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Spotlight 045

Contemporary Jewish Philosophy Reinventing Traditions

Table of Contents

Bibliography

Who Decides? Competing Narratives in Constructing Tastes, Consumption and Choice edited by Nina B. Namaste, Marta Nadales Ruiz [At the Interface/Probing the Boundaries, Brill Rodopi, 9789004350793]

How is the meaning of food created, communicated, and continually transformed? How are food practices defined, shaped, delineated, constructed, modified, resisted, and reinvented - by whom and for whom? These are but a few of the questions Who Decides? Competing Narratives in Constructing Tastes, Consumption and Choice explores. Part I (Taste, Authenticity & Identity) explicitly centres on the connection between food and identity construction. Part II (Food Discourses) focuses on how food-related language shapes perceptions that in turn construct particular behaviours that in turn demonstrate underlying value systems. Thus, as a collection, this volume explores how tastes are shaped, formed, delineated and acted upon by normalising socio-cultural processes, and, in some instances, how those very processes are actively resisted and renegotiated.

Contributors are Shamsul AB, Elyse Bouvier, Giovanna Costantini, Filip Degreef, Lis Furlani Blanco, Maria Clara de Moraes Prata Gaspar, Marta Nadales Ruiz, Nina Namaste, Eric Olmedo, Hannah Petertil, Maria José Pires, Lisa Schubert, Brigitte Sébastia, Keiko Tanaka, Preetha Thomas, Andrea Wenzel, Ariel Weygandt, Andrea Whittaker and Minette Yao.

Table of Contents

Excerpt: Constructing Tastes, Shaping Behaviours by Nina B. Namaste and Marta Nadales Ruiz

What does food mean and symbolize? How is that meaning created, communicated, and continually transformed? How are food practices defined, shaped, delineated, constructed, modified, resisted, and reinvented – by whom and for whom? These are just a few of the core questions that continue to draw scholars from a multiplicity of disciplines, and

continents, to closely analyse the role of food as a system of meaning-making in both past and present society. In this volume of collected works, food studies scholars explore how competing narratives, mediated and delineated through food, shape identities and discourses about self and others.

Pierre Bourdieu in 1979 put forth the idea of taste as being a social construct and since then his theory has proved seminal to the social sciences and food studies. While some have criticized his theories as outdated and irrelevant in the twenty-first century, contemporary critics within food studies continue to substantiate Bourdieu's ideas. For instance, Donald Sloan convincingly argues that culinary taste 'is not an expression of individual preference, but a signifier of longing for social acceptance.' An intellectual contemporary of Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau's theories of micro-resistance and micro-freedoms helped scholars understand the multiplicity of ways in which ordinary people create space and individual meaning for themselves even within constrictive social norms, particularly with food-related palates and customs. Therefore, Bourdieu's concept of taste as a mechanism to create distinctions among and within classes continues to be a relevant frame of analysis when investigating the complex ways in which food mediates meaning in society.

Equally important and relevant to an analysis of food practices is Edward Hall's theory of culture as an iceberg and Michel Foucault's theories regarding power. Hall proposed that like an iceberg, in which very little of its total mass is actually visible, 90% of all culture is below the surface. The 10% that is visible via food practices, clothing, cultural products, etc. manifests a culture's underlying implicit values, beliefs, attitudes, and norms. Yet culture is not a stable, monolithic, fixed entity, but rather is a process in constant negotiation and construction. Therefore, food practices – what and how we eat, with whom, when, in what spaces – is one such visible site where the tacit is actively negotiated.

Central to negotiation, of any kind, is power, thus, the question, in the title of this volume, who decides?, becomes of particular importance. Language both demonstrates and creates our reality. Thus, the discourses we engage in, most certainly, have power – power to delineate self and others, power to delineate in/out groups, power to reinforce or remove an individual's belonging in a group, power to construct a want, desire, or consumption. Individuals use language to express the ways in which they view their agency in constructing an identity; groups use language to describe the interactions and experiences with other groups that then lead them to construct imaginings of themselves and others; media uses language to shape tastes, and ultimately consumption, via advertising campaigns and other outlets. Ultimately, discourse, of which language is a part, is used to vie for what is of primary importance to the self, group, organization, institution, and/or nation. Who has access to and controls the outlets of expression ultimately gets to decide the dominant narrative, or the discursive systems of power. Yet, as de Certeau aptly proves, there is no dominant narrative without micro-resistances and, thus, counter-narratives. In our postmodern world the dominant narratives and systems of discourses are constantly contested, and reinforced, as the chapters in this volume so aptly demonstrate.

Part I explicitly centres on the connection between food and identity construction. The duality 'I' and 'other' is an essential contrast in the discursive construction of identity because the existence of the self depends on the existence of an Other.7 As Ruth Wodak et al. stated, the construction of identity relies upon three pillars: sameness, singularity and difference. Those three elements are always present when describing food practices, tastes and habits. Part II focuses on how food-related language shapes perceptions that in turn construct particular behaviours that in turn demonstrate underlying value systems. Language, then, becomes a mechanism through which to observe systems of power, particularly those connected to identity formation. As a collection, this volume explores how tastes are shaped, formed, delineated and acted upon by normalising socio-cultural processes, and, in some instances, how those very processes are actively resisted and renegotiated.

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Taste, Identity and Authenticity by Marta Nadales Ruiz

Food is a key component of identity. The way any given community eats is a public manifestation of its history, tradition, diversity, organisation, and uniqueness; it is closely connected to its territory, its language, and it represents each individual belonging to it. Thus, food is central to the sense of group identity, and its members' unique characteristics shape their common taste.

Despite being traditionally neglected by social sciences, in the last quarter of the twentieth century scholars and researchers in the fields of cultural sociology, anthropology, and social psychology began to study food practices and collective representations.1 Bourdieu, Grignon, Douglas, Lévi-Strauss, and Fischler, among others, have analysed the implications underlying food cultures and cuisines, and the social norms governing eating.2 They have also worked at showing that tastes can be understood as social constructions and, thus, key elements of difference between communities.

With regards to the construction of identity, Wodak et al. state that, whether own or foreign, there are three key elements on the subject of the construction of identity: sameness, singularity and difference.3 It is impossible to create or define any identity without a reference to them. Accordingly, as described below, the articles in this Part I show how food can shape identity in terms of common characteristics uniting a given community (sameness), singular characteristics that reinforce the authenticity of a given community (singularity), and the emphasis on other food practices, elements that reinforce the contrast with other tastes, other communities that do not share their characteristics (difference).

When it comes to dealing with cultural perspectives, it is necessary to focus on the contrast between 'I' and the 'other.' The construction of difference lies at the heart of the notion of identity; for this reason, when it comes to studying a certain identity we must be familiar with the other communities, the imagined communities as Anderson suggested, surrounding them. Their uniqueness, their singularity and their common features exist as long as there is a contrasting different 'other.'

Consequently, Part I presents a collection of works that analyse the construction of different cultural identities in food-related discourses. Included are chapters on rituals, practices that construct and continue tradition, pride in authenticity, the creation of new cuisines, new traditions and new identity elements; from Europe to Australia, from Portugal to the United States; from the traditional Victorian ritual of the afternoon tea to the new ritual of brunch as the epitome of American Cuisine; from Indian curry to Portuguese bacalhau; from British literature and online communities to non-fictional practices.

'Re-Orientalization: Confronting Asian America via the Steamed Pork Bun' by Minette Yao starts the section off with, as the title states, an inquiry into how the steamed pork bun mediates cultural and ethnic identity, in New York City and in London. In 'Italian Food: The Pride of a People without Borders,' Giovanna Costantini reviews food as a distinctive source of ethnic pride for the construction and dissemination of Italian cultural identity in the USA. She analyses the evolution of the authenticity of Italian food since the first Italian immigrants landed in the USA until the present situation in mass and social media. Brunch as the representation of America's national cuisine, this is what Hannah Petertil defends in 'Brunch: An Instance of American Cuisine.' She examines the historical context that allowed this breakfast-lunch hybrid to flourish as well as the meal structure that has given brunch such an imposing presence to become an element of American identity. In 'The Most American Daily Bread: The Rise and Fall of Wonder Bread,' Keiko Tanaka explores the rhetoric surrounding Wonder Bread and the parallels between the rise and fall of white manufactured bread in U.S. consumer culture and the rise and fall of hegemonic white-Anglo identity. Maria José Pires immerses the reader into the history of salted dried codfish in 'An Encomium of Bacalhau: The Portuguese Emblem of a Gastronomic Symphony.' She focuses on bacalhau as a symbol of Portuguese national identity, and describes the historical evolution of the product through politics, religion, and literature until it has become what it is today: a Portuguese emblem.

In 'The Cup of the Empire: Understanding British Identity through Tea in Victorian Literature,' Ariel Weygandt analyses, both from a historical and literary perspective, the 400-year-old British love affair with tea. She explains the evolution of the consumption of tea, its spread throughout the social classes until the ritual became a representation of national pride, an essential element of British identity. Next is Elyse Bouvier's chapter, 'Breaking Bread Online: Social Media, Photography, and the Virtual Experience,' in which she explores the ways in which sharing food-related photographs and creating social media posts does, indeed, construct community, as well as a delineate one's identity. The last articles in this section present the results of ethnographic research on food practices. Thus, in '"A Little Bit of Rice, a Little Bit of Fish Curry": Food Practices of Malayali Nurses in Brisbane, Australia,' Preetha Thomas, Lisa Schubert, Andrea Whittaker and Brigitte Sébastia discuss the distinct food practices and cultural identity of a selected group of female nurses from Kerala, India, and their families currently living in Brisbane. Through interviews and ethnographic research, they describe how they manage to preserve their national identity in terms of culinary tradition in the new cultural environment as well as their strategies for dealing with change in the new social context. In '"Mamakization': Social Cohesion in Malaysian Iconic Eateries' Eric Olmedo and Shamsul AB, through ethnographic research, theorize the process by which Mamak stalls construct and form a locus of social cohesion in multiethnic Malay society.

To conclude, Part 1 contains a myriad of topics that result in a successful combination that reinforces the importance of food studies to identity and cultural studies, and to social sciences in general. <>

The Water Thief by Claire Hajaj [Oneworld Publications, 9781786073945]

How much would you risk to right a wrong? From the award-winning author of Ishmael's Oranges comes a searing novel with a profound moral conflict at its heart.
When a heart attack kills his father, young architect Nick abandons his comfortable London life to volunteer abroad for a year – a last chance to prove himself, and atone for old sins.

But in a remote village on the edge of the Sahara, dangerous currents soon engulf him: a simmering family conflict, hidden violence and fanaticism, his host's lonely wife hiding secrets of her own. Their attraction threatens both their worlds, blurring the line between right and wrong. And when a deadly drought descends it brings an irrevocable choice. With all their hopes at stake, should he take matters into his own hands? Or let fate run its course? His decision has life-changing consequences for them all.

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Excerpt: Two men are taking Nicholas away. I see them through the police-car window. One takes his shoulder, one his arm. They swallow his skin, like mouths.

Nagodeallah, she fears them. She wriggles and cries on my knees. She grows heavy as a goat. Goggo says I hold Nagode too tight. She says: 'Eh, boy, let her loose. Let her cry like she should.' But Goggo knows nothing. Her mouth has no teeth. All she does is cry for us and lick the water from her gums. But Nagodeallah is mine now. So I squeeze her. I say shush, like Mama would.

Nicholas has not seen us yet. He looks back, towards the runway. At the end is the aeroplane, waiting. Big, like a beast. Like the horse from Mama's stories, the white horse with wings. A knight's horse for Nicholas, to fly away from us.

Those men have angry faces. I know it. Because I am angry too. They tell me that in the special lessons. They ask me to draw everything that happened. But I could only draw the well. Your well, Nicholas. The one you stole like Robin Hood, that you said would save us all. I drew how it was when I looked down inside it — big, and black. These men are big and white.

I hear one man speak. He says Nicholas is lucky. He says it like this: 'You don't know how lucky you are, mate.' Mate. Nicholas uses this word too. It means 'my friend'.

But these men are not his friends. They have locked his hands together. And his face is white, white as the spirits. When he came to us, he was pink. Mama, she used to laugh at him. But the fires

burned him away. They burned us all away and left only bones.

When the policewoman came to tell us about Nicholas, Goggo said: `Praise Allah. Good riddance.' She has not forgiven him. She wants blood in her mouth not tears. Sometimes, I see the blood in my dreams. I see them, Mama, Nagode and Adeya and the others, and their cheeks are running red.

It was Adeya who made me come. The police lady said: 'He asks for you, JoJo, every day. Will you not see him?'

Goggo spat. But Adeya, she came to stand by me. She grew so tall, as tall as Mama. After the fires I told her: 'You can come to live with us, like you are our sister. And I will care for you the same as Nagode.' And Adeya, she said: 'Yes, Jo Jo. But when we are grown, remember that I am not your sister.'

So I said yes to the policewoman, for Adeya. The word in my mouth was no but yes came rolling past my teeth. So the police car fetched us at first light. It had electric windows. I wound them down, so the wind could feel Nagode's hair.

Now the policewoman stands by my window, waiting. The car door is closed. And I am afraid .to open it. Doors are tests, Baba said. We choose to pass or stay. I do not know if the right way is through or back. But I am a man now. So I must choose.

I lift my hand and open the door. Nagode holds me as we climb into the light. The policewoman steps back. And then Nicholas, he sees me.

He says: `JoJo.'I want to say: No way, Nicholas. No, mate. We have nothing for you, Nagode and me. We came only to see you go.

But my throat hurts and the words are stuck in it. My arms shake, and I cannot hold Nagode. I give her to the police lady. One day, my arms will be stronger. One day, Nagode will speak. On that day, I will tell her our stories. I will tell her about Mama and Baba. I will tell her about you, Nicholas, and The Boys, about the fires and the well. When we are grown, we will still remember. That is what I have to say to you, Nicholas. We will remember.

Will you remember, too? When they take you from here, will you think of us, and the things we did together? Like when we built our castle. It was great, that castle. Strong, with a moat, and towers, and the flag Mama made for it. You taught me how to make it strong. Each wall pushes and pulls against the others, you said. If even the smallest falls, then all become weaker. But together they are balanced. This is how the building finds its strength.I want to tell you, Nicholas, that I understand this now. I do not need your lessons any more. I go to a good school. I am the best student. Each night I sit with Adeya and we study your language of numbers. Adeya, she says the numbers speak to us. Like the spirits, Nicholas. Sometimes the spirits speak to me still. They push and pull me inside. It hurts and I cry when Adeya cannot see. But I, too, will become strong one day.

`Please,' you say. `Please.' And now I am crying. Because I am not ready for you to go. I do not forgive you yet, Nicholas. I have important things to tell you.

But now there is no time, they are pulling you away from us. So it must be my turn, Nicholas, it must be me who saves us. I will stop these men with their strong hands. Because we promised, Nicholas. We promised we would stay together.

I open my mouth to call you. But the words are stones and my heart is deep water. The police lady pulls my shoulder back as I put my hand out to you, and I pull forward with all my strength.

And then I feel it, the balance inside. I can speak your name. And you look around one more time; you are turning from the big men and the jet plane back to us.

Do we see each other, you and me? Do you see my hand, and what I have there? Because I know, Nicholas. I know what I must do. I know how to finish it.

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The airport terminal doors swung open; Nick stepped through tempered glass into blinding daylight. Two porters reached for his suitcase as he passed through, palms sand-dry, their eyes dark with need.

He rested his back against cool brick, breathing in the afternoon's ragged clamour. The porters had moved on, drawn away by richer opportunities, their skinny forms swallowed in a heated blur of bodies. A woman brushed past him on the narrow pavement, shoulders swelling from a tight jungle-green dress, matching fabric crowning her temples, arms opened wide like a carnivorous flower. She squealed as she reached into the melée of expectant faces and trundling baggage, pulling someone into a strong embrace — a mother perhaps, or a sister. Nick watched, transfixed by their joy, the fierce press of skin against skin, the careless flow of tears.

Ahead, the airport road curved away from him. Cars flowed along it bumper-to-bumper, a slow-moving river under a bottomless sky. Exhaust fumes circled lazily over nameless trees, their dark flowers collapsing onto the roadside.

Purple cloudbanks curled and deepened on the horizon, over jammed clusters of houses, red-roofed and low. The city centre was just visible beyond them, a blurred shimmer of glass and steel reflecting the coming storm. The sky seemed to grow as Nick looked up, becoming vaster and heavier. Waves of wet heat pulsed downwards, soaking through his shirt. He felt his skin rejoicing, drinking them in, as if quenching a lifetime of thirst.

Nine hours earlier, he'd been cushioned by the soft ascent from Heathrow, the sky racing soundlessly from grey to blue. It was the longest trip he'd ever taken, and when they'd first burst through the clouds into the bright void above it had taken Nick's breath away, filling him with awe. Here at last was the feeling he'd been hoping for: an old chain finally snapping, clear air opening between his past and future.

The jolt of touchdown had woken him from sleep, catapulting him into an altogether different world. They had lowered steps onto the runway and he'd walked out, dazed under the curdling sky, through the confident jostle of bodies at the baggage carousel and out through customs into this new daylight, with its miasma of car fumes, cigarettes, perfume and sweat. Loud smiles and bright voices overshadowed him on every side. What are you doing here? they seemed to demand. He had no easy answer to give, even to himself; it made him feel young, insignificant, and above all not ready.

He closed his eyes, shaky, suddenly grateful for the wall at his back, sensing people rushing by on their way to the taxi ranks. He felt the sky's heat spreading inside him, the dense closeness of rain overhead, probably sweeping in from warm ocean waters just beyond the city. Their rhythm pounded in his temples, green waves beating onto a wide, white shore. But then a tiny, cooling thought blew into him: he knew that ocean. He'd watched it countless times as a small boy, four thousand miles away on its northerly edge, under a sky grey as marbles, digging clams out of the sand between stinging rocks, the cold a blue knife raking bare feet. Somehow even then, before he was old enough to imagine what lay beyond the horizon, or that there could be a beyond, the hidden arc between that moment and this one had started to form.

The memory steadied his breathing. A sign, he thought — a turning point in the story, a straight road glimpsed through the haze. His excitement woke again, a warm rush. Look out of the window at exactly noon, he'd told Kate, at their goodbye. I'll be waving right above you, au revoir at thirty-five thousand feet. Her face had been pale in the flicker of the departure board, one fist outlined against the blue wool of her pocket. Like Superman, she'd replied with a strained smile, as his lips touched the almond-scented skin of her cheek.

That kiss lingered in his mouth; the taste of guilt. When he'd first confessed his plan to her, her laughter had been sympathetic, the compassion of the sane for the deluded. But under the departure board, her hand had clutched his arm in a last, anxious appeal. It's not too late, you know.

Too late for what? he'd asked gently, torn between admiration for her determined composure, self-reproach for the hurt it concealed and desperation to be gone. He'd felt her fingers pressing through his shirt, as if she could penetrate his skin to reach the many doubts still lurking beneath. The curtain of dark hair he'd parted on their first night together a year ago, falling shining and straight across her face, was swept up tight into a ponytail, betraying

a tremble of mouth and chin. Her engagement ring winked up at him like a third eye. To change your mind, she'd replied. To stay here with me, where you belong.

`Nicholas? Hey! Pardon — you're Nicholas?'

Nick opened his eyes into a present full of warm light. A hand was reaching out to him; he followed it up to a stranger's face, vaguely familiar from a grainy snapshot in his deployment folder. Steel-rimmed glasses beneath an anxiously receding hairline, the forehead a worn pink over watery eyes. Pale lashes blinked rapidly against the glare, like a burrowing creature's. Nick had a sudden memory of moles ripping through his mother's lawn, their pointed noses testing the air as she sat motionless by her easel.

`Jean-Philippe?'

`J.P., please. Welcome! At last. No problems with the visa? They can be devils, you know.' He glanced sideways at Nick. 'But look at you! You're not like I imagined. No offence.'

Nick laughed. 'None taken. It's Nick, by the way.'

J.P. dragged the suitcase through the melée of waiting taxis. Bodies buffeted Nick, warm and bright with sweat. His senses were jumbled: corn roasting on a roadside stall filled his mouth

with the taste of mellow gold; the air was smoky green at the back of his throat — with something else, darkly sweet, like sewage.

They reached a brown sedan among the chaos of double-parked cars, exhausts belching fumes. Behind the dust-smeared windscreen a crucifix dangled off coloured beads — strings of chocolate, grass, gold and blood.

`I mean, you're younger than I thought,' J.P. said as he opened the boot, hoisting Nick's suitcase inside. `Twenty-seven? Twenty-eight?'

`Thirty.'

'They usually send them older. The mid-career crisis, you know. Ha!'

The car's seats were stripped bare, metal bones shining through. Nick cranked down the window to let in the sluggish air. Small children wandered through the traffic, clutching packs of gum and rotting baskets piled with fruit and flies. Most scattered at the blare of car horns. But some pressed in, thin fists hammering on the glass.

J.P. started the engine. 'But anyway, here you are.' Buildings loomed ahead, black-streaked and crumbling. `Young blood.' Music crackled to life from the radio cassette player — a full-throated wail over sax and drums that pulsed through Nick like wingbeats. J.P.'s hands tapped its rhythm on the wheel. `Femi —you like him? He's a god round here, so say yes if they ask. It's his latest. Mind Your Own Business. Good advice for our nice new nineties, no? Personally I prefer Ali Farka Touré. The greatest blues man on earth — but from a few borders north of here. Oh, they'll tell you: this is all West Africa, borders are just colonial importations, like French and English — and they have a point, mind you. But when it comes to music, football — the important things in life — the patriotism here is crazier than Europe. So I keep my opinions to myself.'

The lyrics were English, Nick could tell — and yet he couldn't quite catch their meaning as they slipped past, sucked through the window into the whirlwind of street noise: the cry of hawkers over a boom-box's tinny pulse, long-tailed birds piping from a passing tree, the dark rumbling sky overhead. He took a deep breath, conscious of J.P.'s briskly tapping thumbs, of the importance of first impressions. Don't look so overwhelmed, idiot. This has to work out.

`I don't know much about music, I'm afraid,' he replied, taking refuge in honesty. `Catholic mother — I was brought up on hymns.'

'No Geldof? No Live Aid? I thought that was a basic requirement for you British.'

'I missed the Live Aid thing. Too busy studying for the second stage of my architecture qualification. My girlfriend loves U2, if that qualifies?'

`U2, my god. They grow up on hymns here, too. In the south, anyway. Not in the north, where you'll be. There, it's mostly allahu akbar. Well, by the time you go home, you'll know what to sing where. And what do you think of this warm welcome you're getting? Femi ... all this sunshine. Nice for the

swimming pool. But not so nice for the farmers.' Sweat pooled on the Frenchman's temples. 'The rains failed.'

Nick's hotel, booked for one night before his journey north, was fronted in mottled colonial brick. Black birds squatted on its casements around a central swimming pool. J.P. went across to the bar, to negotiate with the waitress for a drink.

Nick waited for him by the water. Red flowers fell from overhanging trees onto the listless surface. He watched, hypnotised, as the water swallowed them, petal by petal. His pale reflection swam between them. Such a sad little fellow, his mother used to say. That was in the early days, when her arms would still wrap around him, baptising him in warmth. He caught the ghost scent of paint on her hand as she stroked his hair. Don't give the boy these ridiculous ideas, Mary, his father would tell her, back turned to them as he worked on patient records, his disdain cold as a knife. For a moment Nick imagined a grey figure materialising beneath the water's cloudy surface, before he wiped his hands over his eyes. <>

What to Read and Why by Francine Prose [Harper, 9780062397867]

In this brilliant collection, the follow-up to her *New York Times* bestseller *Reading Like a Writer*, the distinguished novelist, literary critic, and essayist celebrates the pleasures of reading and pays homage to the works and writers she admires above all others, from Jane Austen and Charles Dickens to Jennifer Egan and Roberto Bolaño.

In an age defined by hyper-connectivity and constant stimulation, Francine Prose makes a compelling case for the solitary act of reading and the great enjoyment it brings. Inspiring and illuminating, *What to Read and Why* includes selections culled from Prose's previous essays, reviews, and introductions, combined with new, never-before-published pieces that focus on her favorite works of fiction and nonfiction, on works by masters of the short story, and even on books by photographers like Diane Arbus.

Prose considers why the works of literary masters such as Mary Shelley, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Jane Austen have endured, and shares intriguing insights about modern authors whose words stimulate our minds and enlarge our lives, including Roberto Bolaño, Karl Ove Knausgaard, Jennifer Egan, and Mohsin Hamid. Prose implores us to read Mavis Gallant for her marvelously rich and compact sentences, and her meticulously rendered characters who reveal our flawed and complex human nature; Edward St. Aubyn for his elegance and sophisticated humor; and Mark Strand for his gift for depicting unlikely transformations. Here, too, are original pieces in which Prose explores the craft of writing: "On Clarity" and "What Makes a Short Story."

Written with her sharp critical analysis, wit, and enthusiasm, *What to Read and Why* is a celebration of literature that will give readers a new appreciation for the power and beauty of the written word.

CONTENTS

19. Mark Strand, Mr. and Mrs. Baby
20. Karl Ove Knausgaard, My Struggle
21. Elizabeth Taylor, Complete Short Stories
22. Louisa May Alcott, Little Women
23. Jane Austen
24. Charles Baxter, Believers
25. Deborah Levy, Swimming Home
26. Alice Munro, Lives of Girls and Women
27. Jennifer Egan, Manhattan Beach
28. Rebecca West
29. Mohsin Hamid, Exit West
30. On Clarity
31. Reiner Stach, Is That Kafka? 99 Finds
32. What Makes a Short Story?
33. In Praise of Stanley Elkin

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Excerpt: Reading is among the Most Private, The Most Solitary things that we can do. A book is a kind of refuge to which we can go for the assurance that, as long as we are reading, we can leave the worries and cares of our everyday lives behind us and enter, however briefly, another reality, populated by other lives, a world distant in time and place from our own, or else reflective of the present moment in ways that may help us see that moment more clearly. Anyone who reads can choose to enter (or not enter) the portal that admits us to the invented or observed world that the author has created.

I've often thought that one reason I became such an early and passionate reader was that, when I was a child, reading was a way of creating a bubble I could inhabit, a dreamworld at once separate from, and part of, the real one. I was fortunate enough to grow up in a kind, loving family. But like most children, I think, I wanted to maintain a certain distance from my parents: a buffer zone between myself and the adults. It was helpful that my parents liked the fact that I was a reader, that they approved of and encouraged my secret means of transportation out of the daily reality in which I lived together with them—and into the parallel reality that books offered. I was only pretending to be a little girl growing up in Brooklyn, when in fact I was a privileged child in London, guided by Mary Poppins through a series of marvelous adventures. I could manage a convincing impersonation of an ordinary fourth-grader, but actually I was a pirate girl in Norway, best friends with Pippi Longstocking, well acquainted with her playful pet monkey and her obedient horse.

I loved books of Greek myths, of Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales, and novels (many of them British) for children featuring some element of magic and the fantastic. When I was in the eighth grade, I spent most of a family cross-country trip reading and rereading a dog-eared paperback copy of Seven Gothic Tales, by Isak Dinesen, a writer who interests me now mostly because I can so clearly see what fascinated me about her work then. With a clarity and transparency that few things provide, least of all photographs and childhood diaries, her fanciful stories enable me to see what I was like—how I thought—as a girl. I can still recall my favorite passage, which I had nearly memorized, because I believed it to contain the most profoundly romantic, the most noble and poetic, the most stirring view of the relations between men and women—a subject about which I knew nothing, or less than nothing, at the time.

