This paper contrasts Judaism and Hellenism with regard to two opposing personality types: the “participant” and the “separant.” “Participant” means the identification of the ego with people, objects or symbols outside the self, and the desire to have one’s separate identity in fusion with these externals. “Separation” implies the opposite. Hellenism is identified with the separate Sisyphean culture, and Judaism with the participant Tantalic culture.

The gist of our dualistic personality theory, which serves as the conceptual basis for our deliberations is based on the existence of two opposing vectors in the human personality, those of ‘participation’ and ‘separation’.

By participation, we mean the identification of the self with a person or persons, an object, a life form or a symbol outside the self, and the striving of the self to lose its separate identity by fusion with it. Separation is the opposite vector, and consists of aiming to sever and differentiate the self from surrounding life forms and objects.

These opposing vectors, as the main axis of our theory, are developed in conjunction with three major developmental phases. First, the process of birth, an abrupt propulsion from cushioned self-sufficiency into the strife and struggles of life outside the womb; it is a major crisis and is undoubtedly recorded by the newborn’s psyche. This is in addition to any physical pressures that the process of birth itself might impose on the cranium and the resultant effects on the various layers of the brain. We build our premises on those separating effects of birth which are universal. These in turn
initiate the opposite vector of participation, a directional driving force which harnesses a diverse assortment of psychic energies towards union with given objects, life forms or symbols. The newborn child, who is physiologically and psychologically capable of recording these crises incidental to its birth, is traumatised by them into a lifelong quest for congruity and unification.

The second process of separation is the crystallisation of an individual self through the moulding of the 'ego-boundary'. The infant shrieks and kicks his way into the world, but still feels himself part and parcel of his surroundings. However, this holistic bliss is gradually destroyed by the bruises delivered by the harsh realities of hunger, thirst, discomfort, physical violence and hard objects in his surroundings, and by a mother who is mostly loving, but sometimes nagging, apathetic, hysterical, over-protective or even downright rejecting. All this pushes the infant into forming a separate identity, that is, into leaving the common fold of unity with his environment and crystallising an 'I'. This individual self knows then that he is not part of and with his surroundings, but rather against them. Such realisation of a separate self, resulting from a coerced departure from the security of engulfing togetherness, is registered by the developing psyche as a fall from grace.

The process of separation continues in full force as a corollary of socialisation, until one reaches the post-adolescent's adjustment to the mandates of the normative systems of society. The making of the 'responsible person', the 'stable human being', is achieved by constant indoctrination by the various socialisation agencies: family, school, church, etc. These convey to him the harsh realities of life and urge him to 'grow up', with the help of some rigorous initiation rites.

The desire to overcome the separating and dividing pressures never leaves the human individual. The striving to partake of a unifying whole is ever present, taking many forms: if one avenue towards its realisation becomes blocked, it surges out from another. We have traced the various pressures towards separation in each developmental phase. The embryo registers every stimulus as a disturbance to be overcome. The various demands of the mother and others close to it, before and after crystallisation of the separate self, are also perceived as disquieting events, with which one must come to terms with. Later, the various demands of the socialisation agencies to fit into the boundaries of the normative system, so as to gain one's social identity and responsibility, serve as the penultimate, or even final, separating pressures. After this, the individual is on his own, ontologically lonely and trying desperately to regain the togetherness of his lost fold. In this uphill climb, the individual may choose both legitimate and unsanctioned paths, both acceptable and deviant avenues.