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TOC
Studies in
Rationalism
Judaism & Universalism

IN MEMORY OF LEON ROTH

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PREFACE

A memorial volume ought, as far as is possible, to speak for itself. All that is called for here by way of introduction is a note as to the scope of the following essays as they are intended to reflect various aspects of Leon Roth's character, work, and interests. A short biographical sketch has been appended below (pp. 1 f.), together with a bibliography (pp. 323 f.), as complete as it has been possible to assemble, of his writings.

The title – *Rationalism Judaism Universalism* – has been chosen with deliberation: and it corresponds to a triangle which – although he never discussed it with me – must, I feel, have been consciously present in Roth's own mind. Professor D. D. Raphael begins his contribution (p. 197) by explaining the possible meanings of the term rationalist and the sense in which Roth may properly be described as one. That Roth was himself a person of deep faith was unmistakable to all who knew him. He was also fully awake to the problems of communication¹ that are typified by the whole question of the feasibility of translation to which Professor Ullendorff adverts (p. 273), and conscious that Jewish tradition, too, is fully aware of the existence of such problems and looks (as the late Dr Wilhelm points out, pp. 298 f.) to the messianic age to resolve them. For artificially contrived harmonisations, on the other hand, he had no use. The original act wherein faith is conceived is personal, possibly not communicable, and one in which reason can have no role. But the act of faith is not without corollaries, and Roth (one must think) would have regarded it as an act of little significance in those of intellectual capacities unless its consequences were in themselves capable of surviving a rational examination. He could himself find no basis for discussion with a religious emphasis that would implicitly inhibit, or constructively stultify the human intelligence vouchsafed (in traditional Jewish terminology) by a God who, of His grace, affords man knowledge and teaches mortals understanding. His training as a philosopher, and his quality as an expositor of Descartes and Spinoza, thus fashioned the faith within his breast into an intellectually disciplined Judaism. But Judaism itself, if it