The passage comes from a story entitled "The Roads Round Pisa." Augustus, a Danish count, is traveling in Italy, where he meets a young woman disguised as a boy. He admires her confidence and forthrightness, and he realizes that he has, all his life, been looking for such a woman. Their flirtation culminates in the following conversation, heavy with suggestion as it delicately euphemizes and maneuvers its way around its real subject, which is sex:

> "Now God," she said, "when he created Adam and Eve ... arranged it so that man takes, in these matters, the part of a guest, and woman that of a hostess. Therefore man takes love lightly, for the honor and dignity of his house is not involved therein. And you can also, surely, be a guest to many people to whom you would never want to be a host. Now, tell me, Count, what does a guest want?"
> "I believe," said Augustus ... , "that if we do, as I think we ought to here, leave out the crude guest, who comes to be regaled, takes what he can get and goes away, a guest wants first of all to be diverted, to get out of his daily monotony or worry. Secondly the decent guest wants to shine, to expand himself and impress his own

> personality upon his surroundings. And thirdly, perhaps, he wants to find some justification for his existence altogether. But since you put it so charmingly, Signora, please tell me now: What does the hostess want?"
> "The hostess," said the young lady, "wants to be thanked."

The hostess wants to be thanked? What does that even mean? Is that—to answer Freud's question—what women want? A polite expression of gratitude? What about pleasure, kindness, loyalty, respect...?

And yet, decades later, I can see how this poetic discussion of the erotic, with only the most vague and delicate suggestion of the mechanics of sex, would have appealed to me at thirteen. How I longed to meet a man someday who would court me with language only a few steps removed from that of the medieval troubadours; how divine it would be to experience a seduction that would verge so closely on poetry. And how I wanted to be the sort of young woman who could travel on her own, charm a man with my courage and independence, and come up with the perfect punch line to answer his mannerly disquisition on what the sexes desire from each other.

I can still see the charm in the passage, even though it seems quaint, artificial, hopelessly old-fashioned. What's more important is that reading it functions, for me, like a kind of time machine, transporting me to the back seat of our family car, crossing the Arizona desert, being urged to just look at the Grand Canyon while I was somewhere else: near Pisa, in 1823, listening to a man and woman have the type of conversation that I hoped to have someday with a handsome (and preferably aristocratic) stranger.

All of which seems to suggest: reading is not exactly like being alone. We are alone with the book we are reading, but we are also in the more ethereal company of the author and the characters that author has created. There I was in the car, with my parents in the front seat, my younger brother beside me, and Isak Dinesen, Count Augustus, and the brave little cross-dresser all floating around in my consciousness.

We may find ourselves surrounded by dozens, even hundreds, of imaginary people, or deep inside the mind of the man or woman whom the narrator has designated to stand at the center of the action.4 (n)- We can close the book and carry these charactens around with us, much the way a child can transport any number of imaginary friends from place to place. And because they are imaginary, we can always stop reading without hurting their feelings, a transaction far less5 (c)0.7 (o)2 (m)9.9 (p)-2.8 (l) (n)-icate most of our dealings with flesh-and-blood human beings.

Lately it's been noted that this privacy has been at least partly compromised when we read on electronic devices that are able to monitor how much of a book we read, where we stop, and what we reread. It's disconcerting to think about, and yet (especially if we are as engrossed in a book as we wish to be) it's possible to forget about these invisible watchers, who at least aren't talking on—or checking—their phones. And of course we can always read a "physical book," which will never disclose the secrets of our reading habits.

Reading and writing are solitary activities, and yet there is a social component that comes into play when we tell someone else about what we have read. An additional pleasure of reading is that you can urge and sometimes even persuade people you know and care about, and even people you don't know, to read the book you've just finished and admired—and that you think they would like, too. We can talk about books to our friends, our colleagues, our students. We can form and enjoy communities that we wouldn't have otherwise had. Read Proust and you have something in common with other readers of Proust: not only the thrill of experiencing a marvelous and complex work of art, but the fact that you and those others now have, as your mutual acquaintances, his enormous cast of characters. You can gossip about people you know in common. Can you believe what happens to the Baron de Charlus by the end of the novel?

Almost twenty years ago, the novelists Ron Hansen and Jim Shepard put together an anthology entitled You've Got to Read This, to which a group of writers contributed an introduction to a favorite

short story of their own choosing. (I wrote about Isaac Babel's "Guy de Maupassant.") I've always thought that every book about reading and about books should be called You've Got to Read This. In fact, I might have called this book that had the wonderful Hansen Shepard anthology not already been sitting on a bookshelf in the study in which I am writing this. I've also thought that "You've got to read this" should be the first line of every positive book review. The essay about Roberto Bolaño's great novel 2666, first printed in Harper's magazine and included here, begins with a description of that impulse, of the desire to say just that, to direct magazine readers toward a great novel.

I've always been delighted when an editor asked me to write an introduction to a classic that is being reissued in a spiffy new edition with a stylish, handsome new cover. Because what I am doing, basically, is saying: You've got to read this—and here's why. I feel the same way about certain book reviews that, to me, are a way of telling people—strangers—about something terrific I think they should read. Drop everything. Start reading. Now.

Some of the essays collected here are introductions to republished classics. Others are reviews of books that I particularly admired and enjoyed. Mixed in are a few essays that attempt to grapple with the social and political conditions that inform our reading habits and the judgments we make about books. Others ("On Clarity") address problems that beginning writers may find themselves facing. Still others are less about reading in specific than about art in general, but have so much to do with what I think about literature that I have chosen to include them. It's why I decided to put "Ten Things That Art Can Do" at the beginning of the book; in my view, the ideas, thoughts, and observations in that essay inform everything else.

The essays gathered in this volume contain reading suggestions and imprecations, records of enthusiasms, pieces that start with particular books and move toward the larger subject of how and what and why we read: why books can transport and entertain and teach us, why books can give us pleasure and make us think. Ultimately, what I am writing about here are the reasons why we continue to read great books, and why we continue to care.
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Essay: Ten Things That Art Can Do

One: Art can be beautiful.

That is all it has to do. That is the only thing we require of it. But what do we mean by beauty? Did the cave dwellers think, Hey, that's really beautiful when someone drew the first bison on the wall? Did anyone think, That's beautiful when the Serbian performance artist Marina Abramovic invited the gallery audience to cut her with razor blades—or shoot her?

Critics and philosophers have devoted their entire lives to defining beauty, while artists have pursued it from another part of the brain. Is there a meaning of beauty on which we can agree? Is a Netherlandish portrait beautiful? What about Vermeer's The Love Letter? Cézanne's apples? Perhaps it would be possible to know nothing about art, to have never seen a painting, and to look at any one of those works and think, Well, that is really gorgeous.

But what about those early viewers who saw Cézanne's apples as the smudgy scrawlings of an untalented child? What about Jackson Pollock? It took me years to see the beauty in his paintings. When I say that there is nothing so beautiful as a certain phrase in Bach's St. Matthew Passion, or Mozart's Così Fan Tutte, or Miles Davis's "Flamenco Sketches," or Mary Wells's version of "You Beat Me to the Punch," what am I saying, exactly?

Unraveling the word beauty can get us so ensnarled that it's no wonder that for a time, critics and academics and even some artists agreed that it was probably better not to use it at all. For all I know—I haven't kept up—this taboo still exists. And, really, who can blame anyone for not wanting to sling around this vague, loaded, indefinable, and antiquated term in the learned journals? Though it does seem a little strange to ban the word from the conversations of people for whom it is a matter of life and death.

The Greeks, at least, had some ideas: order, harmony, structure. But all of that had gotten a radical shaking up even by the time of, let's say, Hieronymus Bosch. If we think the Apollo Belvedere

is beautiful, what do we say about the naked bottom and legs of a man emerging from a strawberry and scurrying around Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights?

Obviously, content is only a fraction of what matters. There's beauty of conception and beauty of execution, which is, to oversimplify, part of what makes Cézanne's apples different from the apples we doodle on our notepad or the scribblings of a child. Conception and execution are major factors in the narratives on the page and screen that I tend to remember as beautiful. For example, I find great beauty in the scene in Mavis Gallant's story "The Ice Wagon Going down the Street," in which the self-deluded and heartbreakingly sad office worker at the League of Nations in post—World War II Geneva is asked to take home a mousy co-worker who has gotten drunk at a costume party. What happens (nothing happens) may well be the most important event in their lives. Yet one of them thinks that the nothing that happened was about the two of them not having sex, while the other thinks that "nothing happened" meant that she didn't commit suicide, as she seems to have considered doing.

There is a startling and deeply melancholy scene in the great Hungarian writer Derso Kosztolanyi's novel Skylark. An elderly couple's beloved, burdensome, unmarried thirty-five-year-old daughter has gone away on vacation, freeing them for a week of unaccustomed pleasures and shattering realizations about their domestic life. On her return, they go to greet her at the station. Dressed in an unflattering rain cape and a silly hat, and carrying a scruffy pigeon, her new pet, in a cage, she is even homelier than they remember, just as she is even more intensely the love of their life and their jailer. Suddenly they notice that autumn has arrived. "A desolate boredom settled over everything. The warm days are over." Why should that seem beautiful?

And why should I be so taken with the moment in Mike Leigh's film Life Is Sweet when Timothy Spall, as the sublimely geeky Aubrey, opens a restaurant, a bistro called the Regret Rien, fashioned on an Edith Piaf theme. "Très exclusive." On opening night, no customers come, and Aubrey, who has been drinking wine as he waits for the nonexistent onslaught of diners, trashes the place and winds up passed out on the floor, stripped down to a pair of unnervingly creepy Speedos. Why do I love the marvelous scene in Francis Ford Coppola's The Godfather in which Sonny speaks out of turn and the Tattaglia family knows that the Corleones are vulnerable and can be attacked? And why do I think there is beauty in every moment of Michael K. Williams's portrayal of Ornar Little in David Simon's TV series The Wire?

There is little that could be considered conventionally pretty about watching Gallant's filing clerk, dressed as a hobo, nearly fall down in a Geneva street, or Kosztolanyi's woman arrive, with her pigeon, at a rural Hungarian train station, or Leigh's chef—a man with heartbreakingly hilarious pretensions to coolness and sophistication—charging around his empty bistro, overturning elaborately set tables, or a Mafia don's meeting with his enemies and his unruly son, or a scar-faced Baltimore hit man sticking up a drug dealer. But how, I wonder, can we not feel the beauty of these scenes?

Each of us has heard—and probably, in a charitable moment, thought—that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but each of us secretly believes that we are the one with the eye for beauty. Why do I see these melancholy scenes, these dark moments, as beautiful? It's a question to which there is no real answer, except to mention truth, another difficult and complicated thing, and to add that we do feel we know beauty when we see it. We could quote Emily Dickinson's famous definition of poetry as applying also to beauty:

> "If I read a book and it makes me so cold no fire can ever warm me I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only way I know it. Is there any other way." Or, less gloriously, we have Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's ruling that hard-core pornography is difficult to define, but "I know it when I see it."

Two: Art can shock us.

I don't mean shock as in bad news or brutal murder or horrific catastrophe or embarrassing scandal. I

don't mean shock as they did on a reality show that ran some years ago, a series entitled Work of Art: The Next Great Artist, modeled after Top Chef In one episode, the contestants competed to make "shocking art." Among the judges was the photographer Andres Serrano, once considered shocking by, among others, the late Senator Jesse Helms, who was shocked that a government arts grant should go to a person who had photographed a crucifix submerged in a vial of urine. (Did Andres Serrano think, Beautiful! when those contact sheets came back?) On the show, Serrano spoke about the difficulty of making art that shocks at this particular political and historical moment. And in fact I wasn't shocked enough to remember which artist contestant won.

In any case, I mean something less aesthetic and moral and more neurological: the shock that travels along our nerves and leaps across our synapses when we look at a Titian portrait or read a Dickinson poem. We understand it, and we don't. It's irreducible; it can't be summarized or described; we feel something we can't describe. I often think of that feeling as resembling those moments in dreams when we fall off a cliff and then discover we can fly. Dropping, then soaring. We can no more explain or paraphrase or categorize our response than we can explain why a Chinese scroll can transport us out of a gallery or museum and return us, moments later, jet-lagged, giddy with the aftereffects of travel through time and space. The effect of those tiny art shocks is cumulative and enduring. Enough of them can change our consciousness, perhaps even our metabolism. Dieters, take notice.

I've always hoped that someone would fund a research project to measure the changes that occur in our brain waves when we lose ourselves in a book. What if it turned out that these changes have a beneficial effect on our health, not unlike the benefits we have been told can be obtained from exercise and a daily glass of red wine? What if reading were proved to be even healthier than exercise? Imagine the sudden spike in reading everywhere as the health and longevity conscious allowed their gym memberships to lapse and headed to the library and the bookstore?

Three: Can art make you a better person?

Not long ago, I read a Facebook post that suggested that Shakespeare was a sadist for subjecting us to something as gloomy as King Lear. And I thought of how a doctor's assistant once told me that the only books and films she likes are those that are cheerful and uplifting, because there's enough doom and gloom in the world without looking for more. She said she hardly ever reads fiction, because it's so depressing. She prefers books on philosophy. "What kind of philosophy?" I asked. She said, "Well, actually, I like books that tell you how to be a better person."

Art will not necessarily make you a better person. When I was a child, my favorite aunt was a great fan of Wagner, and though my mother and father teased her for going to see fat women in braids and Viking helmets sing for five hours at a time, she secretly indoctrinated me into her cult of Wagner. I can still picture the cover of her record of Tristan und Isolde. Later, of course, I discovered that Wagner was extremely anti-Semitic and a favorite of the Nazis and so forth, facts that had little bearing on my falling out of love with Wagner as an adult. Recently I learned from a documentary something that everyone else has probably known about forever: the manic intensity of Hitler's passion for Wagnerian opera, how he felt his whole life had changed after seeing a performance of Rienzi, whose hero, a medieval Roman tribune, leads his people to rise up against their oppressive rulers. Hitler would say of that performance, "It was in that hour that it all began," and claim that Nazism could not be understood without understanding Wagner.

Hitler had notoriously terrible taste in visual art, a predilection for the cream-puff nudes of kitschy French painters like Bouguereau. There is a famous story about Hitler's visit to Berlin's National Gallery in the 1920s. Enraged to discover that Germany did not possess any work by Michelangelo, his favorite artist, Hitler was mildly consoled to find a painting by Caravaggio—Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio—whom Hitler thought was the same person as Michelangelo Buonarroti. Next, he became enchanted by Correggio's highly erotic depiction of Leda and the Swan, though, when his

guide discovered him, transfixed before the painting, Hitler insisted that he was only admiring the subtle play of light and shadow. Finally, and most revealingly, he sought out Rembrandt's Man with the Golden Helmet, an image that, Hitler claimed, proved Rembrandt was a true Aryan who, despite the many works he'd done in the Jewish Quarter, had no real interest in the Jews after all. Hitler's henchmen had better taste—refined enough to know what they wanted when they looted the museums and private collections of Europe and carried off countless masterpieces. But Hitler had originally wanted to be an artist, and during his final days in the bunker, he puttered over an architectural model showing his plan for remaking the Austrian city of Linz.

It's true, or I want to believe it's true, that there is something humanizing about the intimacy a book creates between the author and the reader, between the reader and the character, something humanizing about experiencing the vision and work of another human being. We are so accustomed to speaking about "the humanities" that we no longer think about why these fields of inquiry and study are called that. One of the things that most disturbs me about the way in which children may come to prefer electronic devices and video games to books is that they no longer know or intuit that an individual person has created the thing that is the source of their pleasure. Rather, they come to understand, consciously or subconsciously, that a corporation has provided them with entertainment and happiness. Thank you, Google. Thank you, Apple.

Years ago, I used to comfort myself with the thought that reading a novel by an author from any of the countries in what George W. Bush termed the Axis of Evil could persuade us that the men and women and children who inhabit these so-called evil lands are—beneath the surface created by custom and culture—very much like us and our friends and loved ones. That is, no more or less good, no more or less evil. But how much will that realization influence our actions?

While writing a book about The Diary of Anne Frank, I met a group of inspiring young people who worked for the Anne Frank Foundation and were convinced that Anne's diary could turn other young people away from the path of prejudice and violence. In their company, I, too, was convinced. I wanted to be convinced. But some crabby, skeptical inner voice couldn't help playing devil's advocate—asking who, high on the chemical rush of violence, on the brink of committing a hate crime or perpetrating a genocidal massacre, would be stopped by the memory of a young girl's diary?

In any case, it is neither the responsibility nor the purpose of art to make us better human beings. And it's no wonder that art that takes on this solemn task so often winds up being didactic, preachy, cloying, and less effective than art with a less exalted notion of its purpose. Careers and talents have been ruined when an artist was intoxicated and ultimately silenced by an exaggerated sense of importance. Among the more famous and tragic examples of this was Nikolai Gogol; the misery he experienced in trying to write a sequel to Dead Souls was intensified by his belief that the second volume of his masterpiece was destined to save Russia.

In one of his letters, Chekhov said:

> You scold me for objectivity, calling it indifference to good and evil, lack of ideals and ideas, and so forth. When I am writing about horse thieves, you want me to say that it is evil to steal horses. However, everyone knows this already without my having to say so. Let the members of the jury pass their judgment. My job is merely to show what sort of people these horse thieves are. Here is what I write: we are dealing with horse thieves here, so bear in mind that they are not beggars but well-fed men, that they are members of a cult, and that for them stealing horses is not just thieving but a passion. Certainly, it might be nice to combine art with preaching, but for me personally this is exceptionally difficult and technically next to impossible. After all, if I want to describe horse thieves in seven hundred lines, I have to talk and think and feel as they talk and think and feel; otherwise, if I let myself get subjective, my characters will fall apart and the story will not be as concise as all

very short stories need to be. When I am writing, I rely on my readers, and I trust them to fill in any subjective elements that might be missing.

Four: Though art cannot teach us how to be better

human beings, it can help us understand what it means to be human beings.

If you were to read every novel and story ever written, you would have a pretty good—if not entirely complete—sense of the range of qualities and ideas and emotions that characterize our species. Stare at a Rembrandt or a Rodin or a Helen Levitt photograph long enough and afterward people look different: lovelier and more complex, if not necessarily more explicable to themselves or us.

Art—and here I am speaking not of music or abstract painting but of the narrative and figurative, of literature and portraiture—can describe certain experiences that seem to be common to human beings: birth, death, procreation, falling in and out of love. It can show us that we share these experiences with other human beings. In depicting the emotions and longings and acts that we might not choose to discuss with our families or our neighbors, art can diminish our loneliness and solitude. Books in which the characters express negative emotions—or even commit crimes—can console those who have experienced similar emotions or have committed—or merely considered committing—a crime.

Five: Art can move us.

Surely it must be possible to walk into the cathedral of Chartres or Borromini's Chapel of Saint Ivo, or to stand in front of Caravaggio's Crucifixion of Saint Peter, and feel nothing. But it might require some effort. To say that we try to avoid art that is depressing or disturbing is a backhanded compliment to its power to affect us.

Perhaps, at some point, each one of us experiences his or her own version of the Stendhal syndrome, the psychosomatic response (which can involve fainting, a rapid heartbeat, vertigo, and hallucinations) to the power of art, a disease first identified with and endemic to Florence, where even today a few cases are diagnosed every year.

For years, I suffered from an inability to hear Mozart performed in public without bursting into tears. The quality of the performance made no difference at all, as I discovered when hearing a middle school string orchestra play a simplified excerpt from the `Jupiter"

Symphony. Once, after a crowd of youths had nearly rioted and almost broken down the heavy wooden doors before they were admitted to the Basilica di Santa Maria in Aracoeli, where a crowd of exquisitely

dressed Romans had assembled to hear Mozart's Requiem, I started sobbing out loud. At moments, I've wondered whether these feelings would have been less intense if Mozart had been rich, successful, and sure of himself, like Handel, whose work I also love.

Six: Can art make us smarter?

My sons were in school when a study was published proving that students at Stanford scored better on standardized tests after listening to Mozart than did the control group, which hadn't listened to Mozart. I prided myself on not being the kind of parent who made her kids play Don Giovanni on the way to take their SATs, though—confession—I did suggest that one of my sons put some Mozart on his Walkman (the forerunner of the iPod). Having taken so little advantage of the available information about the relationship between classical music and test taking, I was relieved when a more recent study questioned the results of the earlier research, though I'd liked the idea of Mozart, dead in his pauper's grave, revived to help American students score on standardized testing.

Clearly, more research is needed. Is a Wallace Stevens poem an exercise for the brain? Will a half hour spent in front of a Velázquez help you ace the math exam? Will reading Henry James's The Turn of the Screw make you realize—as any reader or judge or prospective juror or citizen of a democracy or any form of government should know—that two different conclusions can be drawn from the same set of facts? Will James's novella

make it easier for its readers to tolerate ambiguity?

Art can be informative, though it is always a mistake to equate intelligence with the amount of information one possesses. Read War and Peace and you learn something about the Napoleonic Wars. Look at a portrait by Bronzino and you find out how a certain class of people dressed in the sixteenth century. Read Philip Roth's American Pastoral for an education in, among other things, the workings of a glove-making factory. Read Gabriel Garcia Márquez to discover an earlier meaning of "banana republic," and Roberto Bolaño's 2666 to learn about the murders of hundreds (or perhaps thousands) of women that have been taking place for decades along the U.S.—Mexico border. A film such as Jean Renoir's The Rules of the Game or Michael Haneke's Caché or Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's The Lives of Others can help us understand why people, at certain historical moments, make certain moral choices. And Otis Redding's version of "Try a Little Tenderness" can step in to answer Freud's question about what women want, or at least one of the things they want—in addition to equal rights and equal pay.

Art can make you smarter, if by smart we mean more aware, responsive, cognizant, quicker, and so forth. Art can make you more aware of the ways in which history, social class, race, gender, and good and bad luck affect us. Art is the cerebral, spiritual, and emotional equivalent of the toners we splash on our faces to improve our complexions. Art opens our heart and brain cells. Put Mozart on your iPod and you will do better on the exam, especially if you've studied.

Seven: Art is a time travel machine.

There is no better way, including the Ouija board and the séance, to get in touch with people who have been dead for hundreds of years. If you want to know how a seventeenth-century Dutchman saw light, look at a Vermeer. If you want to know how it felt to be a bored housewife in a nineteenth-century French town, read Madame Bovary. If you want a preview of an alternate or possible future, read Philip K. Dick. If you want to see how this country looked fifty years ago, study Robert Frank's photos, or to see what Rome was like for a certain group of people in the 1960s, watch La Dolce Vita. If you want to know how it felt to live in a slaveholding society—that is to say, this country before the Civil War—Huckleberry Finn can tell you more than the most incisive, comprehensive, and meticulously researched history book ever written.

Eight: Art can not only transport us through time.

It can transcend and erase time as we discover that those characters squabbling over the inheritance in a Balzac novel are upsettingly like our relatives. Or that Billie Holiday knew how to sing a phrase in the way that would most affect you and only you, knew how to bend and hold a note until you couldn't help but notice.

One marvelous thing about Proust is how his consideration of the relationship between art and life extends outside of his masterpiece to make you consider the relationship between its art and your life. Reading the opening section of Swann's Way, in which the child insomniac is waiting for the sounds that indicate his mother is coming to kiss him good night, we are restored to that moment in childhood when we lay awake in the dark listening for a longed-for or dreaded noise. Thus we begin the book by achieving the hopedfor result of the project that the narrator attempts in volume after volume: recovering lost time, a project in which he eventually succeeds, thanks to the linden tea and the madeleine, whereas we readers have already succeeded, at least partly, by reading the opening section.

Nine: Can art protect us? Art can protect us.

If it can't, why have so many people, probably starting with the first person who drew that bison on the wall, assumed it could? The conversation about whether tribal or indigenous art is actually art is, to my mind, as arid and pointless as the conversation about whether it should be forbidden to mention the word beauty. Consider those towering wooden figures made by the Asmat people, those nail-studded totems from Benin, the icons and reliquaries in the treasure vaults of cathedrals, or a Fra Angelico fresco on the wall of his brother

monk's cell, and convince me that art doesn't have magic power.

Idolatry is only the most extreme form of art appreciation. According to the painter Alexander Melamid, the way we know that artists are the priests of art is that they all wear black. Regardless of whether we believe that our novel can make the rains come and help our crops to grow, art is the driftwood humans cling to when they worry, as they always have, that our species is drowning.

Ten: Art can give us pleasure.

Now we have come full circle, for to define aesthetic pleasure is as freighted, as complex, as arguable, and as impossible as defining beauty. Emily Dickinson likened poetry to freezing and partial decapitation. There is pleasure in watching the films of Chabrol and Kurosawa, and a related, if different, pleasure in admiring the

skill with which Chardin paints a bubble or a dead rabbit. There is pleasure in observing the small but precise incisions with which George Eliot lays bare a soul, or the inventive turns of phrase with which Dickens sketches a vast, interconnected population, or the plot twists and bold declarations with which Kafka and Kleist persuade us to accept and believe the most improbable premises.

As my doctor's assistant said, there's enough gloom and doom in the world. How fortunate, then, that we have art to amuse us, move us, inform us, comfort us, protect us, and console us for what we already know: that life is strange and hard and often dark, and we should be grateful—more than grateful—for those pinpoints of radiance, the cord of runway lights that guides us back through time and death to the hand that first drew that bison on the wall. <>

Word of Mouth: Gossip and American Poetry by Chad Bennett [Hopkins Studies in Modernism, Johns Hopkins University Press, 9781421425375]

Can the art of gossip help us to better understand modern and contemporary poetry? Gossip's ostensible frivolity may seem at odds with common conceptions of poetry as serious, solitary expression. But in Word of Mouth: Gossip and American Poetry, Chad Bennett explores the dynamic relationship between gossip and American poetry, uncovering the unexpected ways that the history of the modern lyric intertwines with histories of sexuality in the twentieth century.

Through nuanced readings of Gertrude Stein, Langston Hughes, Frank O'Hara, and James Merrill—poets who famously absorbed and adapted the loose talk that swirled about them and their work—Bennett demonstrates how gossip became a vehicle for alternative modes of poetic practice. By attending to gossip's key role in modern and contemporary poetry, he recognizes the unpredictable ways that conventional understandings of the modern lyric poem have been shaped by, and afforded a uniquely suitable space for, the expression of queer sensibilities.

Evincing an ear for good gossip, Bennett presents new and illuminating queer contexts for the influential poetry of these four culturally diverse poets. Word of Mouth: Gossip and American Poetry establishes poetry as a neglected archive for our thinking about gossip and contributes a crucial queer perspective to current lyric studies and its renewed scholarly debate over the status and uses of the lyric genre.

Excerpt: The Poet and the Gossip

Gossip exalts in poetry.
Robert Frost, 1956 lecture
Expect pages and by word of mouth.
Gertrude Stein, "An Instant Answer or a Hundred Prominent Men"

Ours is an age of gossip. Buzz, chatter, dish, gab, hearsay, schmooze, tittle-tattle: proliferating social scientific research on idle talk has ensured we have it on good authority that such various species of gossip account for at least two-thirds of everyday conversation.' And certainly gossip's voracious presence in daily life only grows if, in addition to face-to-face interaction, one considers mobile phone calls and text messages, e-mail exchanges, social networking sites and apps, and the unprecedented transfer of information across global, online communities, mobilized in part by computer networking protocols known as "gossip networks" (whose design mimics the exchange of gossip). More than a century after Samuel Warren and Louis Brandeis famously worried about the fate of privacy when "numerous mechanical devices threaten to make good the prediction that 'what is whispered in the closet shall be proclaimed from the house-tops,'" modern culture—from the talk of the town to TMZ, from the telephone to Twitter—has been marked by an extraordinary and increasing ability, and desire, to spread gossip rapidly and widely.

