the CRH- Centre de Recherches Historique) at the EHESS (l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales) is one of the leading academic centers of Jewish studies research in France, located now in the 13th quarter of Paris, Tolbiac street, it is close to the National Library which is very convenient. The center held weekly seminar and bring important scholars along the year to give lectures and direct seminars. It has been therefore a prolific environment for my research. The EHESS has been- since its foundation in the 1947 by Lucien Febvre- very open to Jewish Studies among other religious studies. Therefore whereas Universities in France have neglected Jewish Studies, important scholars along the 20 and 21 century have been able to contribute important researches.

I am a medievalist Jewish studies scholar specialize in Medieval Kabbalah and Philosophy. I have written my PhD Dissertation, which has been published in 2010, on the notion of Eyn-sof in Kabbalah.

During my fellowship I worked on my book project about the relation of Kabbalah to philosophy, their common ground and profound differences. Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah, two Jewish disciplines founded and flourished during the Middle Age, have much in common. From the thirteen century and beyond, they infiltrated existing institutions while creating new ones. The reception of Philosophy into mystical medieval traditions is the key in understanding the emergence and development of theosophical Kabbalah. My research deals with the rise and formation of theosophical Kabbalah in light of its encounter with Neoplatonic and Aristotelian medieval Philosophy. Its goal is, while showing the tremendous impact of Philosophy on the formation of theosophical Kabbalah, to show how, in the process, Kabbalah offered a genuine counter-Theology. Thus, in some aspect, theosophical Kabbalah rose to the challenge set forth by Maimonides' revolution in order to establish a new competing Theology.