This book provides an account of the dynamic relationship between gossip and poetry in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, revealing gossip's formative queer role in modern and contemporary American poetry.' In readings of poems by Gertrude Stein, Langston Hughes, Frank O'Hara, James Merrill, and others, I demonstrate how poetry has been shaped by its interactions with gossip and how "gossip," as Robert Frost declares, "exalts in poetry."' This might seem a strange claim, since—particularly from the perspective of the twenty-first century and the digital transformation of knowledge and culture—poetry must appear an unlikely or outmoded vehicle for gossip. At first blush, gossip's ostensibly frivolous talk about others would sound at odds with a modern lyric poetry commonly understood as serious, intensely subjective expression. Whereas gossip revels in its many voices—as it spreads it accumulates voices, suggesting an increasingly untidy, increasingly collaborative authorship—the lyric poet is most often seen as going it alone, as in John Stuart Mill's touchstone assertion, "All poetry is of the nature of soliloquy."' Perhaps for these reasons, theorists of gossip have ignored its frequent appearances in poetry, and even scholars specifically interested in gossip's relationship to literary language have focused on more obviously social genres, such as the novel or drama.' But, of all genres, lyric poetry has been most self-reflexively concerned with the matters of privacy that are so crucial to gossip, and particularly with the effects of a privacy that paradoxically circulates in public.' In this sense, it is not surprising that poets like Frost and their everyday readers have persisted in casually thinking of poems as gossipy. Such persistence recommends a more rigorous consideration of poetry as a neglected archive for our thinking about gossip and of gossip as a necessary rubric for understanding how poets have negotiated modern culture's shifting conceptions of privacy and publicity, of selfhood and sociality, and, especially, of poetry itself.

In this volume, I bring together the insights of queer and lyric theory to tell the story of how gossip modeled forms of sociality and voice that poets experimented with over the course of the twentieth century. Through a set of case studies of culturally diverse American poets who absorbed and adapted the loose talk that swirled about them and their work, I argue that gossip became a vehicle for the performance of alternative sexualities and concomitant meditations on alternative modes of poetic practice. At the heart of this argument is a queer reappraisal of modern lyric poetry. Attending to gossip's key role in modern and contemporary poetry enables a recognition of the unpredictable ways that conventional understandings of the modern lyric poem—as, for example, an utterance smudging the lines between private and public, knowing and unknowing, intimacy and strangeness—have been informed by, and afforded a uniquely suitable space for, the expression of queer sensibilities.

"My Name Is Gossip"

In exploring how four major American poets creatively reimagined the demands of the lyric genre by turning to the queer art of gossip, I present a mostly affirmative relationship between poetry and gossip. Yet what is perhaps the most read poem on the matter suggests, quite the

opposite, how gossip has been less exalted than denigrated by poetry. Indeed, gossip, as this poem's title melodramatically announces, is "Nobody's Friend," let alone poetry's:

> My name is Gossip. I have no respect for justice.
> I maim without killing. I break hearts and ruin lives.
> I am cunning and malicious and gather strength with age.
> The more I am quoted, the more I am believed.
> My victims are helpless. They cannot protect themselves against me because I have no name and no face.
> To track me down is impossible. The harder you try, the more elusive I become.
> I am nobody's friend.
> Once I tarnish a reputation, it is never the same.
> I topple governments and wreck marriages.
> I ruin careers and cause sleepless nights, heartaches and indigestion.
> I make innocent people cry in their pillows.
> Even my name hisses. I am called Gossip. I make headlines and headaches.
> Before you repeat a story, ask yourself:
> Is it true? Is it harmless? Is it necessary?
> If it isn't, don't repeat it.

"Nobody's Friend" appeared in the long-running syndicated advice column Dear Abby. According to Abigail Van Buren (the pseudonym of Pauline Phillips and now her daughter, Jeanne Phillips), she first read the poem when it ran as "a full-page ad in The Wall Street/ournal," and throughout the 1980s and 1990s and even into the twenty-first century, she reprinted the poem whenever a reader sought advice regarding matters of gossip and reputation. During this same period Van Buren's twin sister and rival advice columnist, Eppie Lederer, better known as Ann Landers, also printed (and, often at her readers' request, frequently reprinted) a slight variation of"Nobody's Friend" under different titles, such as "Remember Me?" or "Who Am I?" At its peak, Dear Abby appeared in 1,400 papers and claimed a readership of 110 million, while Ask Ann Landers boasted 90 million readers in 1,200 papers, making it plausible that, over the years, "Nobody's Friend" has reached an audience of potentially several million ordinary readers, many of whom carefully saved the poem and shared it with others (I first encountered the poem as a newspaper clipping stuck to my grandmother's refrigerator, where it ironically oversaw the kitchen-table gossip that punctuated family dinners). More than just the most read American poem on the subject of gossip, "Nobody's Friend" in fact may be one of the most read twentieth-century American poems.

Its attitude toward gossip—and poetry's relation to gossip—is therefore instructive. What does it divulge? Taken at face value, "Nobody's Friend" offers up a rather conventional moral admonishment against gossip as a form of damaging malice. Yet the poem itself, spoken by the personified, unreliable, and disreputable "Gossip," would seem to advise against taking it at face value. In Gossip's insistence that we heed its word by avoiding that word's dangerous imperative toward repetition ("don't repeat it"), we are confronted with a version of the liar's paradox, one that strains toward resolution in the implicit split between the voice of the poem and that of the hissing snake in its garden, gossip. This split between an edifying poetry and harmful gossip threatens the poem's coherence: Gossip immediately announces its "name," only to clumsily demur, four lines later, "I have no name" (yet later that name "hisses" its return); it claims "no respect for justice" but concludes with a reverent series of questions treating justice with excessive delicacy (imagine the dreary world limited only to statements that were "true," "harmless," and "necessary"!); and it appears in this instance to warn the readers of Dear Abby against the sort of gossipy curiosity in the personal lives of others that one presumes has brought them to this advice column, and in turn this poem, in the first place.

Such contradictions ensure that if "Nobody's Friend" sets out to provide a poetic spell against gossip, it winds up unwittingly suggesting affinities between these genres' powers. Each genre asks us to construct an intimate figure of voice, a presence made out of absence. Gossip, here, both is and isn't a person: named and nameless, present yet "elusive," it is—like the figure of poetic voice—the seductive effect of words taking on a life of their

own. Fittingly, the poem that Gossip voices circulates in precisely the way that Gossip describes its own circulation: as anonymous words ("to track" the never-identified author of "Nobody's Friend" down, my own efforts suggest, is, as with Gossip, "impossible") that thrive on being repeatedly "quoted" and made at once more present ("gather[ing] strength with age," becoming "more believed") and "more elusive" (to the extent that, over the years, readers of both Dear Abby and Ask Ann Landers regularly wrote to request that the poem, which had gotten under their skin yet somehow slipped away, be reprinted).

The clunky machinations of voice in "Nobody's Friend" make plain its reliance on the figure of the gossip as a disavowed figure for the poet and hint at an overlapping set of interests, methods, and effects between the two genres—as if to speak in a poem might be to betray, if not outright declare, "My name is Gossip." "Nobody's Friend" is hardly unique in its anxious stance toward such a declaration; I introduce the poem here less as a curious specimen of popular culture than as an indication of the extent to which modern and contemporary poetry bears the imprint of its uneasy engagements with gossip. "Nobody's Friend" provides Van Buren, Landers, and their readers both a vivid account of and (in its putative moral correction) an alibi for the pleasures of gossip foundational to the columns and their publics. In this, it echoes a host of modern poems that assert their specificity and value against the negative example of gossip, the presentation of which often feels intended to reroute those charges leveled against idle talk away from the poems themselves.

The many and varied examples of this phenomenon that one might cite stretch from at least Romanticism to the present. They include work by William Wordsworth, who, although influentially in pursuit of a poetry of ordinary language, positions the isolated meditations of poets against the feminized gossip he calls "personal talk" in a poem that begins, "I am not One who much or oft delight/To season my fireside with persona talk,/About Friends, who live within an easy walk,/Or Neighbours, daily, weekly, in my sight."" Or consider—to leap ahead to the modernist period —T. S. Eliot, who in the second section of The Waste Land presents demotic pub gossip about Lil and her husband, Albert, in a manner that could stand as an ars poetica for the multi-voiced poetics of his poem more generally Eliot, here, is indebted to the rhythms of gossip (the passage is musically structured by its "I said," "(hie said," and "she said" speech tags), to gossip-narrative structures (presenting a series of nested accounts as the speaker relates to her unnamed fellow gossiper what she said to Lil about what Al bert had previously said to Lily, and to gossip's composite voice (the short passage consists of at least six different voices, male and female, high anc low, filtered through the medium of the gossip and, ultimately, the poet) Yet, even while drawing heavily on the style and substance of gossip, the passage condemns the gossip about Lil and Albert as a vulgar perversion of epistemological reproduction comparable to Lil's abortion and its reproductive refusal.

A quite different modern poet, Edgar Lee Masters, similarly recoils against the gossip in which he indulges. Masters's best-selling 1915 volume Spoon River Anthology, a sequence of poems in which 244 deceased inhabitants of the invented Spoon River speak their own epitaphs, caused scandal with its airing of thinly fictionalized small-town gossip. Throughout, Masters struggles to reconcile the tension between the book's many individual poems condemning the disastrous, and in some cases even deadly, effects of village gossip and the gossipy motivation and appeal of his project itself. "Minerva Jones," for instance, directly posits poetry as remedy for gossip. Minerva, named after the virgin goddess of poetry and wisdom, recounts her brutal rape by "Butch" Weldy and subsequent death while aborting the resulting pregnancy. When she requests, "Will some one go to the village newspaper," we presume she means to share her untold story and achieve some kind of posthumous retribution—but the next line unexpectedly continues, "And gather into a book the verses I wrote?" Minerva's valorized desire to replace the gossip of village scandal with the poetry of "love" and "life" is a characteristic gesture of Spoon River but ultimately exactly what Masters's morbidly gossipy poems will not do:

rather than ushering in "verses" that stand apart from village gossip, Minerva's wish instead initiates a series of four more poems that relate the scandal of her death and its aftermath from various perspectives, continuing the book's pattern of pursuing the gossip it repeatedly censures.

In another volume of poems appearing in 1915, Robert Frost's North of Boston, we find what Frost described as poetic experiments with "tones of speech" that began as "no more than an almost technical interest" in his neighbors' talk but developed until he "began to suspect myself of liking their gossip for its own sake." This mild suspicion of gossip's partly poetic pleasures is evident in a number of Frost's early poems, such as "A Servant to Servants," his sympathetic but wary portrait of a talky, troubled housewife humored by a politely anxious male interlocutor, or "The Housekeeper," in which the male narrator somewhat sheepishly visits the home of John and his housekeeper, Estelle, in search of gossip about their illicit romantic relationship from Estelle's mother. These poems each provide the reader with male surrogates whose dubious responses to the gossip they eagerly take in serve to absolve us, and the poems, of possibly liking gossip for its own sake. In "The Housekeeper," for example, Estelle's mother draws the negative charge of gossip away from the poem's narrator: he seeks out the household's gossip like a stereotypical nosy neighbor, but she is depicted as a grotesque female gossip, confined to the domestic sphere or "built in here like a big church organ," as she puts it, a mere instrument to be played by those wanting news—or perhaps poetry."

The apprehensive tenor of the relation between gossip and modern poetry persists into the postwar period, when we might expect to find, given the era's general loosening of perceived strictures against the personal in poetry, a more favorable embrace of idle talk. Robert Lowell's "Skunk Hour," the most famous poem from his influential 1959 volume, Life Studies, in fact spends its first four stanzas recounting "village" gossip—about "Nautilus Island's hermit/ heiress," "our summer millionaire," and "our fairy decorator"—and its last four stanzas transforming that collective, third-person gossip about the village into a first-person disclosure of the self. Yet the poem finally compares this process of self-revelation through gossipy possession of others' privacies to a skunk rooting through the garbage for "a bite to eat," a self-incriminating figure for the postwar poet who (as with the so-called confessional poets) finds aesthetic and personal nourishment in what is perceived as humanity's trash. However ambivalent this final figure and its stance toward confession, its clear stance toward gossip about others—a communal practice only seen as valuable insofar as it gives way to the individual authority of self-disclosure—continues the long-standing tendency of imagining poetry as averse to (perhaps to the extent it is in fact intimate with) gossip.

In presenting this snapshot history of modern poetry and gossip, my intention is not, as must be apparent, to exhaustively survey the relation between them. Nor is it to imply that these poets together form a single, coherent poetic tradition. Rather, I introduce the telling (and tellingly gendered) examples of Wordsworth, Eliot, Masters, Frost, and Lowell simply to suggest that the reflexive antipathy between gossip and poetry at work in a popular poem like "Nobody's Friend" indexes a more complex treatment of this seeming opposition that recurs with surprising frequency in a range of sometimes competing modern literary poetries. One further example will serve to tease out some of the key terms on which this common opposition between gossip and poetry often rests, terms that thread their way through the less antagonistic story about poetry and gossip that I propose to tell in my subsequent chapters.

Ezra Pound's well-known 1912 poem "Portrait d'une Femme" employs the extended metaphor of the Sargasso Sea to depict his titular femme as a gossip. The Sargasso Sea, a stretch of the North Atlantic located in a gyre and congested with seaweed, exists in the popular imagination as a mythical graveyard for lost ships and more generally as a cultural junkyard-cum-archive into which all things everywhere gradually make their way (in this, the Sargasso recalls the House of Fame, a powerful part of gossip's image repertoire that will appear throughout this study). "Your mind and you are our Sargasso Sea," Pound's speaker begins, positioning the poem's society hostess

addressee as constituted by London gossip—as an entity into which, over the years, "Ideas, old gossip, oddments of all things" have "floated up" like the debris caught in the weeds of the Sargasso. This patiently collected gossip makes her, the speaker admits, "a person of some interest," "sought" out by "[g]reat minds" who "take[ ] strange gain away." Yet gossip's "strange gain"—the shipwreck of some "curious suggestion" or "[f]act that leads nowhere," perhaps "a tale or two"—is ultimately deemed useless: it "might prove useful and yet never proves." "No! there is nothing!" the poem rather emphatically concludes, "In the whole and all,/Nothing that's quite your own./Yet this is you."

These final lines follow a drawn-out sentence—nearly half the poem—that luxuriates in description of the gossip's "sea-hoard of deciduous things," including "[i]dols and ambergris and rare inlays" (*57*). They thus attempt to subordinate the poem's, and reader's, interest in the extended metaphor's vehicle for gossip—the descriptive attention lavished on those figurative "things" swept into the domain of the gossip—to the sudden, exclamatory rejection of the value of such absorbing treasure, a rejection that at once attests to gossip's dangerous charm and underscores the poem's defensive critique of it. "Portrait d'une Femme" presents gossip as a seductively false or surface form of understanding, as unoriginal, and as a form of fragmentary knowledge indicative of a fragmentary self. Pound's gossipy society lady reduces her world's "bright ships" to "dimmed wares"; her "mind" consists of a jumble of disparate parts, mere "oddments" of "this or that". In possessing gossip, the poem implies, one possesses—in fact one is—"[n]othing that's quite your own." This stance anticipates Martin Heidegger's account of idle talk and his distinction between "what has been drawn from primordial sources with a struggle" and what is "just gossip," something "everyone can snatch up," which "divests us of the task of genuine understanding."" In "Portrait d'une Femme," as in Western culture more generally, such charges take on gendered dimensions. Gossip and other denigrated rhetorical styles have long been associated with women, and feminist revaluations of gossip have shown how gossip appears pointless or trivial according to masculinist models that view reputable discourse as based in logic and abstract principles and that regard the personal, particular, domestic, and embodied as feminine and thus unimportant. Along these lines, Pound's portrait refutes his subject's appeal by casting gossip as a secondary ("second always"), murkily material, and feminine form of knowledge and selfhood (one lacking significance, self-possession, wholeness) for which his masculine poetic authority compensates, even substitutes, confidently declaring in its closing line that "this"—a deictic pronoun that suggests in part this poem—"is you."

Of course, the poem itself encourages, if not outright advances, just the sort of society gossip it claims to dismiss: its portrait's real-life referent has been taken to be Florence Farr, Olivia Shakespear, or perhaps a composite of the two. Further, the poem's descriptive catalogue of figurative gossip—its list of "[s]trange woods half sodden, and new brighter stuff"—reads also like a figure for a modernist, collage-based poetics, a gesture toward the gathering and juxtaposition of fragments old and new as a chief strategy for modernist poetry in the tradition of Pound. As with the poets cited above, Pound's effort to define his poetry against gossip entails the disavowal of key elements of his own practice. In this way, "Portrait d'une Femme" exemplifies the tendency in modern poetry that I have set forth: an inclination to distinguish the particularity and normative value of poetry in contrast to the nonnormative discourse of gossip with which it is often quite closely engaged.

The poem also significantly intimates something about this tendency that we might call queer or, to use the near synonym preferred by "Portrait d'une Femme," something "strange" (*57*). The adjective "strange" appears three times in the poem, more than any other—four lines from its opening ("[s]trange spars of knowledge"), four lines from its close ("[s]trange woods half sodden"), and at its midpoint ("strange gain")—forming a prominent affective through line for our encounter with Pound's femme. "Strange" suggests the unusual or unfamiliar, the typical purview of gossip. It also, more specifically, suggests that which does not belong to a place or person where it is found, amplifying the unsettling, alien qualities of a gossip

made up of "nothing" her "own." "Strange" can also connote sexual promiscuity or deviance—as in the phrase "strange woman," used through the nineteenth century to describe prostitutes or otherwise promiscuous women—and something of this sexual connotation, too, lingers in the marked strangeness of the New Woman who is the subject of Pound's portrait, a creative, unconventional woman who rejects "the usual thing" of marriage and "[o]ne dull man" (*57*). Attacks on gossip habitually assert, as Patricia Meyer Spacks writes, "resemblances between loose talk and loose sexual conduct," and "Portrait d'une Femme" accordingly implies a resemblance between its subject's sexual alterity as a strange or odd woman and her strange collection of "gossip, oddments." The surprise of the strange unsettles but also captivates; the strangeness of gossip and of the gossip presents for Pound a queer source of repulsion and fascination: "one comes to you/And takes strange gain away" (*57*). If, finally, Pound's portrait characteristically withdraws in contempt from its encounter with such alterity, it is also all the stranger for it, allowing us to glimpse what will be the object of my study's longer look—the queer allure of the style, sociality, and alternative forms of agency made available to poetry by gossip and the figure of the gossip.

Defining Gossip

By now one might rightfully be wondering what, precisely, do I mean by the term "gossip," and, more to the point for a study of the poetics of gossip, how do I intend to identify what is surely not quite the same thing, gossip in poetry? These questions are not merely prefatory to my discussion, something to be set forth and dispensed with; they are, as in social scientific research on gossip, central to it. Across this research, an accepted, minimal definition of "gossip" is talk about one or more absent figures. In addition to requiring the absence of a discussed third party, researchers sometimes stipulate an evaluative component of gossip that serves its various social functions. Ultimately, however, any effort to establish a uniform definition of "gossip" comes up against the unruly particularities of its situated contexts, and most scholars agree that context more than the content of talk proves necessary for discerning the presence of gossip. Because gossip is used to establish group boundaries, separating those in the know from those out of the loop, recognizing gossip can be difficult for those unfamiliar with a given social context, its private histories and discursive repertoire. Seemingly neutral remarks about others (Tom had lunch with his wife today) can also be heard, for those so attuned to their situational aspects, as choice gossip (Tom had lunch with his wife today). Thus, although I take talk about absent others as a practical, baseline definition of "gossip," in what follows I try not to presume to know in advance what counts as gossip but rather to

register how gossip emerges within individual poems and how those poems themselves imagine gossip's characteristics and functions—sometimes, as we will see, in ways that contradict even our most fundamental understandings of gossip.

That gossip's meanings and effects are so often embedded in specific contexts presents challenges for understanding any modern poetics of gossip, given the pervasiveness of modernist values of literary autonomy and (especially lyric) transcendence that would abstract a poem from its social and historical circumstances. What do we mean when we call a poem gossipy? Poetry's actual or perceived lack of context makes poetic gossip something we frequently sense but have difficulty locating in specific linguistic or formal features. It also makes disambiguating markers of gossip, when they appear, even more important. Although such markers necessarily differ from poem to poem, my analysis does bring to the fore certain recurrent features of poetic gossip, which together help us to register the poem as a social space, maintained by modes of circulation and historical contexts that lyric theories tend to overlook, downplay, or even deny. Here I want to introduce a few features in particular that will become familiar by the end of this book. These features are far from comprehensive, and their poetic presence and significance varies, but they might at this point be usefully adduced both to anticipate some of what will concern my formal attention and to suggest how that attention raises broader theoretical questions whose complexity I will treat

more fully in my readings of Stein, Hughes, O'Hara, and Merrill.

To be sure, the adjective "gossipy" can simply indicate content, the overt presence of the sort of subject matter to which gossip's unauthorized talk about the lives of others is drawn—private matters, frequently sexual activities or emotions. For example, when Allen Ginsberg, in his candid elegy for Frank O'Hara, recalls O'Hara "hurrying to meet" a "young poet with a big cock/ who could fuck you all night long/till you never came," most readers recognize the unambiguous presence of gossip. Or, to choose another example of poetic gossip in the orbit of O'Hara, there can be little doubt that the anecdote relayed by Thom Gunn in his poem "Famous Friends" presents an instance of gossip (it even appears in a section of his book, Boss Cupid, entitled "Gossip"). "Famous Friends" describes encountering, in "BAR on 2nd Avenue," a man named j. J. (Mitchell) who eagerly identifies himself, "his smile triumphant," as "Frank O'Hara's last lover." Gunn vividly dishes, "it was like having met/ Nell Gwynn,/on the way down, /good natured, losing weight,/still chatting about spaniels."

The poetry that is my focus often contains such plainly gossipy content: Stein's work includes salon gossip about those who came to see and be seen at 27 rue de Fleurus; Hughes's poetry gives voice to the chorus of gossip arising from Harlem's stoops, street corners, and bars; O'Hara's poems name names as they dish his New York art world coterie; and Merrill's supernatural trilogy, The Changing Light at Sandover, details the textual and sexual lives and afterlives of a transhistorical queer literary circle that occupies both this world and the next. But beyond or even in the absence of overtly gossipy subject matter, gossip in poetry is sometimes also a matter of rhetorical style. For example, each of the poets in my study, as we will see, employs paralipsis-the self-contradictory technique by which one emphasizes or asserts what one pretends to ignore or pass over—exploiting the trope's familiar role in gossip's rhetoric (e.g., I couldn't possibly mention how... or I would certainly never imply that ...). Denise Duhamel's poem "Sex with a Famous Poet" presents a clear example of gossipy paralipsis, which provides a way of saying something by claiming not to be saying it. The poem recounts a dream about "sex with a famous poet" whom the speaker has met only one time, at least

> in real life, and that was in a large group
> in which I barely spoke up. He disgusted me
> with his disparaging remarks about women.
> He even used the word "Jap"
> which I took as a direct insult to my husband who's Asian.

Later, the speaker acknowledges that "I know you're probably curious about who the poet is,/so I should tell you the clues I've left aren't/accurate, that I've disguised his identity,/and that you shouldn't guess / bet it's him. ..." Of course, this instance of paralipsis encourages the curiosity and gossipy speculation it purports to set aside or downplay: Who is this atrociously behaved famous poet? In this manner, the poem can gossip without fully seeming to gossip. Yet this is less a matter of the sort of disavowal of dish we've seen in the case of a poet like Pound than an instance of gossip's rhetoric serving as a tool, or "mode of power," as Spacks puts it, for those deprived of agency. By gossiping about an unnamed poet whom we might well wager to be any number of famous poets, the blind item of "Sex with a Famous Poet" playfully opens up larger discussions about pervasive sexism and racism in the poetry world's institutions and power structures. The specific trope of paralipsis, in its capacity to disclose and conceal, here manifests a broader interest in the expressive power of forms of opacity and the productive possibilities of suspended agency that characterize the poetic gossip this book will explore.

The conspicuous presence of proper names or ambiguous personal pronouns in poetry can also serve as markers of gossip, associated equally with blunt revelation (naming names) and more subtle insinuation (as in no names, please or you know who). Tim Dlugos, a later-generation New York School poet in the tradition of O'Hara, exemplifies the proper name as a distillation of gossip in his poem "Tonight," ten cinquains consisting of lines that simply state a name and what that individual is doing "[t]onight" ("May 12, 1983" a postscript tells

us). In the opening stanza, for instance, we learn that

> Barry Davidson is finishing Remembrance of Things Past.
> A hustler's hair and eyes blow Dennis Cooper away.
> Bo Huston comes into his inheritance.
> John Craig seems pretty stoned.
> Lanny Richman's working overtime.

Here, proper names give each line's account the charge of gossip: more overtly gossipy subject matter (e.g., a man seduced by a "hustler's hair and eyes") is amplified by its attachment to a particular (and now well-known) name, while specific names lend even seemingly banal description (e.g., someone "finishing Remembrance of Things Past") the air of knowing implication. As Wayne Koestenbaum, discussing proper names in the poetry of Stein, writes, "The name is the tip of gossip's iceberg; each name implies a verdict, a titter, a possible condemnation," a formulation that evokes—as does "Tonight"—the gossip column's bolded names as metonyms for the items they index. If naming and being named by gossip entails a fear of "possible condemnation," or "a verdict"—particularly for marginalized poets in a hostile culture who worry, like Stein, about the implications "[i]f I name names if I name names with them"—it can also occasion the pleasures of recognition, publicity, and even exposure that come with making Dlugos's list and that distinguish the many proper names of O'Hara's poetry or the exclusive, A-Z seating chart for the invitation-only poetry reading that concludes The Changing Light at Sandover and makes material the celebrated queer literary genealogy Merrill invents throughout it. Proper names in poems often indicate not only gossip but a negotiation of these tensions between the potential damage or delights of naming names.

Such tensions can accompany the prominent use of personal pronouns in poetry, as well. We have already seen an instance of pronouns as markers of gossip in The Waste Land's pub scene, where "I said," "[hie said," and "she said" speech tags alone create an ambient tone of gossip, imply the complex narrative structures of gossip's nested accounts, and suggest gossip's composite voice. Gossip's pronouns also, like proper names, establish boundaries, indicating presence or exclusion from its intimacies—an us and a them. In Harryette Mullen's "Elliptical," for example, it is the undesignated pronoun "they" that implies the verdicts, titters, and condemnations of gossip:

> They just can't seem to ... They should try harder to ... They ought to be more ... We all wish they weren't so ... They never ... They always ... Sometimes they ... Once in a while they ...

Mullen's ellipses suggest gossip's innuendo, but more so serve to abstract gossip's rhetoric from its content, bringing to the fore those gestures, so conventional as to pass unnoticed, that allow disparaging remarks to appear benign and that are themselves freighted with meaning. Shifting our attention from what gossip says to how it says it, "Elliptical" critiques the kind of gossip that works as rote categorization, uninterested in the detail and particularity that it elides and that might complicate its foregone conclusions about a dominant "We" and subordinate "They." Taking up the same conflict but from the opposite angle, Stein in Stanzas in Meditation resists an ominous, ever-present "They" and their gossipy "account," while in Montage of a Dream Deferred Hughes describes the "'They say' ... 'They say' ... 'They say' .... of "the gossips" as a powerful arbiter of reputation. Yet as we will see, these poets often find pleasure and even agency, too, in appearing in their apparently objectifying, exclusionary "account," such that poetic gossip's drama of pronouns, as with proper names, frequently occupies itself with a negotiation of the potentials within gossip's quite real limits.

This negotiation presents a crucial distinction between gossip and forms of talk such as dialogue or conversation. Although most scholarship on gossip favors more usefully narrow definitions of the construct, the broadest definition views it simply as small talk or chitchat, everyday conversation about social or personal topics. But such a baggy definition of gossip makes it difficult to differentiate it from related forms of talk. Thus, while at times I will use synonyms or slang terms for gossip such as "idle talk" or "dish," and I will at times want to consider each poet's gossip within the context of other forms of talk or even as a figure for various forms of unofficial meaning making,

throughout my analyses I maintain a distinction between gossip and conversation. When Stein's, Hughes's, O'Hara's, and Merrill's poetic gossip has been addressed, it typically, as I will show, has been subsumed within broader discussions of talk, dialogue, or conversation. But a prevailing critical emphasis on conversational mutuality and manners tends to efface both the difficulties and the pleasures of gossip's naming names and its unauthorized appropriations, exclusions, and use of others, often imagining a stabilizing parity for poetic talk that is in fact characterized by rapid shifts and disparities in agency. All gossip is a type of conversation, but not all conversation is gossip. Unlike the ideals of decorum and mutuality understood to govern conversation, gossip depends on an absent other whose necessary exclusion from the scene of gossip enables its intimacies. Gossip thrives on its (sometimes charmingly) bad manners and hierarchical play; its authority obtains in speaking ofas much as to others. Yet, conversely, for the poets I consider, gossip's objectifying talk also strangely animates its objects' agency. To read their poetic gossip as conversation obscures both gossip's potential for enforcing normative hierarchies and, quite differently, the way that gossip, unlike conversation, connotes a potential queerness, a pleasurable, world-making investment in the nonnormative. I seek to show how the twentieth century's most innovative poetic representations and enactments of gossip significantly engage the tension between its potential normativity and its potential queerness.

Lyric Gossip

I began this introduction by invoking commonplace notions of the lyric as solitary, personal expression, yet, like gossip, what we mean by "lyric" is—though often presumed—subject to ongoing debate. Recently, scholars in the field of historical poetics, or what has sometimes been labeled the "new lyric studies," have developed and extended long-standing arguments that what we call the lyric is not a transhistorical genre but rather the product of "lyric reading," a set of normative interpretive practices consolidated over the course of the twentieth century. These practices assign qualities now identified with the lyric—namely the fiction of an abstract, isolated, expressive speaking voice—to a wide variety of poems by decontextualizing them from their historical and social environments. Virginia Jackson describes how, as critics associated with the New Criticism differently took up such practices and instilled them in American universities, "a broad idea of the lyric became exemplary for the reading of all poetry," in turn influencing "the way poems were written. Indeed, Jackson contends, "it remains the normative model for the production and reception of most poetry."' Emphasizing production over reception, I examine the work of Stein, Hughes, O'Hara, and Merrill against the unfolding history of twentieth-century lyric reading, demonstrating how their poems not only engage this contemporaneous history but also themselves theorize the lyric genre, forming part of what Jackson describes as the ongoing, "collective project of invention" that is the lyric. In a series of historically situated close readings that move between synchronic contexts and diachronic effects, I identify in their poetry an alternative to lyric reading that I term lyric gossip: a knowing effort to reimagine emerging critical ideals of the lyric by creatively inhabiting them as a source of poetic possibility.

This effort plays out in a number of ways. In Stanzas in Meditation, Stein restages the scene of lyric address by cultivating surprising affinities between gossip's objectifying "They" and lyric's paradigmatic, overhearing auditors. In Montage of a Dream Deferred, Hughes locates poetic voice in a gossipy obscurity that cannot be subsumed by the demands of intelligibility, at once resisting reductive assumptions about the transparency of minority lives and writing and asking us to revalue the modern lyric subject and its exclusionary ideal of transparent universality. O'Hara complicates understandings of lyric utterance as belonging to a fictive speaker by advancing instead a poetics of gossip and a lyric talker. And in The Changing Light at Sandover, gossip provides Merrill with a method and motivation for his poem's provocative sounding of the problem of tone and the queer possibilities, as much as limits, of the lyric interiority that tone is taken to indicate. Lyric address, voice, speaker, tone: in the hands of each poet, the situated style and social practices of gossip clarify, trouble, and rework these foundational, interrelated elements of

the modern lyric, in the process reframing questions of individual agency and relationality central to debates about poetic self-fashioning. Put another way, these poets engage, through their poetry, in self-reflexive gossip about the status and workings of the lyric genre itself.

It is worth stressing that "lyric gossip" does not mean that I understand the poems at the center of my arguments about gossip's role in modern and contemporary poetry to be lyric, however one might define it. Although critics have occasionally made the case—perhaps unsurprisingly from the standpoint of a history of lyric reading—for each of these poems as (whether in whole or in part) lyric, the sheer length of Stein's Stanzas in Meditation (192 pages), Hughes's Montage of a Dream Deferred (51 pages), and Merrill's The Changing Light at Sandover (560 pages) strains against even the most capacious definitions of the genre. O'Hara, meanwhile, antagonized the poetry world and conceptions of the lyric's transcendent universalism with his seemingly antipoetic poems and their garrulous rush of stubborn particulars. My concern is not whether these poems fit some available definition of the lyric (in most cases, they probably would not) but rather, as Jonathan Culler writes in a defense of lyric as an interpretive category, "whether approaching a given poem or poetic corpus in relation [to] the lyric tradition enriches the experience of and reflection on the poems in question" or "to what extent reference to the parameters of that tradition are presupposed —as something to be cited, parodied, deployed, denounced, or worked against." While not, for the most part, "lyric" in any traditional sense, the quite different poetries of Stein, Hughes, O'Hara, and Merrill draw on, depart from, and otherwise contend with coexistent norms of lyric reading that became dominant over the course of the twentieth century and that shaped the reception of poetry, including their own.

It is worth stressing, too, that "lyric gossip" does not mean that I understand the poems at the center of my study and their gossip about the modern lyric genre to be anti-lyric in the tradition of avant-garde poetries ranging from experimental modernisms to the theoretically informed poetries of the 1970s—poetries that, in rejecting lyric reading's assumptions of voice and an expressive lyric subjectivity, may nonetheless shore up the conventions of lyric reading they oppose. I instead want to consider how poems might, as Gillian White writes, "register resistances to lyricizing readings of them without taking on the premises of avant-garde anti-lyricism." What I call lyric gossip may appear to advance a disruptive (if now familiar) critique of the lyric—an effort to expose its naturalized protocols and their potentially damaging implications and effects—and in some sense it does. But, more than such critique, I argue that the lyric gossip of queer poets like Stein, Hughes, O'Hara, and Merrill evinces a non-oppositional relation to the lyric that confounds the lyric/anti-lyric binary that continues to structure debates in poetic theory. Beyond critique, I am interested in how poets may also be motivated, in taking up the lyric, by what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick terms "a reparative impulse," the desire of which is, rather than a suspicious stripping away of illusion in service of exposure, "additive and accretive. Its fear, a realistic one, is that the culture surrounding it is inadequate or inimical to its nurture; it wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self." The poets I consider each want to inhabit and reimagine—without exactly rejecting—lyric norms, summoning the affective resources that a flurry of reading practices have put in circulation around the variously idealized and disparaged lyric object as they pursue one of what Sedgwick identifies as "the many ways selves and communities succeed in exacting sustenance from the objects of a culture—even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them."

Queer Gossip

Throughout this study, I situate the foregoing formal and generic questions in queer cultural contexts where the vexed issues of reputation, sexual identity, and style coalesce around both the idiom and figure of the gossip. Of course, not all gossip is queer but all gossip, by virtue of its motivating interest in the nonnormative, potentially entails queer effects. The poets in my study actively seek such effects. Aware of how gossip can serve as a vital counter to official discourse, and how even repressive gossip can become a vehicle for queer

performance, these poets take the gossip that surrounds them as a source of inspiration and formal model. Their work shares an investment in poetic self-fashioning. Yet Stein, Hughes, O'Hara, and Merrill each recalibrate the poetics and politics of lyric selfhood by grounding it not in a subject's autonomous self-expression, as modern ideas of the lyric would lead us to expect, but instead in the ambiguous or suspended agency effected by gossip's winged words. Their lyric gossip draws on the queer experience of dish as they pursue the fraught pleasures and uncertain agency of gossip's objectifying talk about others and the vivifying anticipation of in turn becoming the object of gossip oneself—as if to be, for these poets, is to be gossiped about.

Placing these poetic experiments in queer historical contexts (whether Stein's Paris salon and the literary and sexual gossip it exuded, the speculation surrounding Hughes's opaque sexuality both within and beyond his Harlem community, O'Hara's negotiation of the Cold War sexual suspicion often attached to the queer and the poet, or Merrill's post-Stonewall return to this moment and the raw material of the 1950s Lavender Scare) allows us to see where modern theories of the lyric and the poems that reflect, exceed, resist, or correct them have been steeped in broader cultural idioms—and thus to understand how poetry's formal properties and not simply its thematic content present a necessary part of the historical record. In my discussions of each poet, the problem of privacy emerges as a crucial node for this interchange of poetic form and social and historical influence. Their work invites us to register, amid the noise of all that separates ideas of lyric, gossip, and queerness, the resonant conceptions of a publicly circulating privacy that disclose a productive affinity between them.

The modern idea of the lyric as a privacy that paradoxically circulates in public—an overheard utterance—finds its most potent expression in Mill's aforementioned 1833 essay, "What Is Poetry?" Here, Mill confronts the apparent contradiction of an idealized lyric solitude that one encounters "printed on hot-pressed paper and sold at a bookseller's shop" by venturing a figure for this publicly circulating privacy: such poetry "is a soliloquy in full dress, and on the stage," performing for an assumed, but unacknowledged, audience. This conception of the lyric as a performance of privacy, one that "know[s] that other eyes are upon us" but must somehow admit "no trace of consciousness that any eyes are upon us," has played a central part in most subsequent accounts of the lyric, although they often emphasize lyric's "overheard," private solitude and downplay its performance, or how that privacy takes place in public and coyly solicits public attention. In Mill's odd figure, the lyric is less a matter of the private solitude typically ascribed to the genre than a way—one of the twentieth century's most significant ways, I would argue—of mediating the private and the public.

In this sense, gossip seems not incompatible but weirdly allied with modern understandings of the lyric. Although frequently discussed as a private, just between us mode, more accurately gossip—like, for all their obvious differences, the Mill-based version of the lyric—mediates privacy and publicity. Gossip's knowledge of or speculation about the private circulates publicly, restaging its intimate scenes in new and often increasingly public contexts and entailing, as Spacks writes, a "blurring of a line that we prefer to keep distinct."' In the twentieth century such blurring has often been a queer project, and in occupying this liminal space between the private and public, intimacy and strangeness, gossip has served as one of the unofficial, ephemeral, or proscribed practices that elaborate and sustain queer worlds. As Henry Abelove writes, "Gossip is illicit speculation, information, knowledge" that "circulates in subterranean ways and touches on matters hard to grasp and of crucial concern"; its "illicit" epistemology and subcultural transmission make it "an indispensable resource for those who are in any sense or measure disempowered." Such use of gossip points toward the broader problem of privacy and queerness—another mode that, like the lyric and gossip, occupies the contradictions of privacy and publicity. For modern queer people, living in an era when public and private speech are structured—as Sedgwick has powerfully argued—by the logics of the closet, "publicness," Michael Warner writes, "will feel like exposure, and

privacy will feel like the closet." In fact, he contends, homosexuals "have neither privacy nor publicness, in ... normative senses of the terms."" A poet working under these conditions, in which the stakes of performing privacy dramatically increase, may perceive—like Stein, Hughes, O'Hara, and Merrill—lyric's and gossip's forms of publicly circulating privacy to be, or potentially to be, in dynamic, queer relation.

Gossip's checkered history in twentieth-century America provides a particularly rich context for exploring the relationship between modern understandings of the lyric and modern forms of sexuality. If the first half of the past century presents a parallel history of poetry's uneasy codification as lyric and of the uneasy codification of modern sexual identities, gossip suggestively blurs these two histories, most evidently—as I later explore in more detail—in the McCarthy era's gossipy conflation of the queer, the un-American, and the artist. Of the works I consider, only Hughes's and O'Hara's are composed in the midst of the postwar culture of heightened suspicion surrounding sexual and artistic identity. Yet Stanzas in Meditation, written in 1932, and The Changing Light at Sandover, the first installment of which was not published until 1976, are each also indelibly colored by this period in American history toward which they reach—whether forward or backward. The source material for Sandover, like the queer experience it narrates, dates from 1953, and Merrill's trilogy challenges and finds pleasure within the gossip-laden, Cold War unease that haunts his poem. Stein's Stanzas, meanwhile, was not published until 1956, when its reception by poets like John Ashbery drew out its interest in how gossip initially fueled by phobic sexual suspicion can paradoxically limn queer possibility. Compare the opening lines of Stanzas—

> I caught a bird which made a ball
> And they thought better of it.
> But it is all of which they taught
> That they were in a hurry yet

In a kind of way they meant it best —with those of Ashbery's pronoun-filled poem about gossip, homosexuality, and the McCarthy era, "The Grapevine" (from his 1956 volume Some Trees):

> Of who we and all they are
> You all now know. But you know
> After they began to find us out we grew
> Before they died thinking us the causes
> Of their acts.

Read through the anachronistic lens of Ashbery's midcentury grapevine (a "word-of-mouth network of 'fruits, " as John Shoptaw puts it), Stanzas becomes a central text for the lyric gossip that flourishes in American poetry during the 1950s and 1960s and its queer negotiation of the demands of a multivalent, overhearing "they."

In framing my study's understanding of queer gossip, I should clarify that by "queer" I mean not so much the expression or representation of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender identities as the baffling of sexual or gender identity categories and of normative categorization more broadly. The "rich, unsystematic resources" of what Sedgwick calls the "nonce-taxonomic work represented by gossip" hold out precisely this potential for a more nuanced account of gender, sexuality, and desire than identity categories tend to offer, and in this sense gossip enables the queer energies of Stein's, Hughes's, O'Hara's, and Merrill's gossip and its makeshift maneuvering through social and poetic convention. Many of gossip's queer effects—of, for instance, fleeting, unauthorized spaces and subjectivities—derive from its status as both a performance in the theatrical sense and as performative in the sense of speech act theory and the theories of performativity drawn from it. Numerous theorists of gossip point out that it involves a kind of theatrical performance: "Think of it as drama," writes Spacks. "Two characters ... speaking the language of shared experience, revealing themselves as they talk of others, constructing a joint narrative—a narrative that conjures up yet other actors, offstage, playing out their own private dramas." Gossip is also performative, its language often depicted as self-actualizing, setting in motion what it ostensibly describes. Its characterization as autonomous language out of control garners generally poor reviews (think of the World War II slogans warning against gossip: "careless talk costs lives" and "loose lips sink ships"), but, from another perspective, gossip's ability to meld saying and doing suggests

a vital source of transformative, nonnormative energy.

The idea of gossip as both performance and performativity informs my analysis of lyric gossip as a queer form of aesthetic self-fashioning, and in the chapters that follow I read in Stein's, Hughes's, O'Hara's, and Merrill's work a performance of sexuality that takes place largely at the level of poetic style. Wayne Koestenbaum emphasizes gossip's queer performativity and the way it can loosen more fixed gender or sexual identities when he writes, "Gossip, hardly trivial, is as central to gay culture as it is to female cultures. From skeins of hearsay, I weave an inner life, I build queerness... " If by "queerness" one means primarily the avoidance or dismantling of identity categories, to "build queerness" might seem a paradox. Indeed, if we consider the concept of "nonce taxonomy" Sedgwick advances in Epistemology of the Closet, it might seem an appropriate one. In a passage to which my study will recur, Sedgwick introduces gossip as her primary example of nonce taxonomy, a project that seeks to create "space for asking or thinking in detail about the multiple, unstable ways in which people may be like or different from each other." She writes:

> Probably everybody who survives at all has reasonably rich, unsystematic resources of nonce taxonomy for mapping out the possibilities, dangers, and stimulations of their human social landscape. It is probably people with the experience of oppression or subordination who have most need to know [how "people may be like or different from each other"]; and I take the precious, devalued arts of gossip, immemorially associated in European thought with servants, with effeminate and gay men, with all women, to have to do not even so much with the transmission of necessary news as with the refinement of necessary skills for making, testing, and using unrationalized and provisional hypotheses about what kinds of people there are to be found in one's world.

Sedgwick is careful to note that gossip is not an essentially female or gay discourse, although historically women and gay men have been "peculiarly disserved by its devaluation."" Instead, gossip, for Sedgwick, represents a way of building queerness in all its one-time-only nuance, of meeting "one's descriptive requirements that the piercing bouquet of a given friend's particularity be done some justice."

Sedgwick's nonce taxonomy shares deep affinities with Roland Barthes's concept of the Neutral, which emerges throughout his body of work but most extensively in the series of lectures he gave at the Collège de France in 1977-1978. Barthes sees the elaboration of the Neutral as an aesthetic and "ethical project" that, like Sedgwick's anti-homophobic inquiry, proposes a manner of eluding the binary thinking that limits and deforms what counts as knowledge in Western discourse. Like Sedgwick, he declares, "I want to live according to nuance."" The Neutral, that which "outplays" and "baffles the paradigm," is his way of doing so, his "style of being present to the struggles of my time." This ethics of style offers "the nonviolent refusal of reduction, the parrying of generality by inventive, unexpected, nonparadigma-tizable behavior, the elegant and discreet flight in the face of dogmatism." Yet gossip, for Barthes, would seem to be the anti-Neutral. In Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, he writes, "Saying 'he' about someone, I always envision a kind of murder by language, whose entire scene, sometimes sumptuous, even ceremonial, is gossip."" Sedgwick's gossip conjures "the piercing bouquet of a given friend's particularity"; Barthes's gossip violently fits its subjects into general categories. In a fragment entitled "Gossip" in A Lover's Discourse, Barthes writes further that gossip "takes possession of my other and restores that other to me in the bloodless form of a universal substitute." So much for nuance!

In Sedgwick and Barthes we find versions of the two typical views of gossip's ethics. Gossip as nonce taxonomy recalls the view that (as Robert F. Goodman puts it) "the sort of moral judgments made by gossipers cannot be separated from the specifics of particular cases. So enmeshed are such moral determinations in detail that they cannot be fit neatly into a unified moral system or easily generated to other cases." Gossip as a form of "universal substitute" suggests the view that "a primary emphasis of gossip is upon instances of

trespass against a community's norms. A primary purpose of gossip is to sustain those norms, not to make fine-tuned judgments of every case." In introducing these two views, my aim is not to set forth for gossip the kind of subversive/hegemonic, structuring binary against which both Sedgwick and Barthes work but rather to think about how they may be much the same view, differently inflected. Sedgwick is attuned to the ways nonce taxonomy is always threatening to get stuck, to become rote, normalizing taxonomy; and, however much Barthes wants to attack gossip, his lingering on its "sumptuous, even ceremonial" qualities suggests a concurrent investment in its stylistic and erotic potential, and how one may find nuance within discourses that can tend toward troubling generality.

Between Sedgwick and Barthes, then, one might piece together a fuller theoretical account of gossip's queer aesthetics and ethics. Although my project leans, like its objects of study, toward an affirmative account of gossip, within the poems I consider, gossip is never neatly valorized or castigated, and its queer pleasures are inseparable from its real risks. Much of the scholarship on gossip seems caught up in a repressive hypothesis, certain that gossip, a liberating discourse of the subordinated, has been maligned and repressed precisely because of the threat it poses to the status quo. As useful as this w0rk can be, the critical insistence on, as the title of one collection of essays declares, Good Gossip, or (per its first essay's title) "The Vindication of Gossip," can at times seem reductively to declare that tomorrow gossip will be good again. The poets in my study, faced with phobic networks of suspicion and knowingness that implicate and conscript them, cannot celebrate gossip in this way, instead adopting it as a discourse that inherently neither subverts nor reinforces power, but that one might take up for any number of purposes. Whether in the dizzying shifts Stein makes between the first and third person, Hughes's transformation of the effacement of social obscurity into a boldly obscure assertion of personhood, the ambiguous subjective or objective status of O'Hara's gossip about himself, or Merrill's becoming a medium for the gossipy voices of other worlds, each of these poets plays with gossip's distinct ability to slide back and forth between subjectivity and objectivity, pleasurable particularity and violent generalization. In so doing, their poems nourish the formal space between subject and object, a space of suspended agency that Barthes might see as the theatrical space of gossip and its violent "scene," or Sedgwick might call a "space for asking or thinking in detail about the multiple, unstable ways in which people may be like or different from each other." Stein's, Hughes's, O'Hara's, and Merrill's shared fascination with this space suggests a familiarity with the deprivations of being objectified and an attendant queer ambivalence toward the powers and aesthetic of autonomous selfhood so often accorded to the modern lyric poem.

Reading Gossip

In this book I seek to contribute such crucial queer perspectives to current lyric studies and its renewed scholarly debate over the practices and forms of lyric poetry. More than simply mapping a curious poetic mode, I want to present new and illuminating queer contexts for understanding the influential formal achievements of Stein, Hughes, O'Hara, and Merrill, and to uncover the unexpected ways that the history of the modern lyric intertwines with histories of sexuality.

The poets who are my points of focus are queer and have been associated with gossip. Other connections exist among them: Stein and Hughes shared a close mutual friend and literary champion in Carl Van Vechten; O'Hara studied and admired Stein's work and wrote, like his fellow New Yorker Hughes, poems that document the daily experience of moving through the city's streets; Merrill enjoyed a correspondence with Alice B. Toklas and prominently featured Toklas and Stein in his Ouija world, and he personally knew and moved in and out of the same New York literary and gay social circles as O'Hara, who received a grant from Merrill's Ingram Merrill Foundation. Yet none of these poets were, ultimately, closely affiliated, and their poems present a disparate array of styles—from the avowedly experimental to supposedly mainstream, from the famously difficult to the deceptively simple—and a wide range of subject matters and concerns. What follows, then, is not an

analysis of gossip's part in a particular coterie or community or school. While individual chapters examine specific socio-historical contexts for each poet's use of gossip, in sum they tell a story about gossip and lyric that moves across such contexts. By departing from the critical tendency to organize the study of American poetry principally in relation to schools of verse, my emphasis on gossip constellates twentieth-century American poetry anew by telling tales out of school, as it were—establishing, if not quite an alternative genealogy of American poetry, a network of more modest but no less significant queer affinities among poets of seemingly dissimilar styles and movements.

I track this network through four case studies centering on the relationship between poetic form and social forms. In their close attention to form, subjectivity, and sociohistorical context, these studies take queer gossip, with its keen and equal interests in the nuances of style, selfhood, and the social, as both methodological model and object of study. Each chapter examines a principal feature of modern lyric poetry and the distinctive social conditions that inform the given poet's queer revaluation of that feature. Chapter 1 focuses on the figure of poetic address, chapter 2 on the figure of poetic voice, chapter 3 on the critical concept of the poetic speaker, and chapter 4 on the concept of poetic tone. This is not to suggest that address, voice, speaker, and tone operate discretely: for twentieth-century lyric readers, the presumption of a speaker, for example, produces the search for voice and tone, and structures of address can shore up or complicate the figure of voice. Although each chapter foregrounds a distinct element of the lyric to explore how it has been theorized both by scholars and the poet at hand, my readings are necessarily less neat than this structuring device might suggest, inevitably entailing a consideration of each interrelated element of the lyric. So, too, my discussion of address in Stein speaks to my reading of O'Hara, my consideration of voice in Hughes resonates with my ideas about tone in Merrill, and so on. It is together that these chapters reveal how queerness has enabled (and sometimes necessitated) poetic invention and, in turn, how lyric gossip has powerfully expressed and engendered queer sensibilities.

My first chapter, "'They Will Tell Well': Gertrude Stein, Address, and Gossip," begins by challenging the familiar dismissal of gossip as an overly accessible and therefore shallow literary mode by examining gossip's role in Stein's notoriously difficult writing. The gossip accepted as characteristic of Stein's personality and popular style has not received sustained critical attention; moreover, her more obviously experimental work—in its supposed tight-lipped refusal to offer up gossip—is often positioned as critiquing and so redeeming the loose talk of her relatively accessible texts. The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas and the long, difficult poem Stanzas in Meditation, each composed in late 1932, have provided an exemplary pairing for this critical narrative. In this oft-repeated story, The Autobiography becomes paradigmatic of Stein's gossipy, popular writing, while Stanzas represents just the opposite, an abstract, obdurately self-enclosed meditation, the lyric antidote to The Autobiography's poison pen. Yet the demands of Stanzas include an endlessly chatty speaker who enjoys the tone, rhetorical gestures, and pronominal dramatis personae of gossip. Tracking the unacknowledged gossipy impulses of Stein's poem in relation to its more frequently noted lyric ones, I argue that Stein's meditation on gossip and its constitutive, objectifying I/They relationship proves central to her seemingly conflicting meditation on—and queer reimagining of—the parts played by the I and You of lyric address and its traditionally unacknowledged auditors.

Chapter 2, "Ain't You Heard?': Langston Hughes's Queer Gossip," turns to Hughes to further consider the possibilities at work in taking gossip's social obscurity—rather than its presumed accessibility as a literary style—as a queer model for poetic voice. The chapter focuses on Hughes's 1951 book-length poetic sequence Montage of a Dream Deferred, which both begins and ends with an enticement to gossip—"Ain't you heard?"—and in the interim stages a dishy, multivoiced repertoire of suggestive talk and bebop noise. In Montage, I argue, Hughes employs gossip as a way of recording the social rhythms of black culture in postwar Harlem,

particularly as they frustrate standard forms of legibility or attention and resist normative ideals of respectability. In giving voice to gossip about and by Harlem's "people of the night"—queer figures relegated to social obscurity by racial difference, class marginality, nonnormative sexuality, gender nonconformity, or some intersection of these elements—Hughes preserves the aesthetic and ethical values of both their dissonant rhythms and his own identification with them. Indeed, although Hughes is well known as a poet of simplicity, I contend that it is through the social and verbal obscurity of gossip, bebop jazz, and queerness that he performs his own elusive poetic voice in Montage. To this end, I analyze a series of neglected vernacular moments in the poem that are not simple or transparent, as readers so often note of Hughes, but instead explicitly obscure. My analysis shows how Hughes highlights the shared opacity and inventiveness of bop idiom, gossip, and lyric poetry, each a kind of private language that stands askew to the wider world but promises alternative pleasures to its initiates. Less a failure of meaning than a queer form of it, gossipy obscurity in Montage provides Hughes a way of transforming the damaging effacements of social obscurity into a defiantly obscure assertion of community, voice, and personhood.

In chapter 3, "'The Dish That's Art': Frank O'Hara's Self-Gossip," I reframe the relationship between Cold War culture and lyric poetry in terms of gossip. An emphasis on confession and confessional culture has dominated understandings of midcentury poetry, especially in relation to changing perceptions of privacy, subjectivity, sexuality, and style. Yet O'Hara's poetry usefully reminds us that the era of McCarthyism and Confidential magazine was as much one of gossip as confession: "I am/ nourished by the/shabbiness of my/knowing so much/about others and what/they do," O'Hara writes. Certainly, confession can be gossipy, and gossip can be in turn a form of confession. O'Hara's poetic gossip is always a kind of self-gossip, a performance of the self ambivalently rooted, like confession and confessional poetics, in both negative affect and pleasure. Nevertheless, this self-gossip becomes for O'Hara a queer method of poetic self-fashioning that presents an alternative both to confession and to New Critical ideals of lyric subjectivity. Reading gossip's part in the formal and social logics of O'Hara's poetry, I show how, in eschewing authorized self-disclosure for unauthorized talk about others (including the self as other), O'Hara's poetry necessitates a subtle yet significant change of emphasis from confession to gossip. Such a change enables an attendant shift in our thinking about postwar poetics: from the power structures and agency of confessional practice to those of intimate dish and coterie chatter, from the critical concept of the poetic speaker to the notion of a lyric talker, from the confessional construction of modern subjectivities to gossipy self-making, and from Cold War anxiety to queer pleasures.

My final chapter, "'The Celestial Salon': James Merrill and the Afterlife of Gossip," takes up the lingering effects of McCarthy-era gossip, moving beyond the common characterization of gossip as merely ephemeral as I explore instead its queer afterlives in contemporary poetry. Merrill's sprawling verse epic, The Changing Light at Sandover, details nearly thirty years of gossipy Ouija board communications, conducted alongside his partner, David Jackson, with deceased friends, poetic luminaries, and a vast array of spirits. Merrill, I contend, indulges in the Ouija's "backstage gossip" both to establish a queer relationship to poetic tradition and to confront the pervasive menace of the Cold War discourse of the Lavender Scare, which haunts the trilogy's 1950s origins. This discourse would position queerness as a figure for the nonreproductive and antisocial, in part by blurring nuclear and sexual threat. In Sandover, the reproduction of gossip establishes affiliations that recast a postnuclear fear of annihilation in terms of the domestic sphere and a queer, postnuclear family, building a utopian vision out of the unstable economy of queer reproduction central to America's Cold War unease. This gossipy retelling of the widespread cultural narrative that equates homosexuality with the dissolution of the social both opens onto and partially arises from the problem of tone: the aesthetic and ethical question, predominant in postwar poetry and poetics, of how—if at all—one understands others' interiorities and communicates one's own. In Sandover, Merrill

uses the art of gossip to theorize and deploy tone, enabling hypotheses about otherworldly selves whose interiorities are never certain, but no less powerful for that. His Ouija poem brashly demystifies lyric's subjective interiority even as its gossip preserves this interiority as a resonant, lasting queer space for unanticipated selves.

A coda adds one last word on the future of lyric gossip. Working within the dense thicket of language and information produced by technologies such as the Internet and the smartphone, twenty-first-century poets have exhibited a wide-ranging interest in creating poems out of other people's words. These poets mirror in their poems the challenges—to originality, to the individual voice, to privacy, to decorum—faced by anyone living amid this vast quantity of talk and text, and they turn to the figure of the gossip to think through the stakes of tapping into communal, mediated language. In brief readings of writing by the poets Juliana Spahr, John Keene, Eileen Myles, and D. A. Powell that engages the gossipy poetics of Stein, Hughes, O'Hara, and Merrill, I argue that the nexus of lyric, gossip, and queerness at work in poetry that contends with this century's crowded linguistic archive represents the latest transformation of the lyric gossip traced throughout my study. Rather than creating a wholly new aesthetic for the digital era, these writers' innovative work memorably enters into, extends, and helps to illuminate a long-standing network of modern and contemporary poets drawing on gossip and gossip-related speech practices to reimagine what a seemingly moribund lyric poetry is and all of the queer things it still might do. <>

Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Interreligious Hermeneutics: Ways of Seeing the Religious Other edited by Emma O'Donnell Polyakov [Currents of Encounter: Studies in Interreligious and Intercultural Relations, Brill-Rodopi, 9789004381667]

This volume examines the hermeneutics of interreligious encounter in contexts of conflict. It investigates the implicit judgments of Judaism and Islam that often arise in response to these conflicts, and explores the implications of these interpretations for relations between Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Addressing antisemitism and Islamophobia through the tools of interreligious hermeneutics, this volume brings together three distinct discourses: the study of ancient and new tropes of antisemitism as they appear in today's world; research into contemporary expressions of fear or suspicion of Islam; and philosophical reflections on the hermeneutics of interreligious encounters.

The Hermeneutics of Interreligious Encounter in Contexts of Conflict by Emma O'Donnell Polyakov

The assumption that religion can be neatly separated from the public sphere can give rise to the notion that one may critique a social situation or political context while remaining innocent of casting judgment upon a religious community; however, religion is intricately interwoven into cultures and societies and no such disassociation can be readily reached. As the public eye keeps a critical gaze focused on international conflicts, particularly those in the Middle East, these conflicts cannot be easily unbound from the religious traditions of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity rooted in these regions and intertwined in these conflicts. When attention is focused on conflicts and social situations that cannot be entirely disentangled from religious identities, traditions, and communities, religious stereotyping and discrimination often arise, at times overtly, but at other times in very subtle ways.

Many places across the globe, particularly Europe and the United States, are experiencing a rapid growth of religious plurality, which is only expanding with the refugee crisis. While many have welcomed this transformation as an opportunity to enrich their communities, this diversity has also been met with a surge toward nationalism and separatism, and with increased suspicion, hostility, and violence. Rapidly changing international and multicultural contexts can reinforce patterns of essentializing religious traditions and identities, particularly in the case of conflicts that are linked to specific religious communities. Interpretations of conflicts in the Middle East and fears of terrorism can slide into Islamophobia, and similarly, criticism of Israel can all too easily shift into a criticism of Jews, to name just two prominent examples. Situations such as these challenge us to explore the ways in which we receive and interpret the religious other.

This volume examines the hermeneutics of interreligious encounter in contexts of conflict. It investigates the implicit judgments of Judaism and Islam that arise in response to these conflicts, and explores the implications of these interpretations for relations between Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Two particular intersections of religious identity and current events

serve as the focus: 1) perceptions of Judaism in relation to Zionism and the Israeli- Palestinian conflict, and 2) Western perceptions of Islam in relation to conflicts in the Middle East. Antisemitism and Islamophobia are distinct phenomena with very different histories and manifestations; however, both phenomena are pernicious forms of religious stereotyping, and both are operative in many cross- cultural perceptions of the religious other. It is useful, therefore, to recognize this relationship and to explore specific contexts of each phenomenon, with attention to the hermeneutical lenses shaping these perceptions of otherness.

While the questions raised in this volume examine the intersection of political events and religion, the responses specifically address the consequences in the realm of interreligious relations. This volume brings together three distinct discourses: the study of ancient and new tropes of antisemitism as they appear in today's world; research into contemporary expressions of fear or suspicion of Islam; and philosophical reflections on the hermeneutics of interreligious encounters. It draws together fields often kept separate, bringing historical and sociological studies of specific contexts of religious discrimination into conversation with theological and philosophical theories of interreligious encounter, incorporating studies from the diverse disciplines of history, sociology, philosophy, religious studies, and theology. Addressing antisemitism and Islamophobia through the tools of interreligious hermeneutics, the volume considers the processes of interpretation, re-envisioning, and misunderstanding that necessarily occur in any perception of the religious other.

Hermeneutics and Reflexivity

The practice of interreligious hermeneutics is a development of the discipline of hermeneutics, which generally refers to the study of textual interpretation, and in its original context, primarily biblical texts. However, hermeneutics can also be applied to non- textual, interpersonal contexts, and can become a study of ways of "reading" and interpreting the other. Thus, interreligious hermeneutics is the practice of examining the

processes through which the religious other is interpreted, with attention to the layers of perception, interpretation, and understanding or misunderstanding involved in interreligious encounters.

As Catherine Cornille observes in the opening paper of this volume, few scholars today "still believe in the possibility of a neutral or objective representation of the religious other." Whereas earlier scholarship generally assumed the capacity to understand the religious other, this is now recognized as ultimately unattainable, given the inescapable subjectivity through which the other is viewed and interpreted. In the humanities and social sciences, this recognition has inspired a shift toward scholarly reflexivity, and toward post-colonial critiques of a Western, and primarily Christian, hegemony of framing the other.

In theological studies, this recognition has been a bit slower, and until quite recently, the primary area of concern has been soteriological; that is, many theologians have focused their inquiries into non- Christian religions on the question of salvation, searching for ways in which the truth claims of Christianity might function in relation to other religions. However, in the past few decades the focus has shifted away from soteriological issues and toward hermeneutical questions, exploring not how the religious other may be saved, but rather, taking the reflexive turn and examining ways of seeing of other (Moyaert 2012:34). This shift turns the spotlight back onto the viewer, exploring the layers of perception and interpretation through which one attempts to understand the religious other. This volume follows this move, turning the lens around to examine the ways that we see the religious other in the increasingly religiously plural context of today's world. In this regard, it joins a few recent volumes that explore the new field of interreligious hermeneutics.

An inherent ambiguity exists in interpretations of the religious other, for the ways that members of a religious community understand themselves and their practices are inevitably different from the ways that others understand them from different perspectives. This volume does not seek to overcome this ambiguity, but rather to observe and analyze it. Many of the papers in this volume consider cases in which there is no objectively correct interpretation, or cases in which views of a given situation remain ambivalent. These papers trace ambiguities such as these in topics ranging from the history of communications between Israel and the Vatican to the interpretation of a provocative Swedish cartoon series.

Another thread uniting the papers in this volume is the recognition that identities are often constructed and reinforced in contradistinction to the other. A central theory on the process of identity construction holds that identity is formulated in relation to what it is not, through the process of recognizing difference and positing oneself in distinction to it. And, through defining one's identity in relation to the other, one also emphasizes the otherness of the other, often quite regardless of the other's self-understanding. In contexts of political conflict or social tension, these processes of polemic identity construction tend to increase, as the assertion of boundaries between "us and them" is emphasized. Consequently, the encounter with the religious other in these contexts can result in essentializing or disparaging religious otherness, or in other ways of widening the gap between the perception of the self and the perception of the religious other. In the epilogue to this volume, James Carroll refers to this as "the West and the rest" mentality at work.

In this process of othering, difference is rarely honored, and the distinctiveness and integrity of its alterity are rarely recognized. Rather, difference is often rejected as a symbol of what is foreign, illogical, or undesirable; in essence, the other becomes a symbol for what one wishes to not be. As the papers in this volume ask, when we look at those whose religious traditions and cultures are different than our own, who do we see? Do we see in their traditions reflections of what we fear, or projected images of what we construe as the opposite of our own identities, like photographic negatives of ourselves? The chapters in this volume each address aspects of these questions in distinct contexts, to examine processes of interpreting religious otherness, and to move toward recognition of the dignity of alterity.

Structure

On December 4th through 6th, 2016, the Centre for Theology and Religious Studies at Lund University hosted a three- day international conference, which I had the honor of serving as director, to explore issues related to the hermeneutics of interreligious encounter in today's world, and to examine the patterns of perception that can lead to antisemitism and Islamophobia. The papers collected here emerged from this conference, and are organized into three sections, which reflect the three areas of inquiry that are brought together in this volume. The first section, "Theoretical Starting Points: Interreligious Hermeneutics," lays the methodological groundwork, and provides a framework for the questions that guide each of the following papers. The papers in this section can also serve as a guide for the reader, providing a set of hermeneutical questions to inform the reading of the later papers, which address specific case studies.

The first paper in this volume sets the tone by systematically laying out various forms of misunderstanding that can occur in interpreting another religious tradition. Catherine Cornille's "Types of Misunderstanding in Interreligious Hermeneutics," discusses the risks involved in attempting to understand a religious tradition other than one's own, with attention to the epistemological issues that such a venture raises. The paper begins by observing that interreligious understanding is, by its very nature, marked by misperception or distortion, and that this serves as the central presumption of interreligious hermeneutics. Cornille then examines types of misunderstanding and misrepresentation, offering a typology of the various forms. She argues that not all types of misunderstanding are equally problematic, and then discusses the differences between destructive and constructive forms. Within this discussion, she focuses on how the challenges of misunderstanding are addressed by the discipline of comparative theology, which insists on remaining transparent about the inevitable bias that occurs in perceiving another religious tradition, and being vigilant about the dangers of the misrepresentation or intellectual colonialization of the religious other.

Marianne Moyaert provides another perspective on interreligious hermeneutics, with a study of how narrative hospitality can be utilized to disrupt religious ideology. In "Making Space for the Other: From Religious Ideology to Narrative Hospitality," she draws upon the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur, discussing how religious ideological discourse can influence the way one perceives and relates to the religious other. Moyaert uses Ricoeur's work to explore how the problem of this ideological discourse may be dealt with from a religious perspective, and argues that practices of interreligious hospitality and narrative flexibility can be utilized to challenge rigid religious ideologies. She discusses how these practices are engaged in the context of scriptural reasoning, which involves intentional interreligious encounters over shared scriptural narratives, to foster a receptivity to the religious other.

The second part of the volume, "Antisemitism, Anti-Judaism, and Anti-Zionism," consists of case studies in perceptions of Jews and Judaism, covering the related but distinct phenomena of racial discrimination against Jews, theological disparaging and invalidation of Judaism, and anti-Zionist sentiments as they relate to Jews as a collective. This section begins with a discussion of Christian theologies of Judaism, in a paper by Randall C. Zachman entitled "Identity, Theology and the Jews: The Uses of Jewish Exile in the Creation of Christian Identity." Zachman explores how Christian theological traditions have portrayed Jews not as members of a living tradition, but as a theological category. This perception, he argues, is used to reinforce Christian identity polemically, in contradistinction to Jews. Referring to the Christian notion that Jewish exile is a punishment for failure to recognize Jesus as the messiah, Zachman argues that this theological tradition has used the mythical idea of the God- forsaken Jew, as seen through a Christian lens, to reify Christian claims and Christian self- understanding. In the course of making this argument, Zachman surveys Christian theologies of Jewish exile, moving up through history to the present, ending with a discussion of 20th- century changes in Christian theology regarding Judaism.

Raymond Cohen investigates the way that these theological prejudices against Judaism play out in a political context in the next paper, entitled "Was Theology to Blame? The Holy See and Israel's Stony

Path to Normalization." Cohen examines the sources of the dispute between the Vatican and the early Zionist movement, and later the state of Israel, with the aim of untangling the theological and political interests at play in the history of this troubled relationship. He dismantles the assumption that conflicts between Israel and the Vatican are always rooted in religious differences, and argues that despite the sizable impact of these religious factors, a number of other sources of contention are at play. Examining correspondence and policies from 1904, 1943, 1947– 1949, and 1991– 1993, Cohen discerns the interaction of three distinct sources of conflict: theological difference, political interests, and ingrained mutual antagonism.

The third paper in this section examines how perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are influential in fueling antisemitism across Europe today. In "Contemporary Antisemitism in Europe and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict: Connections and Misconceptions," Henrik Bachner investigates instances of violence and expressions of antisemitism in Europe in recent years, evaluating the extent to which a direct causal relationship with the Israeli- Palestinian conflict is evident. He examines instances of antisemitism in distinct political and cultural contexts in Western and Eastern Europe, and carefully determines linkages with racist ideologies, religious prejudice, and political conflict in each context. He argues that while the Israeli- Palestinian conflict clearly affects antisemitism in Europe, in many instances the conflict serves as a context in which ingrained antisemitic prejudices unrelated to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict find expression.

The third part of this volume, "Islamophobia in the Media," begins with a study of the ways in which Swedish media coverage portrays the Syrian refugee crisis. In "Media Representation of the Syrian Refugee Crisis: Islamophobia, Securitization and Self-Reflection," Dalia Abdelhady and Gina Fristedt Malmberg offer a perspective from the social sciences. They share the results of their recent empirical study of mainstream newspapers in Sweden concerning coverage of the refugee crisis, and examine the way that Islam and Muslims are portrayed in this media coverage. Abdelhady and Malmberg conclude that the Swedish media coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis depicts the refugees as fundamentally different, both religiously and culturally, and displays a systematic process of othering.

The next paper in this section examines the connection between emotion and cognition in responses to Islamophobic humor in the media. In "Affect, Thought, and Hermeneutics: Changes in the Views of Muslims in American Editorial Cartoons," Peter Gottschalk argues for the interdependent relationship between emotional responses and thought processes in interpretations of Muslims and Islam. He observes that the notion of phobia as an affective response is too rarely considered in discussions of Islamophobia, and that emotions of fear are often instrumental in judgments about Muslims and Islam. In the second part of the essay, Gottschalk studies this correlation between emotion and cognition in the specific context of contemporary American editorial cartoons, specifically those addressing the so- called Islamic State and the Syrian refugee crisis.

Jonas Otterbeck follows Peter Gottschalk's paper with an in- depth reading of one particular cartoon strip, in "Islam in Satire: Representations, Taste Cultures, and Liquid Racism." Otterbeck discusses the way that the Swedish cartoon strip, Rocky, playfully manipulates racial and religious stereotypes, particularly of Muslims. He takes a hermeneutical approach, exploring the ways that the reception and interpretation of this humor are dependent on various ways of reading, reflecting the interpretive lens of the reader and the sensitivity to genre. He argues that if the strip is read as ironic provocation, the protagonist's Islamophobia becomes the object of mockery, whereas if the strip is read without this interpretive strategy, it is seen as promoting religious prejudice. Otterbeck uses Bourdieu's theory of taste culture and Simon Weaver's theory of liquid racism to this end, in an investigation of the way that different hermeneutical lenses result in the attribution of very distinct meanings to the strip. His study points to the importance of interpretation and context in reading the religious other.

This volume closes with an epilogue entitled "Jews, Jihad & Jesus: Dousing Fires Ignited by a Misremembered Christ," the text of a public lecture delivered by the historian and journalist James Carroll on December 5, 2016, at Lund University. Carroll offers an impassioned critique of the misrepresentations of Jesus that, he argues, have fueled suspicion and hatred of the religious other

throughout history. He identifies the symbolic opposition of church and synagogue, forged in the development of early Christianity and reinforced and reiterated through the centuries, as the seed of contention that has given rise to an ongoing pattern of religious hatred. He refers to this as the "us against them" mentality or the "West against the rest" trope, arising from misinterpretations of Jesus that place the church against the synagogue. From this fundamental opposition, Carroll argues, a polarized mindset has developed in Christianity, which manifests today in antisemitism, Islamophobia, and multiple forms of

hatred, constituting what he terms the "the soul-sickness of the West." Carroll argues that to overcome this ingrained pattern of opposition, Christians must work diligently to reinterpret scripture, and must re-envision Jesus in his Jewish context, for the sake of interreligious and intercultural relations today. <>

Witness: Lessons from Elie Wiesel's Classroom by Ariel Burger [Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 9781328802699]

Elie Wiesel was a towering presence on the world stage—a Nobel laureate, activist, adviser to world leaders, and the author of more than forty books, including the Oprah's Book Club selection Night. But when asked, Wiesel always said, "I am a teacher first."

In fact, he taught at Boston University for nearly four decades, and with this book, Ariel Burger—devoted protégé, apprentice, and friend—takes us into the sacred space of Wiesel's classroom. There, Wiesel challenged his students to explore moral complexity and to resist the dangerous lure of absolutes. In bringing together never-before-recounted moments between Wiesel and his students, Witness serves as a moral education in and of itself—a primer on educating against indifference, on the urgency of memory and individual responsibility, and on the role of literature, music, and art in making the world a more compassionate place.

Burger first met Wiesel at age fifteen; he became his student in his twenties, and his teaching assistant in his thirties. In this profoundly thought-provoking and inspiring book, Burger gives us a front-row seat to Wiesel's remarkable exchanges in and out of the classroom, and chronicles the intimate conversations between these two men over the decades as Burger sought counsel on matters of intellect, spirituality, and faith, while navigating his own personal journey from boyhood to manhood, from student and assistant, to rabbi and, in time, teacher.

"Listening to a witness makes you a witness," said Wiesel. Ariel Burger's book is an invitation to every reader to become Wiesel's student, and witness.

Contents

Excerpt: This book is based on twenty-five years' worth of journal entries, five years of classroom notes, and interviews with Elie Wiesel's students from all over the world. The classroom notes were taken in shorthand in my terrible handwriting, which I sometimes had trouble deciphering.

In addition to my written notes, after I bought my first smartphone (in 2007), every time I met with Professor Wiesel, I left his office and recorded notes on a voice memo. These recordings gave me a window into the content of many of our conversations and reminded me of how I felt upon leaving him. Listening now, I can hear my excitement as I walked up Bay State Road in Boston or Madison Avenue in New York City. I spoke quickly, trying hard not to forget anything.

Recently I found some cards with Professor Wiesel's scrawled notes in blue ink in my copies of Goethe's Faust, Ismail Kadare's Elegy for Kosovo, and Bertolt Brecht's Mother Courage and Her Children, all books we were reading in class. His handwriting is difficult to read but I include some of those notes in the book.

And I had the privilege and pleasure of connecting with several of his former close students, who were

generous with their time and stories. They shared many of the moments from the classroom that you will encounter in this book as well as their current reflections, shaped by the intervening years, on what it was like to be Professor Wiesel's student. I am grateful to them for sharing their memories.

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Elie Wiesel is best known for his Holocaust testimony and for the universal lessons he drew from his particular experience of tragedy. Author of Night, which has become part of the modern canon and is taught in high schools across the globe, and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Wiesel worked tirelessly on behalf of suffering people everywhere. Over decades, he traveled to Cambodia, Bosnia, Moscow, South Africa, and many other places to protest oppression and to bear witness for victims in an effort to let them know they were not alone. He was a writer, witness, and human rights activist, "a towering moral figure," in the words of Krista Tippett.

But if you asked him, as several interviewers did over the years, what he saw as the core of his life's mission, his answer was always the same: teaching. He often said, "I am a teacher first, and teaching is the last thing I will give up." He saw his writing as an extension of this role, and his activism as its public face. In one of his memoirs he wrote, "In Boston my students gave me joy and vice versa ... I learn along with my students ... I could stop, I don't ... Teaching requires all one's energy, all one's attention, all the curiosity I have. I have no other métier. And I am not looking for one."

I was Elie Wiesel's student, and although he died in July of 2016, I still am. For five years I served as his teaching assistant while pursuing a doctorate at Boston University. I worked with him closely, choosing course topics, planning syllabi and readings, leading discussion sections. In those classes I witnessed his exceptional approach to education. It was academically rigorous, yet welcomed students' searches for personal meaning. It was rooted in classical intellectual and literary traditions, yet spoke directly to the most contemporary concerns. It took place in a secular university but comfortably employed religious and theological language. It was, in short, a rare thing: a humanities education designed to produce morally responsible, sensitive, justice-seeking humanists. Over the years, I saw hundreds of students transformed.

But I was his student well before I served alongside him in the classroom; I was his student since the moment I met him, at age fifteen. He was my mentor, my guide, and eventually my friend. He helped me steer my way through complex questions of identity, religion, and vocation to a life of meaning I did not know was possible.

Over twenty-five years, we spent many hours together talking about personal and political matters, our childhoods, biblical stories and commentaries, art, music, faith. I asked him for advice about career decisions, parenting, and marriage. He often responded with other questions for me to ponder rather than answers or specific directives. Yet somehow his questions helped me clarify my own. Because of him, I became something greater than any role I'd imagined for myself. I became a teacher.

Elie Wiesel believed in the power of education to change history. He saw the simple act of transmission from teacher to student as a source of hope as the world continued to struggle with itself. We wish for peace, justice, and we know that we need to heal ourselves and our planet, but things seem to be getting worse. We feel overwhelmed and don't know how we can intervene even if we had the strength. We struggle to nurture our inner lives in a noisy time, and faith, any sort of faith, often seems far away. We need compelling moral voices, models of integrity, and they are hard to find.

Elie Wiesel is one such voice, a man whose life experience led him on a quest for knowledge, understanding, and sensitivity. Wiesel was a student when, in May 1944, he was deported with his family to Auschwitz. His mother and younger sister were murdered upon arrival. Elie and his father endured forced labor and then a forced march to Buchenwald, where his father died. American soldiers liberated the camp on April 29, 1945. Elie was sixteen.

After the war, he continued his studies and became a journalist. In 1956 he published his first book, Night, about his experiences during the Holocaust. He began giving talks on classical and modern philosophical, religious, and literary themes, and in 1972 he was invited to teach at City College of New York. In 1976 he moved to Boston University, which he came to see as his intellectual home, and where he taught for the next thirty-four years.

At BU, Professor Wiesel offered two courses in the fall semester of every year. One was taught on Mondays and was devoted to a broad philosophical or literary theme, like faith and heresy or literary responses to oppression; the Tuesday classes focused on a seminal religious text—the book of Genesis, the book of Job, or a classic work of Hasidic thought. Among the courses he taught over the years were Parable and Paradox; Conflict and Confrontation: Coping with God; Suicide in Literature; The Master/ Disciple Relationship in Ancient and Modern Literature; Franz Kafka's Exile and Memory; Writers on Writing; Literature of Prison; and Hidden Literature and Banned Books. Each lecture was preceded and followed by discussion sections led by his teaching assistants in which we reviewed the assigned reading (students read a book each week) and explored the themes brought up in class.

Professor Wiesel often spoke of his respect for his students in his public lectures, which were large and imposing events attended by over three thousand people. He would say, with a twinkle in his eye, "Every year I say that my students this year are the best I've ever had, and every year I am right. But this year they really are the best!" This sentiment was expressed in the class structure; he decided early on that his classes would begin with the students' voices, not his. Two students spoke for ten minutes on each week's reading. Most of these were straightforward presentations, but occasionally they were artistic, as when a student performed an interpretive dance to convey the feeling of a work. Professor Wiesel's lecture usually began with his response to the questions his students had raised.

In the pages that follow, I open an intimate window into Elie Wiesel's classroom. We will explore some of the central themes to which he returned again and again in his life and teaching, including topics that you may not immediately associate with Elie Wiesel, for he was obsessed not only with the Holocaust and human rights, but with memory, faith and doubt, madness and rebellion.

So let us settle into the classroom where Professor Wiesel is about to give the first lecture of the semester. The students, who have been shuffling papers and conversing quietly, fall silent. The silence fills the room as light from the morning sun filters through the classroom's high windows. Wiesel stands behind an old wooden chair and says a simple "Good morning," and the class responds in kind.

He smiles and says, "Let us begin with your questions."

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A Conversation with Ariel Burger, author of Witness

How did the idea for Witness: Lessons from Elie Wiesel's Classroom come about?

In 2008, soon after I had ended my term as Professor Wiesel's TA, there was a conference in honor of his 80th birthday, at which I gave a talk about his approach to teaching and learning.

It was astonishing to me that so much had been written about this great man, yet so little had been written about his role as a teacher, even though he always said that teaching was the most important public role he played. I wanted to address that lack, and to make it possible for many more people – especially younger people who wouldn't get to see him lecture or sit in his class – to learn from him. Professor Wiesel was very supportive of the idea, and we spent time discussing what I might include.

Wiesel passed away while you were writing the book; how did that affect the writing?

Well, writing the book was already an emotional process.

I felt so grateful for him, for my time with him, and for his message, that I came to my writing sessions with a lot of enthusiasm. When he died, I couldn't

look at the manuscript for a month. After that, I felt driven. I realized that now there would be no more lectures, no more classes, no more meetings. Not only for me, but for anyone.

And I knew I had a story to tell, that I had an obligation, as all students do, to share what I learned from my teacher.

The themes of the book span many areas: religion, activism, art. Did you plan them before you started writing?

Some of the chapters' themes were clear to me from the beginning: I knew for example that there would be a chapter on faith and doubt, and one on song.

Others emerged as I wrote. The chapter on activism in particular was in part a response to the new American moment of 2016 and on, the erosion of civil discourse, the rise of a resistance, moral excesses on the far right and far left. I was always going to write something about Professor Wiesel's activism, but the current moment necessitated an entire chapter. All of this evolved through six or seven versions of the projected table of contents. The version I shared with Professor Wiesel in 2009 or '10 is different, but still recognizable.

What do you hope people take away from reading it?

I want the reader to feel the experience of being in class with Professor Wiesel, to hear his voice and imagine his face.

I want the reader to know that he was a person of great wholeness and emotional range, that he was at times indignant about human suffering and the arrogance that causes it, that he could be pensive or funny.

That his life went on after Night, and the corpse-like face he saw in the mirror at the end of that book was not the end of the story.

I want us to reconsider categories like 'faith', 'rebellion', 'madness', and to think more deeply about these categories. For example, one of the central themes of the book is that faith and doubt can coexist.

I want us all to feel that we can make a difference in a large and imposing world, that our inner resources are greater than we are led to believe. I want the reader to hear Wiesel's message that it is our humanity that holds hope for our world.

I want us to challenge our addiction to answers, to become comfortable with questions, with mystery. I want us to become addicted instead to learning.
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Elie Wiesel: Teacher, Mentor, and Friend: Reflections by Judges of the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity Ethics Essay Contest edited by Alan L. Berger, Foreword by Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, Afterword by Carol Rittner [Cascade Books, 9781532649509]

Contents

"There is some real beauty to be found here in these memories of my father."—Elisha Wiesel, Elie Wiesel's son

"I was moved, and at the same time very happy, to read the contributions to this outstanding volume that keeps alive the memory of one of the finest

messengers of humankind, our great teacher Elie Wiesel." —Reinhold Boschki, Tübingen University

"Elie Wiesel once said he wrote not to be understood, but to understand. The gift of the Prize in Ethics is that Elie inspired the next generation to do the same . . . In this book lies the opportunity to learn from Elie's dear friends and partners in the Prize in Ethics, who have worked with him tirelessly over the years in promoting his urgent call to humanity to 'think higher and feel deeper.'" —Dov Seidman, partner to the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity

"Through the memories of his colleagues and students, we meet an educator who was able to transform the classroom into a sacred space. It is a privilege for those of us who never knew him to be able to enter that space and to experience for ourselves how profoundly Professor Wiesel touched and transformed the lives around him." —Theresa Sanders, Georgetown University

"This compilation seems the most fitting tribute to a consummate educator whose pedagogy was grounded in story-telling itself. I can think of no better way to honor a man who taught through the stories he told and wrote, than to present this collection—stories of the impact of his life, work, and inspired teaching on individuals and institutions." —Elizabeth Anthony, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

"This book reminds us that a great teacher can open minds, ennoble spirits, and—most miraculously—break hearts while filling them with joy and hope. In these pages we hear the gracious, kind, caring, wise voice of Elie Wiesel— teaching, mentoring, uplifting . . . Never has a book been so utterly necessary: at a time of shrill crassness and ethical void, we are reminded of the power of grace, of speaking softly and listening to all—especially to one's students. We are deeply grateful to the editor and contributors for this compelling, extraordinary gift." —Nehemia Polen, Hebrew College, Newton Center, Massachusetts

Excerpt: Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg

The civilized world suffered a devastating loss with the death of Elie Wiesel on July 2, 2016. The world knew this from awareness of Wiesel's public persona. Elie had become an international figure. He was known as the person who, by force of his witness and writing, played a central role in bringing the Holocaust from the margins of public awareness to its recognition as a seminal event in history and a moral touchstone for all of humanity. Wiesel was an iconic figure as the Nobel Peace Prize laureate (given to him for serving as "messenger to humanity" from the dead) who had gone on to apply his ethical passion to aid oppressed people or nations suffering from attempted genocide throughout the world. In an age possessing few spiritual leaders who are unconstrained by narrow political or self-interested agendas, he stood out for the universality of his concerns. In a period when it appeared that all ethics and values statements had become relative, he spoke for the right and the just, out of grounding in the event which had become the uncontested, absolute standard of evil. Spurred on by his experience, he fought indifference as the antithesis of the good and as the enabler of evil. He spoke truth to power with a passion forged in the flames so as to become "the conscience of humanity."

It turns out that the world did not know the half of it. Behind the public giant was a private towering figure—a teacher, a mensch, a friend of the rarest kind. This revelation is the gift given by this gem of a book—a riveting collection of testimonies as to the electrifying vitality infused in one's personal life by having Wiesel as part of it. The witnesses also reveal that Wiesel was a tzaddik and a rebbe—but this was hidden, as is appropriate for a lamed-vovnik or saint in a postrabbinic age.

After he won the Nobel Prize, Elie and Marion Wiesel created the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity to advance ethics and healing in the world. Since he was focused on passing the witness and the responsibility to the next generation, they created an Elie Wiesel Ethics Essay contest in which thousands of college students participated to express their concerns and offer remedies on the great issues facing humankind. In turn, Elie invited eight extraordinary individuals to serve as readers and judges with him. With each one he established deep friendship and vital interaction in a host of ways and various fields. After his death, the

group came together at a conference at Florida Atlantic University to remember his remarkable life and to testify to his character and profound humanity as well as his influence on them, their students and their fields of endeavor.

The collective witness of the eight judges, found in this book, is sad, touching, illuminating and inspiring. John K. Roth and Henry Knight incarnate Wiesel's religious power in asking questions and challenging God. No less, they represent his impact on Christians and Christianity to face up to a history of oppression of Jews and false, hateful witness against Judaism. Equally Wiesel helped them and Christianity turn the page, repent and renew the faith. They moved to restore the religion to Jesus the Jew and to help the faith become the gospel of love he had sought to proclaim for everybody.

Carolyn Johnston cotaught with Wiesel for twenty-three years. She and Barbara Helfgott Hyett and Alan Berger exemplify Wiesel's impact on teaching the Holocaust and making it into one of the most important and widely taught courses in university humanities and Jewish studies. All present the same portrait of Wiesel as a teacher—totally open and present for his students. They capture the image of the mentor who helped them (and countless numbers of their students) wrestle with the tormenting questions that his testimony raised. He tutored them and enabled them to respond by becoming witnesses. He inspired them to become enemies of indifference and to take up the responsibility to engage thousands of others in this task. I want to add that Wiesel always saw his teaching as central to his life—but this is not well known. Another of his closest students, his last teaching assistant Ariel Burger, is shortly publishing his account of Wiesel, the teacher. The volume is called Witness: Lessons from Elie Wiesel's Classroom (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018). The world needs to learn more about this remarkable man's legacy of teaching.

David Patterson and Alan Rosen give us a profound portrait of Wiesel, the writer and visionary, as rooted in the Jewish tradition and in the pantheon of Judaic religious figures. The Talmud tells us that the true tzaddik (righteous person) is marked by the fact that his inwardness is the same as his external message and self-presentation. Through Patterson's and Rosen's eyes, we come to see that like a true tzaddik, Wiesel spoke little of himself; nor did he seek to impress or awe people. Like that of a truly righteous person, his private behavior and friendship was consistently humane, considerate, and sensitive to others. Neither fame nor the adulation of masses eroded his centeredness in the others whom he met and taught and cared for. Their testimony also shows how his Jewishness was the bedrock of his person. While refusing to take the title of Rabbi, he became one of the great Jewish midrashists and interpreters of tradition in our time. And, yes, he filled the role of rebbe in a world that did not know the old traditions he was re-creating and whose stories he was retelling so masterfully. Elie practiced as the consummate Hasidic Rebbe—listener to problems, teacher of life's wisdom, singer of Jewish songs, protector of Jewish communities—long after the Nazis burned down his world of origin and stripped him of the black garb he might have worn, had they not ripped him out of this community.

Judith Ginsberg tells the story of the Wiesel Ethics contests, the students they affected and the ideas they spread. Each one of the testimonies in this book is precious. Each adds color and depth to the portrait of a great human being. Each offers a message of consolation in that Wiesel clearly inspired other people to go on with the work. Each will carry on his witness and mission with extra fervor and force because of his continuing impact and presence in their lives.

We who are bereft for losing Wiesel—and everyone who has been touched by him—can draw strength from this volume. I offer a blessing on those who conceived and put together this book. They have given the world a blessing in his name and a magnificent tribute to his memory.

Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor, author, teacher, advisor to presidents of both parties, human rights activist, Nobel Peace laureate and, in President Barrack Obamás words "conscience of the world" was deeply committed to the Jewish tradition. That commitment was the bedrock of Wiesel's universal obligation to side with the victims of war and injustice. Through his focus on memory he constantly strove to achieve a tikkun or healing of the world in so far as this is possible. Five days after his death, the United States Senate honored Wiesel by unanimously passing a resolution emphasizing Elie's "lifelong commitment to advancing human dignity, freedom, and respect throughout the world." Many know at

least something of Wiesel the public figure, whose interrogation of both God and humanity after Auschwitz stirred the conscience of millions. Far fewer know of Wiesel the teacher and mentor. Shaped by the teachings of Jewish mysticism—especially the Hasidic tradition whose tales he first learned from Dodye Feig, his maternal grandfather—Wiesel embraced paradox. But perhaps there is no greater paradox than the man himself: an important figure on the world stage, he was not given to touting his many achievements. Rather, as the reflections in this volume reveal, his passion for teaching and writing led him to encourage new generations to engage the world from a moral and ethical perspective. He did not want his experience—the Holocaust—to become their destiny.

To that end, Wiesel and his wife, Marion, established the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity shortly after he received the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize. Within three years the Wiesels, through the foundation, established the Elie Wiesel Prize in Ethics essay contest. The LRN corporation became a corporate sponsor of the Essay Contest in 2008. In the ensuing years, over sixty-five hundred college and university junior and senior students have written on the ethical and moral challenges facing the world. An Ethical Compass: Coming of Age in the 21st Century, featuring the winning essays subsumed under nine headings: Conflict, Memory, Conscience, God, Illness, and Education appeared in 2010. Wiesel sought to encourage future leaders to express their concerns about—and suggested remedies for grappling with—some of the deepest issues confronting the world. In Wiesel's words "These young voices . . . pose challenging questions to themselves and to all of us about the role of conscience and justice, memory and resistance, in our lives."

The contributors to this volume are judges of the Elie Wiesel Ethics Essay Contest. If the students are encouraged to engage their ethical passions, the judges are no less engaged by their experience of reading the essays and interacting with Elie. Each of the judges had a personal relationship with Wiesel that affords them a distinctive insight about the man and his impact on students including themselves. Their reflections contribute to our fuller understanding of the richness and depth of the Nobel laureate as a human being and as a moral and ethical guide in a fragmented world. Moreover, each of the essays in its own particular way reflect Wiesel's literary and theological impact on both Jews and Christians as well as on those who feel themselves religiously homeless but who nonetheless seek meaning in a rapidly changing cultural environment.

These essays emerged from a memorial symposium celebrating Wiesel's life and work held on February 5, 2017 at Florida Atlantic University. They tell a particular tale that reveals dimensions of Wiesel as both a mentsch (moral human being) and a major thinker. In fact, the two qualities are, in his case, intimately related. His life is no less, and probably more, a commentary on his work than his work is a commentary on his life. This volume interweaves personal reflections about Wiesel's remarkable teaching virtuosity with scholarly analysis revealing how each endeavor influences and illuminates the other. Taken together these reflections reveal the profound impact of Wiesel's vision on those with whom he spoke and worked.

Judith Ginsberg shares the story of how Wiesel invited her to become a contest judge. Although Wiesel turned down an offer to become a Distinguished Professor at Hunter College where Judith's husband was president, he became a steadfast friend and advisor. Judith began reading essays for the Elie Wiesel Ethics Essay Contest over twenty-five years ago and provides a detailed account of how the contest functions. She also speaks about the impact on her of two essays in particular, one by Rachel Maddow, then a Stanford University undergraduate, who later became a political commentator on television. The second essay was written by Robert Chan, a prisoner serving a life sentence for murder. Maddow's essay decries the lack of resources allocated to assist AIDS victims. Chan, who was motivated to receive an associate's degree while incarcerated, writes of being re-humanized by studying. Both essays call out societal dehumanization of those perceived as other.

Carolyn Ross Johnston writes of team teaching with Wiesel at Eckerd College during the winter months for over twenty years and his impact on her and her students. Wiesel "told us marvelous stories, sang to us, analyzed sacred texts (we always started with books of the Bible), and was," she writes, "the best listener I have ever known." One of the students wrote a paper on the transformative power of Elie Wiesel the teacher. A second student wept when Wiesel assured her she would be a great professor and thanked the young woman for being in his class. A third student

recalls Elie saying there is always someone in the world in need of help. He told the young man that he could see in his face that he would find those who needed assistance. Recalling these episodes, Johnston terms her experiences of teaching with Wiesel "moments of grace."

Barbara Helfgott Hyett, angry about the lack of a role for women's voices, wept when she met Elie and recalls that he invited her to study with him, and that he asked her to teach certain topics. Wiesel also encouraged her son's study of French. Remembering the vigorous discussion among the contest judges concerning sending along an essay written by a felon to Elie for consideration (see Judith Ginsberg's reflection above), Barbara succinctly states the arguments of both sides: How could we send along such an essay? The response: How could we not? The essay received an award. It seems to me fair to say that Helfgott Hyett summarizes the feeling of all the judges when she writes, "It was impossible to have known Elie Wiesel and not be changed."

Henry Knight shares his experience of hearing and learning from Elie Wiesel in the context of a far-reaching question: Why did Noah get drunk? Dialoguing with the text, as always, Wiesel asked if Noah's drinking could be linked to God's promise signaled by the rainbow. God had promised not to destroy the earth, but had said nothing about the deadly potential of human beings. Viewing all prior events through a covenantal lens, Wiesel attested that the Holocaust reveals that the rainbow broke, and with it the covenantal canopy of meaning. Taking Wiesel's lesson to heart, Knight, an ordained minister as well as a professor, preaches with an awareness of the "wounds my own theological traditions have caused." Noah got drunk because he realized the fragility of covenantal life. Wiesel urged Knight to keep writing about the necessity of a covenantal regard for the sanctity of life in a fragile world.

John K. Roth, who chairs the reader's committee writes of Elie's impact on America and on his involvement with Claremont McKenna College (CMC). Roth recounts Wiesel's institutional impact by recalling CMC's initiation of a Center for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights thanks to a generous founding gift from CMC alumnus Leigh Crawford. Today that center is the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights. Moreover, during the '80s and '90s Wiesel gave several public lectures at CMC whose students interacted with Elie Wiesel personally in classrooms and at shared meals. Wiesel responded to Roth's first piece, "Tears and Elie Wiesel," about the impact Wiesel's writings had on him. Roth notes how "demanding and meaningful it can be to experience, deep-down, the impact of Elie Wiesel." Roth concludes: "By allowing us to enter his life he has done much to give meaning to ours."

Alan Rosen, who received his PhD under Elie Wiesel's direction, recalls his mentor's insistence that the "past must be linked to the present: one must cry over the destruction of Jerusalem: only then may one capture its fire." A "Heavenly Temple," made of fire dwells in a heavenly realm waiting for the proper time to descend once again to its rightful place in (earthly) Jerusalem. Rosen discusses how Elie Wiesel "made this (daunting) task of capturing the fire of a Heavenly Temple a project to actualize in his and our own generation." Fire assumes ominous dimensions in Wiesel's canonical memoir Night. The image of consuming flames appears in many of Wiesel's subsequent writings. "And yet," to employ Wiesel's signature phrase, he also utilized fire as a sacred medium as in his book Souls on Fire: Portraits and Legends of Hasidic Masters. This remarkable transformation of fire imagery; from a malediction to a blessing marks Wiesel's literary career. As chairperson of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, Wiesel recalled the Talmudic story of an invisible temple—a third (indestructible) Temple—which resides in heaven and is built of fire. This temple would be eternal. Rosen contends that Wiesel's essential teaching on this matter is "fire cannot be destroyed with fire."

David Patterson speaks of Wiesel as a Jewish writer, which means one who bears witness for one who is no longer able to do so. Wiesel told Patterson that praying means "praying with anger." Patterson reflects on his experience of leading a daylong seminar for the winners of the essay contest. The essence of the contest, he notes, is "an assessment of writing as testimony." He challenges his fellow judges, questioning if we are sufficiently angry to read the essays. Patterson notes that for Wiesel "writing is about the restoration of the idea of man through the affirmation of human relationship grounded in an infinite responsibility for the other human being, voiced in the far-reaching shadow of Auschwitz." Wiesel's aim in writing was not to entertain, but to disturb— "oneself as well as others." Wiesel wrote

that he felt the presence of his teachers looking over his shoulder as he writes. "Just so, writes Patterson, "I feel his presence looking over my shoulder even now."

Alan L. Berger recalls receiving a note from Elie Wiesel in response to a review he had written of Souls on Fire in the early '70s. This initiated a forty-plus-year dialogue. Moreover, Wiesel called into Berger's seminar students at Florida Atlantic University on various occasions, responding to questions about faith, belief in God, education, and Jewish-Christian dialogue. The students invariably report that this experience was life-changing in their university education. In 1997 Wiesel received an honorary doctorate from FAU. It is no surprise that he was named an outstanding professor at Boston University where he taught for more than twenty-five years.

Wiesel told Berger that "only God is alone, human beings need dialogue." Berger discusses Wiesel's view on Jewish-Christian relations, referencing selected Wieselian novels and the Nobel Peace laureate's personal experience. On the personal level, Wiesel's post-Shoah encounter with François Mauriac, the Catholic writer and Nobel laureate in literature, was life altering. Wiesel attests: "The fact is that, practically, I owe François Mauriac my career. He was a Christian and we were very close." Wiesel writes:" A Jew's aim is not to convert another to his faith, but to help him become more fully who he is." Berger recounts that after having the privilege of leading the seminar for winners of the essay contest in 2008 and seeing the synergy between students of different religions and races, a true meeting of the minds of future leaders, he told Elie how optimistic and hopeful for the future the dialogue had left him. Wiesel responded: "Alan, that is why Marion and I established the essay contest."

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Collectively, these reflections form a palimpsest of Wiesel as a distinctive Jewish thinker who sought the moral improvement of the world through his teaching and writing. Wiesel observed on more than one occasion that "The teacher in me is a writer and the writer in me is a teacher." The judges each in their own way bear witness to the validity of Wiesel's contention. Each is committed to bearing witness to Wiesel's mission to achieve a healing of the world one soul at a time, so to speak. Wiesel's message is rooted in his specific Jewish identity. However, it has universal implications for people of various faiths and creeds. He did not teach hatred. Rather, his focus was on the obligation to remember. Heeding this focus, and to cite but one example, Reinhold Boschki, a German, non-Jewish scholar who studied with Wiesel at Boston University has translated Night into German. Wiesel's impact on the world continues. The judges are committed to perpetuate his teachings and his insights.

A final reflection. Elie Wiesel passed away on Saturday, July 2, 2016. According to Jewish tradition, the souls of the righteous are taken on Shabbat. We read in the Talmud that God told King David he would die on Shabbat (Tractate Shabbat 30a). The great medieval commentator Rashi (Shlomo Ben Yitzhaki, died 1105) comments, "so that he [King David] would immediately enter a stage of perfect rest."5 In another case, Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi, lying on his death bed, was told by Rabbi Hia that passing away on Shabbat was a good sign (Tractate Ketubot 103b). In the same vein, Rava Bar Rav Shila, fourth-century Talmudic commentator, said, "and he, the person who dies on Shabbat, will be called a great and holy man" (Tractate Shabbat 156a). Outside the Talmud we read that according to Rabbi Isaac Luria (the ARI, sixteenth-century founder of the Lurianic Kabbalah), one who dies on Shabbat does so free of sin. Rest in peace Elie Wiesel. Your memory and mission continue to inspire. <>

Series: Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers

The Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers showcases outstanding Jewish thinkers who have made lasting contributions to constructive Jewish philosophy in the second half of the 20th century. Each volume is devoted to one particular thinker and is meant to show the thinker's relationship to the Jewish philosophical past and to contemporary Jewish existence. Each volume follows the same structure: an overview essay, several seminal essays by the philosopher, an interview with the editors, and a select bibliography of 120 items. Together the volumes in the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers will feature the diversity and vitality of contemporary Jewish philosophy, will stimulate discussion on Jewish philosophical response to contemporary challenges, and will chart new paths for Jewish philosophy in the 21st century.

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ideal for use in diverse educational settings (e.g., college-level courses, rabbinic seminaries, adult Jewish learning, and interreligious dialogue).

Series Editors' Excerpt:

It is customary to begin studies devoted to the topic of Jewish philosophy defining what exactly this term, concept, or even discipline is. We tend not to speak of Jewish mathematics, Jewish physics, or Jewish sociology, so why refer to something as "Jewish philosophy"? Indeed, this is the great paradox of Jewish philosophy. on the one hand it presumably names something that has to do with thinking, on the other it implies some sort of national, ethnic, or religious identity of those who engage in such activity. Is not philosophy just philosophy, regardless of who philosophizes? Why the need to append various racial, national, or religious adjectives to it?

> [Alexander Altmann once remarked:
> It would be futile to attempt a presentation of Judaism as a philosophical system, or to speak of Jewish philosophy in the same sense as one speaks of American, English, French, or German philosophy. Judaism is a religion, and the truths it teaches are religious truths. They spring from the source of religious experience, not from pure reason. (See Alexander Altmann, "Judaism and World Philosophy," in The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion, ed. Louis Finkelstein (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949), vol. 2, 954.)]

Jewish philosophy is indeed rooted in a paradox since it refers to philosophical activity carried out by those who call themselves Jews. As philosophy, this activity makes claims of universal validity, but as an activity by a well-defined group of people it is inherently particularistic. The question "What is Jewish philosophy?" therefore is inescapable, although over the centuries Jewish philosophers have given very different answers to it. For some, Jewish philosophy represents the relentless quest for truth. Although this truth itself may not be particularized, for such individuals, the use of the adjective "Jewish"—as a way to get at this truth—most decidedly is. The Bible, the Mishnah, the Talmud, and related Jewish texts and genres are seen to provide particular insights into the more universal claims provided by the universal and totalizing gaze of philosophy. The problem is that these texts are not philosophical on the surface; they must, on the contrary, be interpreted to bring their philosophical insights to light. Within this context exegesis risks becoming eisegesis. Yet others eschew the term "philosophy" and instead envisage themselves as working in a decidedly Jewish key in order to articulate or clarify particular issues that have direct bearing on Jewish life and existence. Between these two perspectives or orientations, there exist several other related approaches to the topic of Jewish philosophy, which can and have included ethics, gender studies, multiculturalism, and postmodernism.

Despite their differences in theory and method, what these approaches have in common is that they all represent the complex intersection of Judaism, variously defined, and a set of non-Jewish grids or lenses used to interpret this rich tradition. Framed somewhat differently, Jewish philosophy—whatever it is, however it is defined, or whether it is even possible—represents the collision of particularistic demands and universal concerns. The universal or that which is, in theory, open and accessible to all regardless of race, color, creed, or gender confronts the particular or that which represents the sole concern of a specific group that, by nature or definition, is insular and specific-minded.

Because it is concerned with a particular people, the Jews, and how to frame their traditions in a universal and universalizing light that is believed to conform to the dictates of reason, Jewish philosophy can never be about pure thinking, if indeed there ever can be such a phenomenon. Rather Jewish philosophy—from antiquity to the present—always seems to have had and, for the most part continues to have, rather specific and perhaps even practical concerns in mind. This usually translates into the notion that Judaism—at least the Judaism that Jewish philosophy seeks to articulate—is comprehensible to non-Jews and, framed in our contemporary context, that Judaism has a seat at the table, as it were, when it comes to pressing concerns in the realms of ethics and bioethics.

Jewish philosophy, as should already be apparent, is not a disinterested subject matter. It is, on the contrary, heavily invested in matters of Jewish peoplehood and in articulating its aims and objectives. Because of this interest in concrete issues (e.g., ethics, bioethics, medical ethics, feminism) Jewish philosophy—especially contemporary Jewish philosophy— is often constructive as opposed to being simply reflective. Because of this, it would seem to resemble what is customarily called "theology" more than it does philosophy. If philosophy represents the critical and systematic approach to ascertain the truth of a proposition based on rational argumentation, theology is the systematic and rational study of religion and the articulation of the nature of religious truths. The difference between theology and philosophy resides in their object of study. If the latter has "truth," however we may define this term, as its primary object of focus, the former is concerned with ascertaining religious dogma and belief. They would seem to be, in other words, mutually exclusive endeavors.

What we are accustomed to call "Jewish philosophy," then, is a paradox since it does not—indeed, cannot—engage in truth independent of religious claims. As such, it is unwilling to undo the major claims of Judaism (e.g., covenant, chosenness, revelation), even if it may occasionally redefine such claims.$ so although medieval Jewish thinkers may well gravitate toward the systematic thought of Aristotle and his Arab interpreters and although modern Jewish thinkers may be attracted to the thought of Kant and Heidegger, the ideas of such non-Jewish thinkers are always applied to Jewish ideas and values. Indeed, if they were not, those who engaged in such activities would largely cease to be Jewish philosophers and would instead become just philosophers who just happened to be Jewish (e.g., Henry Bergson, Edmund Husserl, and Carl Popper).

Whether in its medieval or modern guise, Jewish philosophy has a tendency to be less philosophical simply for the sake of rational analysis and more constructive. Many of the volumes that appear in the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers will bear this out. The truths of Judaism are upheld, albeit in often new and original ways. Although Jewish philosophy may well use non-Jewish ideas to articulate its claims, it never produces a vision that ends in the wholesale abandonment of Judaism. Even though critics of Jewish philosophy may well argue that philosophy introduces "foreign" wisdom into the heart of Judaism, those we call Jewish philosophers do not perceive themselves to be tainting Judaism, but perfecting it or teasing out its originary meaning.

The result is that Jewish philosophy is an attempt to produce a particular type of Judaism—one that is in tune with certain principles of rationalism. This rationalism, from the vantage point of the nineteenth century and up to the present, is believed to show Judaism in its best light, as the synthesis or nexus between a Greek-inflected universalism and the particularism of the Jewish tradition.

What is the status of philosophy among Jews in the modern period? Since their emancipation in the nineteenth century, Jews have gradually integrated into Western society and culture, including the academy. Ever since the academic study of Judaism began in the 1820s in Germany, Jewish philosophy has grown to become a distinctive academic discourse practiced by philosophers who now often hold positions in non-Jewish institutions of higher learning. The professionalization of Jewish philosophy has not been unproblematic, and Jewish philosophy has had to (and still has to) justify its legitimacy and validity. And even when Jewish philosophy is taught in Jewish institutions (for example, rabbinic seminaries or universities in Israel), it has to defend itself against those Jews who regard philosophy as alien to Judaism, or minimally, as secondary in importance to the inherently Jewish disciplines such as jurisprudence or exegesis. Jewish philosophy, in other words, must still confront the charge that it is not authentically Jewish.

The institutional setting for the practice of Jewish philosophy has shaped Jewish philosophy as an academic discourse. But regardless of the setting, Jewish philosophy as an academic discourse is quite distinct from Jewish philosophy as constructive theology, even though the two may often by produced by the same person.

Despite the lack of unanimity about the scope and methodology of Jewish philosophy, the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers insists that Jewish philosophy has thrived in the past half century in ways that will probably seem surprising to most readers. When asked who are the Jewish philosophers of the twentieth century, most would certainly mention the obvious: Franz Rosenzweig (d. 1929), Martin Buber (d. 1965), and Emmanuel Levinas (d. 1995). Some would also be able to name Abraham Joshua Heschel (d. 1972), Mordecai Kaplan (d. 1983), Joseph Soloveitchik (d. 1993), and Hans Jonas (d. 1993). There is no doubt that these thinkers have either reshaped the discourse of Western thought for Jews and non-Jews or have inspired profound rethinking of modern Judaism. However, it is misleading to identify contemporary Jewish philosophy solely with these names, all of whom are now deceased.

in recent years it has been customary for Jews to think that Jewish philosophy has lost its creative edge or that Jewish philosophy is somehow profoundly irrelevant to Jewish life. Several reasons have given rise to this perception, not the least of which is, ironically enough, the very success of Jewish Studies as an academic discipline. Especially after 1967, Jewish Studies has blossomed in secular universities especially in the North American Diaspora, and Jewish philosophers have expressed their ideas in academic venues that have remained largely inaccessible to the public at large. Moreover, the fact that Jewish philosophers have used technical language and a certain way of argumentation has made their thought increasingly incomprehensible and therefore irrelevant to the public at large. At the same time that the Jewish public has had little interest in professional philosophy, the practitioners of philosophy (especially in the Anglo-American departments of philosophy) have denied the philosophical merits of Jewish philosophy as too religious or too particularistic and excluded it entirely. The result is that Jewish philosophy is now largely generated by scholars who teach in departments/programs of Jewish Studies, in departments of Religious Studies, or in Jewish denominational seminaries.

The purpose of the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers is not only to dispel misperceptions about Jewish philosophy but also to help nudge the practice of Jewish philosophy out of the ethereal heights of academe to the more practical concerns of living Jewish communities. To the public at large this project documents the diversity, creativity, and richness of Jewish philosophical and intellectual activity during the second half of the twentieth century, and early twenty-first century, showing how Jewish thinkers have engaged new topics, themes, and methodologies and raised new philosophical questions. Indeed, Jewish philosophers have been intimately engaged in trying to understand and interpret the momentous changes of the twentieth century for Jews. These have included the Holocaust, the renewal of Jewish political sovereignty, secularism, postmodernism, feminism, and environmentalism. As a result, the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophy intentionally defines the scope of Jewish philosophy very broadly so as to engage and include theology, political theory, literary theory, intellectual history, ethics, and feminist theory, among other discourses. We believe that the overly stringent definition of “philosophy” has impoverished the practice of Jewish philosophy, obscuring the creativity and breadth of contemporary Jewish reflections. An accurate and forward-looking view of Jewish philosophy must be inclusive.

To practitioners of Jewish philosophy this project claims that Jewish philosophical activity cannot and should not remain limited to professional academic pursuits. Rather, Jewish philosophy must be engaged in life as lived in the present by both Jews and non-Jews. Jews are no longer a people apart, instead they are part of the world and they live in this world through conversation with other civilizations and cultures. Jewish philosophy speaks to Jews and to non-Jews, encouraging them to reflect on problems and take a stand on a myriad of issues of grave importance. Jewish philosophy, in other words, is not only alive and well today, it is also of the utmost relevance to Jews and non-Jews.

The Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers is simultaneously a documentary and an educational project. As a documentary project, it intends to shape the legacy of outstanding thinkers for posterity, identifying their major philosophical

ideas and making available their seminal essays, many of which are not easily accessible. A crucial aspect of this is the interview with the philosophers that functions, in many ways, as an oral history. The interview provides very personal comments by each philosopher as he or she reflects about a range of issues that have engaged them over the years. In this regard the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers simultaneously records Jewish philosophical activity and demonstrates its creativity both as a constructive discourse as well as an academic field.

As an educational project, the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers is intended to stimulate discussion, reflection, and debate about the meaning of Jewish existence at the dawn of the twenty-first century. The individual volumes and the entire set are intended to be used in a variety of educational settings: college-level courses, programs for adult Jewish learning, rabbinic training, and interreligious dialogues. By engaging or confronting the ideas of these philosophers, we hope that Jews and non-Jews alike will be encouraged to ponder the past, present, and future of Jewish philosophy, reflect on the challenges to and complexities of Jewish existence, and articulate Jewish philosophical responses to these challenges. We hope that, taken as individual volumes and as a collection, the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers will inspire readers to ask philosophical, theological, ethical, and scientific questions that will enrich Jewish intellectual life for the remainder of the twenty-first century.

All of the volumes in the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers have the same structure: an intellectual profile of the thinker, several seminal essays by the featured philosopher, an interview with him or her, and a select bibliography of 120 items, listing books, articles, book chapters, book reviews, and public addresses. As editors of the series we hope that the structure will encourage the reader to engage the volume through reflection, discussion, debate, and dialogue. As the love of wisdom, philosophy is inherently Jewish. Philosophy invites questions, cherishes debate and controversy, and ponders the meaning of life, especially Jewish life. We hope that the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers will stimulate thinking and debate because it is our hope that the more Jews philosophize, the more they will make Judaism deeper, durable, and long-lasting. Finally, we invite readers to engage the thinkers featured in these volumes, to challenge and dispute them, so that Judaism will become ever stronger for future generations. <>

The Future of Jewish Philosophy edited by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Aaron W. Hughes [Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers, Brill, 9789004381209]

This anthology of original essays reflects on the future of Jewish philosophy in light of the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers. The volume assesses the strengths of Jewish philosophy, explores the place of Jewish philosophy within the Western academy as a critique of and contribution to the discipline of philosophy, and showcases the relevance of Jewish philosophy to contemporary Jewish culture. The volume argues that Jewish philosophy is more vibrant, diverse, and culturally significant than its public image implies. Special attention is paid to the interdisciplinary nature of Jewish philosophy, the institutional settings for generating Jewish philosophy, and the contribution of philosophizing to contemporary Jewish self-understanding.

CONTENTS

Excerpt: Jewish Philosophy as Cultural Practice by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson

Envisioning Jewish Philosophy

The idea for the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers (hereinafter, the Library or LCJP) came to me in 2008 in conversations with Norbert Samuelson, an important contributor to Jewish philosophy. The inspiration for the project was the Library of Living Philosophers, published by Open Court since 1939, in which "a great philosopher presents his views in an intellectual biography" and each volume includes as well "a number of essays by distinguished scholars who critique the great philosopher's ideas." After discussing the proposed project with several editors, it was endorsed by Jennifer Pavelko at Brill, a publishing house strongly committed to Judaica scholarship in general and to Jewish philosophy in particular. Brill agreed to publish not only the Library, a set of twenty volumes with each volume featuring one thinker, but also an edited anthology of essays, Jewish Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century: Personal Reflections, in which twenty-three Jewish thinkers offered their succinct visions of Jewish philosophy both as constructive thought and as academic discipline on the basis of their own personal life experience. The two projects have a lot in common. Some individuals, for example, are included in both projects (i.e., Lenn E. Goodman, Elliot R. Wolfson, Avi Sagi, Tamar Ross, and Michael L. Morgan); both exhibit the same approach to Jewish philosophy; and they share the same goal: to showcase the breadth, diversity, and vitality of contemporary Jewish philosophy.

But why would we, the editors, embark on this time-consuming project? After all, within the competitive conventions of the academy, especially in the humanities, edited volumes are valued less than authored monographs, even though the former's contribution to scholarship is the same if not greater than the latter. So why did we take upon ourselves such a thankless task and devote five years to it? For me the answer is clear: the two projects are deliberate attempts to right the wrong done to Jewish philosophy, which is mistakenly and unjustly perceived as a narrow-minded, technical, or historical discourse that is disengaged from and irrelevant to contemporary Jewish life. By contrast, the Library and the edited volume have shown that Jewish philosophy today is robust, creative, diverse, penetrating, and most pertinent to Jewish culture, to Jewish studies, to the discipline of philosophy, and to the humanities. Jewish philosophers today engage the most profound and contested issues of contemporary Jewish life, which include: the meaning of being Jewish; Jewish life after the Holocaust in light of revived anti-Semitism; the Jewishness of the State of Israel; the Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts; Judaism and contemporary science and technology; democracy and pluralism in Israel; the Diaspora-Israel relations; Judaism and the ecological crisis; and gender, sexuality, and egalitarianism.

There is no doubt in my mind that Jewish philosophy today is as deep, creative, and significant as it has ever been, but as noted above, Jewish philosophy also suffers from a negative public perception. In professional Jewish academic organizations (e.g., the Association for Jewish Studies), sessions on Jewish philosophy (be it medieval or modern) are

not well attended, and the scholars who do attend these sessions are aware that these professional gatherings do not capture the creative work of Jewish philosophers nor do they enhance Jewish philosophy as an academic discipline. The dissatisfaction with the state of Jewish philosophy was expressed most poignantly by Aaron W. Hughes and Elliot R. Wolfson, the editors of a recent anthology of essays, New Directions in Jewish Philosophy. The editors of the volume asked the contributors to address the following questions: "What is the major lacuna that you witness in your respective subfield of Jewish philosophy? What traditional assumptions have created such a lacuna? How can these assumptions be redressed? And, most importantly: If redressed, what would the future study of Jewish philosophy look like?" The volume thus presented itself as an attempt to "boldly chart a new and creative course for the study of Jewish philosophy," as the editors sought to "expand the contours of Jewish philosophy—redefining its canon, articulating a new set of questions, showing its counterpoints with other disciplines—as a way to demonstrate the vitality and originality of the topic."

Negative perceptions of the discipline of Jewish philosophy also abound in non-Jewish philosophical organizations, whose practitioners (especially those trained in analytic philosophy) do not consider Jewish philosophy to be philosophy at all. They reason that this is because Jewish philosophy is inseparable from Judaism and from the historical experience of one ethnic group, the Jews. Most professional philosophical organizations in North America do not have special sessions on Jewish philosophy, although the American Philosophical Association has two officially affiliated groups: the Academy for Jewish Philosophy and the Association for the Philosophy of Judaism. The limited attention to Jewish philosophy in such professional organizations is astounding given the fact that many academic philosophers, including some of the leading philosophers today, are born Jews. Outside the academy the situation is not much different: the educated Jewish public, let alone the non-Jewish public, expresses little interest in or knowledge about Jewish philosophy, and Jewish philosophers have very limited impact on Jewish communal life, precisely because Jewish philosophy has become a professional academic discourse that requires expertise fit for specialists only. The Library seeks to showcase Jewish philosophy within the academy, to other scholars of Jewish studies, to philosophers and other humanists, and at the same time bridge the gap between Jewish philosophy as an academic practice and Jewish lived experience.

All inquiries into Jewish philosophy always begin with definitional and methodological questions about which there has been no consensus: What is Jewish philosophy? Who is a Jewish philosopher? What is the subject matter of Jewish philosophy? How does Jewish philosophy relate to the discipline of philosophy? What is the difference between Jewish philosophy and Jewish theology? Who is the intended audience of Jewish philosophy? How does Jewish philosophy relate to culture, either Jewish or non-Jewish? While these questions will continue to generate discussion for generations to come, most would agree that Jewish philosophy is not simply philosophy written by Jews, but something that must address Judaism, the religion of the Jews. In our "Editors' Introduction to the Series," reprinted in all volumes of the Library, Aaron W. Hughes and I have acknowledged the difficulty of defining Jewish philosophy. We noted that "Jewish philosophy is indeed rooted in a paradox since it refers to philosophical activity carried out by those who call themselves Jews. As philosophy, this activity makes claims of universal validity, but as an activity by a well-defined group of people it is inherently particularistic." We further elaborated on the dynamics between the universal and the particular saying that "Jewish philosophy—whatever it is, however it is defined, or whether definition is even possible—represents the collision of particularistic demands and universal concerns. The universal, or that which is, in theory, open and accessible to all regardless of race, color, creed, or gender confronts the particular, or that which represents the sole concern of a specific group that, by nature or definition, is insular and specific-minded." Precisely because it concerns itself with a particular group of people, the Jews, "Jewish philosophy can never be about pure thinking, if indeed there ever can be such a phenomenon. Rather Jewish philosophy—from antiquity to the

present— always seems to have had and, for the most part continues to have, rather specific and perhaps even practical concerns in mind." Jewish philosophy then emerges out of the life of the Jews, it reflects on the belief system of Judaism, and it engages a textual tradition, both Jewish and non-Jewish, which has framed Jewish culture.

The Library features outstanding Jewish thinkers who have made a distinctive contribution to the discourse of Jewish philosophy (both in terms of constructive thought and in terms of scholarship) in the past seven decades. Each volume in the Library consists of an introductory essay about the life, works, and views of the featured thinker, several essays authored by the thinker, and an interview with us, the editors. As several reviewers of individual volumes have noted, the interview is the most original aspect of each volume, because it engages the thinker's ideas directly and personally. By featuring individual thinkers in depth, the Library makes the case of contemporary Jewish philosophy as creative, innovative, diverse, complex, and relevant inquiry into the meaning of being Jewish today. Moreover, to those who see Jewish philosophy as intellectually uncreative, socially irrelevant, and culturally insignificant, the Library is an invitation to engage with the ideas of the featured philosophers. By studying the works of the featured philosophers and engaging their ideas, the Library's volumes are intended to generate new thinking, discussions, and reflections—in other words, philosophical conversation that will in turn perpetuate Jewish philosophical discourse and secure the future of Jewish philosophy. The Library thus makes the case of Jewish philosophy to those who are either uninformed about it, to those who do not take it seriously, or to those who are critical of it. Of course, those who are already engaged in Jewish philosophy may find the volumes of the Library to be intellectually stimulating and thought provoking.

The Library defines the scope of Jewish philosophy rather broadly, by including inquiries about Kabbalah and Hasidism, poetry and art, and science and medicine within the scope of Jewish philosophy. Such broad definition reflects my own academic training at the Hebrew University and my commitment to intellectual history as a contextual, interdisciplinary, and cross-cultural inquiry. I see Jewish philosophy as a sociocultural force that generates reflexive, critical thinking as well as transformative action through education. In this view, philosophy is integral to Jewish lived experience and cannot be disengaged from other forms of Jewish self-expression, including halakhah, midrash, Kabbalah, liturgy, the arts, and the sciences. As a pursuit of truth and wisdom, Jewish philosophy has shaped the Jewish religion primarily through liturgy, whose history reflects evolving theological reflections and changing intellectual conventions. Since philosophy has always informed Jewish religious practice, in Judaism it is impossible to separate between "theory" and "praxis" as both cohere into a way of being Jewish in the world, whether it is defined in religious or secular terms.

Such an approach to Jewish philosophy is pluralistic and inclusive both in terms of defining one's Jewishness and in terms of defining the way of doing philosophy. How one practices Judaism will shape how one does philosophy and vice versa. Therefore, there is no one correct way of philosophizing or of being Jewish. For this reason, the Library features thinkers who are engaged with Kabbalah, literature, and art as well as thinkers who are trained analytic philosophers or historians of science. Similarly, the Library includes people who define themselves religiously as Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, or Neo-Hasidic Jews, as well as thinkers who resist these denominational labels and reject any conventional categorization. Admittedly, such broad vision may not satisfy the purists who may think it too vague or lacking analytic rigor and precision, yet, I believe that this intentionally pluralistic and inclusive vision is historically correct, intellectually coherent, and socially beneficial. When Jewish philosophy is understood as cultural practice as part of ever-changing Jewish culture, its distinctive chapters become clear: ancient Hellenistic Egypt, medieval Spain and North Africa, Renaissance and Baroque Italy, nineteenth-century Germany, and twentieth-century America, Europe, and Israel. In each of these cultural moments, Jewish philosophy has manifested the prevailing cultural milieu, the dominant intellectual concerns, and the prevailing

linguistic and rhetorical idioms. Jewish philosophy is always a snapshot of a particular cultural moment.

The Library: A Multi-Faceted Project

As a project in intellectual history, the Library is a multi-faceted project. Since this project features a group of thinkers, it can be seen as an exercise in prosopography, namely the construction of a group portrait. Each volume opens with an essay whose subtitle is "An Intellectual Portrait" because the Library is, after all, meant to be a gallery of portraits with each volume featuring the portrait of one particular thinker. The visitor to this gallery exhibit has to appreciate each and every thinker on his or her terms, but also to see the thinker as part of a group whose creativity reflects the broader cultural context in which he or she wrote. The presentation of twenty Jewish thinkers intends to take stock of Jewish thought at a particular moment in time—roughly from the mid-twentieth century to the present. In this regard the Library is a documentary project that features the transformation of Jewish life during a transformative period. This period, for instance, has occurred after the Holocaust; after the establishment of the State of Israel; after the failure to reach peace; after the professionalization of Jewish studies; after the sexual revolution and the rise of feminism; after the collapse of modernism and the emergence of postmodernism, globalization, and postcolonialism; and after the breakthroughs of scientific advancements and technological innovations—to mention just some of the social, cultural, and political developments in the second half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century. The Library shows how reflective, insightful, and penetrating Jewish thinkers make sense of the contemporary moment and argues that their thinking is relevant to all of us, Jews and non-Jews, academics and general readers. The Library is also a legacy project, namely, it wishes to crystallize the legacy of the past in order to ensure continuity and further growth. And since intellectual futures are created by means of education, the Library is also, and perhaps primarily so, a pedagogic project that wishes to make a difference in the way Jews today think about being Jewish in light of Jewish intellectual activity in the past and in anticipation of the future.

It goes without saying that the first challenge we the editors had to face was to decide who should be featured in the Library and what should be the criteria for inclusion. We wanted to include thinkers who have been influential, impactful, or significant in Jewish life during the past seven decades. We looked for those who represent or reflect a certain strand in contemporary Judaism or a way of being Jewish, both in the Diaspora and in Israel. We wanted to include thinkers who have been particularly original or insightful or who have introduced a new way of thinking about Jewish philosophy within the academy; and we looked for people who have been especially prolific. Because some have been more prolific than others, we chose to include a bibliography of only 120 items, a symbolic number for Jews. I am fully aware that our decisions will be challenged and criticized, and I admit that the Library could have included other people as well and that it could have been much larger. The relative low representation of women in the Library (only two out of a total of twenty) will definitely raise criticism; it could be addressed only by extending the Library to additional volumes and by including younger scholars. The Library features thinkers from the United States, Israel, England, and Canada, but it does not feature scholars from France, which is yet another omission that could justify criticism. Indeed, I continually receive requests from people who propose this or that person for inclusion in the Library and they are undoubtedly disappointed to find out that the Library was limited to twenty volumes. This too is relevant to the argument of the project: more people are engaged in Jewish philosophy all over the world and more people care about Jewish philosophy than is commonly acknowledged.

Our criteria for inclusion in the Library will undoubtedly be contested, because any discussion of Jewish philosophy is necessarily subjective, reflecting the intellectual identity, cultural experiences, social conventions, and religious orientation of the person engaged in it. While Jewish philosophers may agree Jewish philosophy refers to a certain literary tradition, it is doubtful that there will be consensus on the texts that belong

or do not belong to that literary strand. The same is true in regard to the methodology that guides the critical engagement with these texts. There is neither one methodology nor one type of inquiry that constitutes the one and only way, or the best way, of doing Jewish philosophy. Jewish philosophers avail themselves to different methodologies that have changed over time in accordance with the intellectual and cultural climate of the day. Today Jewish philosophy is informed both by continental philosophy and analytic philosophy, and several volumes in the Library show the mistake of treating these intellectual traditions as mutually exclusive. A given philosopher, for example, can be informed by both of these philosophical traditions.

Furthermore, no matter how one philosophizes, and which texts one engages, Jewish philosophy is by no means an isolated intellectual endeavor, but one that interacts with many other intellectual pursuits, such as historiography, art, literature, science, medicine, and law. Thus the content of Jewish philosophy as much as its methodology is open-ended and underdetermined: Jewish philosophy reflects on and wrestles with numerous intellectual, social, cultural, and political issues, and it goes about its business in a variety of ways. In its content, methodology, and concerns, Jewish philosophy is inherently pluralistic and necessarily diverse. This point is made clear in our "Introduction" to Jewish Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century, where we have noted that Jewish philosophy is inherently interdisciplinary, encompassing the methodologies and concerns of other fields such as political theory, intellectual history, theology, religious studies, anthropology, education, comparative literature, and cultural studies. Jewish philosophy is intensely personal because to think about the meaning of being Jewish or the meaning of Judaism can never be separated from the personal biography of the thinker. And Jewish philosophy is socially embedded because it responds to the lived experience of the Jews and it reflects on the contemporary challenges to Jewish existence.

Toward the Future of Jewish Philosophy

This volume and the conference upon which it is based focus on the future of Jewish philosophy. Of course, none of us has a crystal ball in which to see the future, and none of us can predict its course. Concern with the future of Jewish philosophy guided my interviews with the featured philosophers in the Library. All the interviews conclude with some reference to the future, usually asking the thinker to identify the challenges of the future and stating whether he or she is pessimistic or optimistic about what the future might bring. Not surprisingly, the answers varied greatly, reflecting one's personality and outlook on life, as well as one's analysis of the present. As much as there is no consensus on the nature of Jewish philosophy, its method, and content, there is no consensus on the challenges for its future existence and well-being. For some, the challenge was predominantly political, pertaining to interplay between Judaism and Zionism in the State of Israel and in the Diaspora; for others the challenge revolved around the relationship between Jews and non-Jews, in light of the prolonged Israeli-Arab conflict and the rise of anti-Semitism; and to still others the challenge was cultural, pertaining to the quality of education, both Jewish and philosophical and the institutions that we need to build in order to ensure that Jewish creativity will thrive. No matter how one defines the challenges to the future of Jewish existence, it is fair to say that all participants in the Library have shared one conviction: Jewish philosophy is essential to the future of Judaism, Jewish culture, and Jewish intellectual creativity. Jewish philosophy is not ancillary to Jewish existence; it is a sine qua non to it.

Indeed, this is the pedagogic message of the Library, a message that is relevant both in the Diaspora and in Israel. Jewish philosophy can be central to Jewish education, and the volumes of the Library offer a vehicle for carrying out Jewish philosophical discourse. The volumes of the Library are organized in such a way that they could inspire philosophical reflections among all Jews in a variety of educational settings and regardless of one's level of religious observance or philosophical expertise. Non-Jews who care to know about contemporary Jewish thought could also benefit

greatly from the volumes of the Library. Whether one engages the introductory overviews, the individual essays, or the interviews, one can embark on a conversation about the meaning of being Jewish, the problems of Jewish philosophy, the task of the Jewish philosopher, the challenges to Jewish existence, and much more. These reflections can take place in college-level courses, rabbinic seminaries, adult education classes, and even pre-college Jewish learning. There are many ways to use the materials of the Library to enrich Jewish learning, but whether this will be done depends on all of us, and our willingness to use the volumes of the Library as tools for the teaching of Jewish philosophy. I very much hope that the Library and this volume will showcase the power of Jewish philosophy to function as a catalyst of Jewish learning. Since the future of Jewish philosophy depends on the people who care about it, we can optimistically say that Jewish philosophy has a very bright future ahead, because Jewish philosophy is generated today by bright, well-trained, sensitive, and engaged Jews.

The Essays

This volume is structured according to the organization of the conference that celebrated the (near) completion of the Library. Part I consists of essays that frame the entire project. This essay and the following essay, "Jewish Philosophy in the Academy," by Aaron W. Hughes, serve as point of departure for reflections by the contributors to the volume. The essays in Part II respond to my essay reflecting on Jewish philosophy as a cultural practice within the Jewish community, whereas the essays in Part III respond to Hughes's essay and comment on the place of Jewish philosophy within the academy. Part I also includes an essay by Warren Zev Harvey, originally delivered as the keynote address in the conference, which surveys the Library in its entirety by discussing the contribution of each and every volume. Additionally Part I includes a solicited essay by Lenn E. Goodman, who participated in the conference and who is featured in the Library. Goodman's essay provides an historical perspective about the project of Jewish philosophy, noting the diversity of philosophical genres and the challenges that face Jewish philosophy that falls between "the Scylla and Charybdis of philosophy," which are the analytic and continental modes of doing philosophy. Goodman reminds the reader that "all good philosophers . . . like all good novelists and poets, need to be a little alienated from the world they live in. But not so alienated as to go mad and find oneself unable to communicate—nor so at home as to be complacent and notice nothing." The essays in this volume address this desideratum by illustrating the sensitivity of Jewish philosophers to the world in which they live while retaining their inquisitive and questioning spirit.

The essays in Part II reflect on the role of Jewish philosophy in Jewish communal life and in public life more generally. Referencing the statements of Tirosh-Samuelson and Hughes in their introduction to the Library, Elias Sacks welcomes the determination of the Library to show that "Jewish philosophical activity cannot and should not remain limited to professional academic pursuits" but instead figures prominently in settings ranging from adult education to interreligious dialogue in which members of the Jewish communities (and perhaps their non-Jewish neighbors) "reflect on problems and take a stand on a myriad of issues," and in which "the more Jews philosophize, the more they will make Judaism deeper, durable, and long-lasting."

In order to rethink the place of Jewish philosophy in Jewish public life, Sacks proposes that we look at the East-European Jewish philosopher, Nachman Krochmal (d. 1840), "whose writings point toward a model for how we might encourage communal engagement with philosophy." This model, Sacks concedes,

requires both caution and risk-taking. It requires caution in the sense that it calls for a surrender of intellectual ego, demanding that academic practitioners of Jewish philosophy be wary of too quickly emphasizing their own intellectual priorities and instead focus on generating communal perplexity—on cultivating habits of philosophical questioning among members of the broader public. And it involves risks in the sense that it may pose dangers both for scholars and for the community that they wish to address.

Sacks argues that Krochmal, the Ukrainian Jewish philosopher, remains so meaningful today because he began his philosophical investigation with "issues that matter to others" rather than with "issues that matter to him." Krochmal recognizes how to make the case of philosophy to Jews who may be skeptical of philosophy and how to couch the philosophical inquiries "in the traditional language of the communities that he addresses." Jewish philosophy in the twenty-first century has much to learn from the model proposed by Krochmal in the nineteenth century.

In agreement with the call to make Jewish philosophy involved in communal self-reflection, Yonatan Y. Brafman thinks through "the normative implications" of this approach to Jewish philosophy, namely, the "tasks to which it commits its practitioners with reference to the type of educational media it should employ and the audience it should aim to reach." Brafman critically examines the responsibility of Jewish philosophers as educators, and some of the controversies about the desired relationship between philosophy and Jewish culture. To clarify these controversies and chart a future trajectory, Brafman poses three models for Jewish philosophy "that entail different expectations for its relation to the discourse and practices of communities": "Jewish Philosophy as Therapy," "Jewish Philosophy as Ideology," and "Jewish Philosophy as Critique." After analyzing the complex relationship between these three paradigms, Brafman concludes that what the Jewish philosopher "ought to do is to awaken the community to its problems and aid in their resolution. This may not be what the future of Jewish philosophy will be, but . . . it is what it ought to be."

All three models of Jewish philosophy are exemplified in the work of Elliot N. Dorff, who has been instrumental in shaping the discourse on bioethics in America. Dorff's essay offers concrete examples for the invaluable contribution of a Jewish philosopher to public discourse within and without the Jewish community. Training in philosophy, Dorff demonstrates, is crucial to unpacking the subtlety of the complex issues posed today by new technologies and new scientific advances, but speaking from a Jewish philosophical perspective leads one to question a simplistic understanding of the separation between religion and state in America. Religion in general and Judaism in particular have much to say about public policy.

The argument for a socially and politically engaged Jewish philosopher is situated historically and philosophically by Steven Kepnes who explores "the Jewish focus on ethics—social, political, legal, natural, and theological"—which could lead one to say with Hermann Cohen, that "post-Kantian ethics was a Jewish invention." While engaging the various volumes of the Library in the broader philosophical and theological project of modern Jewish thought, Kepnes critiques some of the developments represented in the Library (for example, the emphasis on aesthetics and on hermeneutics), and instead calls Jewish philosophers "back to the logos, back to reason." He argues that "without reason it is difficult to decide what is to be included and what is to be excluded from this thing called Judaism." Kepnes's call for the return to "reasoned conceptualization and propositions about God" is presented "as an antidote to a preoccupation with the endless search for meaning in contemporary Jewish thought," but it remains to be seen whether his desire to place theology in the center of Jewish public discourse will be heeded.

Who is going to lead the return to theology in Jewish public discourse? The obvious answer to that question is "the rabbi," since rabbis were invested with authority to interpret the tradition, and many rabbis in the medieval and early-modern periods were philosophically informed. But in the modern period, the training of rabbis, their authority, and their social role have changed greatly with the secularization of society and the modernization of Jews and Judaism. Can rabbis carry the didactic project of Jewish philosophy? Or perhaps that project should be placed at the doorstep of the academic scholar of Judaism, the one who teaches Jewish philosophy in the modern university. Yet, it is precisely the scholar of Jewish philosophy who lacks authority to speak for the tradition and to lead his Jewish audience to cultivate the love of philosophy. The professionalization of Jewish philosophy in the Western academy has resulted in the fact that many scholars of Jewish philosophy

(and of Jewish studies more generally) remain unengaged in the Jewish community and write exclusively for other academics. Martin Kavka and Aubrey L. Glazer propose very different approaches to the dynamic relationship between Jewish community, rabbinic authority, and Jewish philosophy.

Kavka critically reflects on the educational purpose of the LCJP by noting that "Tirosh-Samuelson and Hughes have shepherded the publication of books on twenty thinkers with the full expectation that readers will reject the conclusions of at least some—perhaps many, perhaps even most—of those thinkers. The radicality of the authority structure introduced by the LCJP should not be underestimated . . . It is up to the readers, not the scholars, to decide which ideas and visions shall live and which shall die. The authority is theirs." Problematizing the project of the LCJP, Kavka argues that "The LCJP, in its very structure, discloses the fragility of Jewish philosophy" because Jewish philosophy is "a particular type of Judaism." Kavka develops his critical analysis by engaging one volume of the LCJP, Menachem Fisch: The Rationality of Religious Dispute. Fisch, the historian and philosopher of science, has unpacked the assumptions and values that undergird the rational discourse of rabbinic Judaism and has detached "tradition" from "traditionalism." Kavka uses Fisch's insights to expose the theoretical problems inherent in the LCJP given the fact that "authority is plural" and "inquiry is always communal." Engaging Fisch's "anti- traditionalist" interpretation of rabbinic Judaism leads Kavka to claim that "if commitment to Jewish philosophy and theology is commitment to the Jewish tradition as a site of value, and if the tradition affirms value in communal and public inquiry, then a commitment to Jewish philosophy (or theology) is also a commitment to a communal path of inquiry in which the philosopher (or theologian) herself plays a small role." If Fisch's neopragmatism is correct, and authority is social, plural, and communal, then the project of the LCJP is much more complicated, because "norms are divine only if a community comes to agree that they are correct."

A different approach to the communal role of rabbis/philosophers is presented by Aubrey L. Glazer, who is a philosophically trained rabbi engaged in creating Jewish communities that practice philosophy not as a rational, propositional discourse but as a "sonorous community" that prays and sings together. The future of Jewish philosophy for Glazer has much to do with music, or critical musical thinking, rather than with science and analytic philosophy. For Glazer the Jewish community in the Diaspora is no longer based on ethnicity and is not grounded in shared culture. In a pluralistic, post-denominational, and post-ethnic American Judaism, a new Jewish community has emerged, one in which literacy in Jewish liturgy or acceptance of certain beliefs can no longer be presupposed. The new heterodox Jewish community is entirely voluntary, rooted in friendship and expressed through sonority, through singing together, and that reality dictates a different role for the rabbi-philosopher. Philosophy has much to offer to the framing of the new Jewish community, and the main insights come from continental philosophy, to which Jewish philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas have contributed greatly. The new Jewish sonorous community is based on friendship and the rabbi-philosopher can explicate the meaning of friendship and the obligations that follow from it. The history of Judaism itself offers a case for such community, and Glazer brings to mind the Hasidic community in eighteenth-century Tiberias as a model to learn from.

In sum, the essays in Part II affirm the social relevance of Jewish philosophy but offer diverse models for the social activity of the Jewish philosopher/theologian and diverse interpretations of the nature of the Jewish community. Only the future will tell which of those models will prevail or last. The essays in Part III shift the focus from the community to the academy, since the practice of Jewish philosophy today takes place mainly in the secular university. Part III as well does not offer a consensus in regard to the definition of Jewish philosophy, the best way of generating Jewish philosophy, and the appropriate setting for it. Instead, the essays express a variety of definitions, perspectives, preferences, and proposals for the future of Jewish philosophy, indicating the robustness of Jewish philosophical thinking today.

Some of the essays are optimistic about the power and relevance of Jewish philosophy while others are more pessimistic and critical; some offer concrete proposals for strengthening Jewish philosophy, while others are content with what has been accomplished.

Part III opens with an essay of Claire Katz who makes a case for Jewish philosophy within liberal arts education. Through conversation with Aaron W. Hughes's Rethinking Jewish Philosophy: Beyond Particularism and Universalism, Katz relates her own wrestling with the theoretical issues as a professor of Jewish studies who also teaches gender studies. Katz's personal experience makes it clear that Jewish philosophy is profoundly meaningful to students, be they Jewish or not, so that scholars of Jewish philosophy who introduce students to the Jewish philosophic tradition contribute greatly to education. Each of the following essays highlights the contribution of Jewish philosophy to higher education in America, albeit in variety of ways.

On the face of it, it seems that analytic philosophy is the most resistant to Jewish philosophy, because analytic philosophy claims for universality that denies historical and cultural particularity. But this perception is too shallow: it does not account for recent developments within analytic philosophy and for the impact of analytic philosophy on the practice of philosophy of religion in general and Jewish philosophy in particular. Alex Sztuden shows how much knowledge of analytic philosophy has transformed modern Jewish philosophy, especially among Orthodox philosophers of halakhah, and conversely how Orthodox Jewish thinkers have contributed to analytic philosophy of religion. Sztuden's analysis prominently features the work of David Shatz (vol. 19 of the LCJP), but Shatz is not alone, other philosophers in the LCJP also reflect the impact of analytic philosophy on Jewish philosophy: Elliot N. Dorff (vol. 5), Avi Sagi (vol. 10), Norbert Samuelson (vol. 15), Tamar Ross (vol. 17), and Menachem Fisch (vol. 18). Religiously committed Jewish philosophers have enriched analytic philosophy as much as the analytic discourse has deepened contemporary Jewish philosophy.

The potential contribution of analytic philosophy to Jewish theological discourse is further elaborated by Cass Fisher who builds on the work of Norbert Samuelson and David Shatz and who shares the call of Steve Kepnes to put theological reasoning at the center of Jewish philosophy in the twenty-first century. Fisher prefers to look at Jewish philosophy "as a field rather than a discipline," and he resists the temptation to see Jewish philosophy and Jewish theology as interchangeable, because the former is much broader than the latter. Considering specific trends in scholarly publishing and in the funding of Jewish intellectual work, Fisher suggests that scholars seek funding from non-Jewish private foundations (e.g., the Templeton Foundation), at a time when funding from federal agencies (e.g., the National Endowment of the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts) is severely threatened. Sharing the grim assessment of Hughes in regard to the place of Jewish philosophy in analytic philosophy departments, Fisher looks at new organizations such as Association for the Philosophy of Judaism as a "ray of hope" and a model to follow.

The challenges to Jewish philosophy in the academy arise from the rigid dichotomy between "facts" and "values" that governed the modern academy since the beginning of the twentieth century, first ideologically articulated by Max Weber in his 1917 lecture, "Science as a Vocation." Randi Rashkover critically examines the development of the dichotomous fact-value paradigm and its negative impact on "the study of Judaism and modern Jewish thought as they have operated in the Western university setting." Like Kavka, she too looks at the impact of the fact-value paradigm by engaging the work of Menachem Fisch along with the historians of science such as Peter Harrison that informed Fisch's scholarship. Historians of science were not the first to challenge the fact-value divide. Already in the 1930s Leo Strauss challenged it as he critiqued the model for Jewish studies proposed by the Wissenschaft des Judentums movement. Rashkover considers Strauss's alternative model of "thinking within Judaism" and its political implications for the practice of Jewish philosophy. She argues that Strauss's critique of the fact-value divide and his attempt to restore Jewish

discourse as law have failed because they were not extensive enough, but Strauss raised the right issues and called us to challenge many of the assumptions that hamper the place of Jewish philosophy within the Western academy.

The immanent critique of the fact-value divide, which Rashkover advances, allows for new considerations of the relationship between "the natural and social scientific approach [and] the study of religion," as she puts it. This point is demonstrated in some detail by Heidi M. Ravven, who has been at the forefront of the new discipline of neurophilosophy. Her work on Spinoza (and his Jewish medieval predecessors, Maimonides and Gersonides) offers new ways of reconsidering the mind-body dichotomy, the epistemological correlative of the fact-value divide, which modern philosophy has taken for granted. Ravven brings to our attention the profound interest in Jewish philosophy (especially medieval and early modern Jewish philosophy) in contemporary China, where Marxism is being rethought and reframed, as well as in contemporary America, where new scientific discoveries about the human brain put in question many of the assumptions of American democracy. As Ravven's experience demonstrates, Jewish philosophy is deeply valued by non-Jews, and it has more to contribute to contemporary philosophical, political, and cultural debates than ever before.

The complex interplay of Judaism, philosophy, science, ethics, and politics must be understood historically. Samuel Hayim Brody reflects on the distinct features of Jewish philosophy, namely, its hermeneutical, dialogical, and historical tendencies which Brody fully endorses. Brody sees the LCJP as an implicit response to an essay written by Paul Mendes-Flohr in 1999 that critiqued "professors of Jewish studies or cognate fields" for speaking among themselves and making limited impact on the larger Jewish community. In accord with Mendes-Flohr's criticism, Brody urges Jewish philosophers "to continue to ask intellectual-historical questions" but to do so "with a keener eye toward the challenges and dangers of recursive weirdness," by which he means the "weirdness that inevitably accompanies all specialization." The only way to avoid that unwelcome "weirdness" is to deliberately affirm the interdisciplinary nature of Jewish philosophy and to allow for porous boundaries. Unlike Sztuden, who welcomes the analytic style of philosophizing, Brody prefers the dialogical- historical-hermeneutical style of Jewish philosophy, notwithstanding "its lack of precision and openness to vagueness." What makes Jewish philosophy Jewish and what makes it philosophical remains a matter of debate even to contributors of this volume. Similarly, debate and conflict characterize the contemporary Jewish communities in Israel and the Diaspora, as the division between them continues to deepen. Brody suggests that Jewish philosophers could play an important role in bridging that divide by addressing the particularly political issues such as "state legitimation and authority, nationalism, settler-colonialism, anti-Semitism, white supremacy, the history of the Jewish left and the Jewish right, and so on, without succumbing to the pressures of communal polemics which require immediate condemnation of one's opponents as a measure of bona fides." The future of Jewish philosophy depends on its willingness to enter into the thicket of the political debate in the Diaspora and in Israel.

The role of Jewish philosophy in framing contemporary political discourse among Jews becomes more problematic as the academic study of Judaism, including the sub-field of Jewish philosophy, consists of scholars who are not Jews by birth. Paul E. Nahme, who is of Lebanese descent and grew up with an Arab identity, albeit an identity that he had to keep private while growing up in Canada, was attracted to Jewish philosophy precisely because he grew up as an "alienated and marginalized kid." He holds that "Jewish thought—like Jewish studies more generally—is failing to cultivate and represent its most vital resources for reinvigorating a truly humanistic education to help a world in dire need of such models." Situating the LCJP in the cultural context of post-Holocaust America, Nahme asserts that what the LCJP represents is the result of a successfully waged campaign of identity politics. This is because Jewish thinkers in post-Holocaust America, for the first time, found the confidence to deem what they did both explicitly "Jewish" and distinctly

"philosophical." No more hiding in the margins of general philosophy; no more generalization of "Jewish" texts or ideas into ethics and moral philosophy. "Jewish" philosophy could begin to cultivate its own canon and delineate its disciplinary boundaries. This confidence in the distinctly "Jewish" face of philosophy resulted from a surge of self-confidence and should be noted for its unprecedented historical achievement.

Nahme is somewhat critical of the self-confidence represented by the Library because, "Jewish philosophy no longer addressed what used to be referred to as the 'Jewish Question,' or the non-Jewish questioning of Judaism." For Nahme, the task of Jewish philosophy is to continue to interrogate "Judaism" and "Jewish identity" so as to keep these presumably known concepts always questionable. The future of Jewish philosophy, he asserts, depends on addressing the "newfound questionability of Judaism." For Nahme, "if the success of the LCJP represents the overcoming of a previous social, political, and national skepticism about Judaism, the future of Jewish philosophy will have to deal with the growing skepticism about Jews and Judaism once again."

Whether the reopening of the "Jewish Question" should be welcomed and embraced as a mark of philosophical richness or rather lamented and feared because it signals the rise of anti-Semitism remains for the reader to decide. What is clear to me as the Editor-in-Chief of the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers is that the future of Judaism, of Jewish public life, and of Jewish education depend on the robustness and vitality of Jewish philosophy, which are demonstrated by the essays in this volume. However defined and practiced, Jewish philosophy is essential to the future of Judaism. <>

Elliot R. Wolfson: Poetic Thinking edited by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Aaron W. Hughes [Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers, Brill, 9789004291041]

Elliot R. Wolfson is Professor of Religious Studies and the Marsha and Jay Glazer Chair of Jewish Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. A scholar of Jewish mysticism and philosophy, he uses the textual sources of Judaism to examine universal philosophical topics such as the function and processes of the imagination, the paradoxes of temporality, and the mystery of poetic language. Working at the intersection of disciplines and refusing to reduce texts to their simple historical contexts, Wolfson puts texts spanning diverse temporal, cultural, and religious periods in creative counterpoint. His sensitivity to language reveals its fragility as it simultaneously points to the uncertainty of meaning. The result is a creative reading of both Judaism and philosophy that informs and is informed by poetic sensibility and philosophical hermeneutics.

CONTENTS

Excerpt: Elliot R. Wolfson: An Intellectual Portrait by Aaron W. Hughes

on wings of moonlight
filled with vision unseen
i remain
Elliot R. Wolfson, "on wings of moonlight"

It is fitting to open this essay with a poem because, as the subtitle of this volume should make clear, poetic locution resides at the heart of Wolfson's thinking. Poetry, for Wolfson, is not simply an aesthetic embellishment, but that which generates and unfolds philosophical meaning, thereby making understanding—and not just communication—possible. There is no "Truth" waiting to be objectively discovered and subsequently articulated behind language, only words that, when

properly attuned to, reveal a dialectical process of covering and uncovering, of veiling and unveiling. To get beyond language would require a language of beyond, something that is tantamount to a cognitive impossibility. Instead Wolfson abides in the splendor and fullness of poetic thinking, therein trying to articulate the linguistic veil that many refuse to notice, yet behind which none can trespass. Philosophical activity, for Wolfson, is not about the clarification of terms, but about actualizing a form of poesis. But, if it is poetic, it is also necessarily lonely. The philosopher—as artist, as critic, as thinker—must negotiate between center and margins, trying to find a place that is often uncertain and certainly not traditional in the religious sense of the term.

Elliot R. Wolfson is one of the most original and creative thinkers operating within the idiom of the term that habitually, if problematically, is referred to as "Jewish philosophy." Although over the years he has contributed greatly to our scholarly understanding of kabbalah, or Jewish mysticism, it would be a mistake to define him solely by the contributions that he has made to this academic subfield. Since his youth, Wolfson has been a student of philosophy and he has frequently used Jewish mysticism as the source with which to engage in philosophical thinking. In his earlier work, for instance, kabbalistic texts have served as the muse for his examination of universal philosophical topics such as the function and processes of the imagination, the paradox of temporality, and the ontology of poetic language. Wolfson self-consciously works at the intersection of disciplines and what drives his creativity is his uncanny ability to put texts spanning diverse temporal, cultural, and religious periods in philosophical counterpoint. He reads, for example, premodern mystical texts in light of nineteenth- and twentieth-century French and German philosophers and vice versa, and the result is a living conversation that spans the ages as it simultaneously connects diverse linguistic expressions and interpretive modalities that Wolfson refuses to reduce to their simple historical contexts. Recent years have seen him work with an even broader array of texts that include religious works produced in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, in addition to his ever-deeper engagement with the texts of Judaism, both philosophical and non-philosophical. Yet, framing his interest in all of these texts is his engagement with philosophical hermeneutics.

Unlike many of the philosophers showcased in the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers, Wolfson is not particularly interested in issues confronting contemporary Jews. Nor is he particularly interested in articulating a set of responses, Jewish or otherwise, to such issues. Rather, we must envisage Wolfson as a philosopher who is interested in topics that, although they may have social relevance if and when translated, are purely the domain of contemporary philosophy (more specifically, phenomenology and hermeneutics). This is important to note because Wolfson's goal is not to find a Jewish "essence" or mis/read texts in ways that contribute to contemporary problem-solving; rather, he shows us how to be close and sensitive readers who must be true to the integrity of the texts that we read. What, then, makes him a "Jewish philosopher"? The answer is simple: he comes at these universal problems through the particular texts of Judaism. "My upholding of the universal," he writes, "is certainly not meant to efface the particular; indeed, the universal I envision is one continuously shaped by the particular ... and thus I resist (à la Hegel) both the universalization of the particular and the particularization of the universal." In so doing, Wolfson affords us yet another paradigm of what it means to engage in the project of philosophy from a Jewish perspective. He is an extremely well-read scholar who uses a broad range of philosophic and religious traditions/ categories to explicate philosophical questions out of the texts of the Jewish tradition. In so doing, he avoids the Christocentric assumptions of many working today within the context of the Continental philosophical tradition (e.g., Jean-Luc Marion).

Imagination forms the bedrock of all Wolfson's work. It functions as his point of departure and place of return, permitting him to read together texts that, on the surface, seem to have nothing to say to one another, and it is the faculty that offers him the creative wherewithal to carry such readings out boldly and fully. While the imagination is an artistic, mystical, and philosophical faculty, Wolfson

articulates its transcendence and phenomenologically reveals its labyrinthine contours that can only be imagined from within its own imaginative structures. The imagination, in his own imaginative reading, becomes "the site wherein beings are brought to openness in the unconcealment of being as the letting-presence of the absence that prevails in the presencing of what is not yet present, the future that anticipates the past recollecting the future." I have quoted this not to scare off the reader new to Wolfson's thought, but to show how language, imagination, and temporality are fundamentally connected and reveal themselves in his work though a prose style that reflects the creativity of language and the complexity of being. To unlock one is to understand the other, and, of course, vice versa. Once again, it is worth underscoring that, for Wolfson, philosophy is a poetic activity; one does not or cannot use language to arrive at a transcendent meaning, because meaning is in the very language, in the play of its words, conjuring up the symbolic imagery that permits us to encounter an imageless reality. Wolfson's prose, then, is intentionally difficult because that which he seeks to point toward, to un-conceal, is ultimately the very fragility of language, the way it haunts and tears the fabric of reality to open up a silent clearing that permits language to be heard in the first place. This is why his prose has a poetic dimension to it. It is also why his poetry and his artwork must be seen as two other sets of pathmarks (Wegmarken in the Heideggerian sense of the term) that chart the way.

Another feature that helps us understand Wolfson's thought and use of language comes by way of Buddhist philosophy, something that he has studied since a young man. In particular, he is drawn to the concept of madhyamaka developed by the Mahayana tradition, and that is often translated as the "middle path," though it should not be confused with the "golden mean" of the Western philosophical tradition. Madhyamaka denies that things possess an inherent nature and that, instead, binary oppositions break down because each needs the other ultimately to define itself. The reciprocity between opposing terms means that we must dialectically overcome traditional dyadic structures and, thus, call into question the bivalent logic of linear reason. Silence or un-language, for example, needs language; truth un-truth; and so on. Framed formulaically: A is A; A is not-A, A is both A and not-A, and A is neither A nor not-A. This can lead Wolfson, for example, to posit "that the exteriority of the interior ... is gauged by the interiority of the exterior" or that "true liberation ... would consist of being liberated from the need to be liberated." By such locutions, Wolfson contends that concepts such as interiority or liberation are only graspable from their opposites, and vice versa, and that the only way to understand this semantically is through a chiasmic style of writing in which two terms or concepts that are related to one other are inverted.

Wolfson has spent a lifetime dedicated to mastering both Jewish texts and philosophical literature out of the conviction that the particularity of the former can serve indexically as a marker of the latter's universality. This is what motivated his work on Jewish mysticism in the first place, and this is why it is so rich, so textured, and, I dare say, misunderstood. He brings to the study of kabbalah a set of questions and concerns that are certainly nontraditional and that, as a result, lead to unexpected results that transcend simple or simplistic ethnico-historical understandings. His indebtedness to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Edmond Jabès, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Edmund Husserl, and, above all, Martin Heidegger are clear—all have become his conversation partners over the years as he has sought to uncover and inhabit the symbolic lifeworld of kabbalah. Although familiar, indebted, and responsible to the canons of both philological and historical scholarship, Wolfson is beholden to neither. This is what gives his work on kabbalah its philosophical depth. The formless form, the body of unembodiment, the intimate connections of anthropomorphism and theomorphism, and his deft attention to gender signification all increasingly became concepts not confined to kabbalistic texts, but philosophy more generally. But it is not an imposition of the latter on the former. Wolfson's work respects the integrity of original texts as he undertakes the task of translating their insights into

registers supplied by other intellectual and religious traditions.

This translation is what makes Wolfson's work so urgent and so exciting as he envisages the philosophical through the lens of Judaism and as he simultaneously envisages Judaism through the lens of the philosophical. This bifocality, in the lineage of Levinas, Derrida, and other Continental philosophers, finds Wolfson searching for a place that is defined by its very uncanniness, that is, its no-place-ness. It is this a-place/no-place, in the language of Derrida, whose "architecture" is "neither Greek nor Judaic," a space prior to the disentanglement of Jew and Greek. This has led Wolfson, both in his writing and in his teaching, to advocate for a Jewish philosophical thinking that belongs neither to the Jew nor to the Greek, a mode of thinking that resists reduction to either one of these demarcations. It is a difficult, if not impossible task: to arrive at a place that is no-place and, perhaps, we should chart its course by the journey in and through language more than the actual telos.

Wolfson's lasting contribution must be to this type of philosophical thinking. Not simply to Jewish studies, not simply to the study of Jewish mysticism, but to showing how the texts of one religious tradition, to wit, Judaism, illumine more universal philosophical themes. These themes have included, in recent years, secrecy, messianism, apophasis, transcendence, and immanence. That he engages with these universal themes through the particulars of Judaism should not mean, as so many want it to, that his thinking is of relevance solely to Jewish studies. This is the lot of many in this field of Jewish studies—how to move to that universal that wants to relegate us to the confines of the particular, and how to get beyond the particular that is, perhaps necessarily, afraid of the mesmerizing lights of the universal's attraction.

Wolfson's work on Jewish mysticism, then, cannot be separated from his engagement with philosophy. As will become clear in the interview near the end of this volume, he also strongly resists the urge to have his work pigeonholed within an ethnico-religious frame of reference. Indeed, his life work has been an attempt to dismantle the types of ontological essentialisms that plague so much of contemporaneous academic discussions. Resisting the label "Jewish philosopher" or "Jewish scholar," Wolfson sees himself as illumining larger philosophical problems using the particular language of Judaism as he simultaneously problematizes traditional Jewish concepts using the universal categories of philosophy. It is a delicate balance, to be sure, and he manages it with considerable aplomb that is undoubtedly made easier on account of his poetic sensitivity to language and the fragility of meaning that travels in its wake. Poet, painter, scholar—Wolfson uses all of these idioms, intertwinedly, to get at, to point the way toward, to reveal, that which cannot be spoken or that which dares not reveal its name.

Language and being for Wolfson open us onto a vista of ontological poetry in whose paths we make sense of ourselves, both individually and collectively. Poetic language, framed somewhat different, is what discloses ontology just as it is ontology that makes poetry possible. Maneuvering between poetry as thinking and thinking as poetry, we confront an amorphous space, the space in-between, the semantic locus upon which the chiasmus can but point fleetingly. It is this in-between-ness that becomes the foundation, source, and goal of Wolfson's thinking. Following the later Heidegger, about whom I shall discuss in greater detail below, Wolfson shows us the pathmarks that illumine our way ahead as it obfuscates our past and present, that demarcate our temporal coordinates as they betray our hermeneutic reversibility. It is to return to the imaginative faculty—as Wolfson so frequently does in his scholarly work, in his poetry, and in his painting—the place that reveals the ontological horizon, the locus where being is both projected and understood. Philosophy, poetry, and art become three variations on the same theme that fugue-like visit and revisit one another constantly. Wolfson, thus, uses language to limn the very limits of language.

If, in the words of Levinas, nomadism is intrinsic to poetic being in the world, Elliot Wolfson is a true nomad, someone who has chosen to eschew the sedentary nature of our traditional intellectual structures in the quest for meaning that unveils the

place of transcendence as it simultaneously veils the transcendence of place. But it is a locus of alienation from Judaism because it steadfastly refuses to buy into or endorse the traditional narratives, predicated as they are upon outmoded concepts such as chosenness, election, or messianic fulfillment. In our palaces of amnesia, built out of stainless steel and colored in a drab grey, Wolfson asks us to be bold and risk the uncertainty, to embrace the ambiguity, that true thinking demands. This is a thinking that hears the muted call of Jewgreek and Greekjew, before their mutual unraveling. Wolfson encourages us to dismantle, yet not deconstruct (and I think there is a crucial difference between the two) these inflexible structures, the ephemeral abodes of human habitation. At a time when the humanities risk hiding behind the sociopolitical tribalism of identity politics or the shallowness of a certain kind of historical positivism, Wolfson—qua nomadic thinker—calls for iconoclasm, and the search for those ciphers that grant us access to the imaginal world, and he also shows us how the existence of that imaginal world lets us recognize phenomena as ciphers in the first place.

Wolfson is a scholar of Judaism, but only if we force ourselves to understand how the two words in that phrase—"scholar" and "Judaism"—pirouette in his thinking. Judaism serves, for him, as it should and as it must, as an indexical marker of and for the scholar's necessary if impossible desire for universality. Framed somewhat differently, for Wolfson the commensurability of the universal, which is after all philosophy's quest, only makes sense in light of Judaism's incommensurability and, of course, vice versa. The particular and the universal undermine one another in their mutual indeterminacy even when they are introduced to one another—as they have been from Halevi to Rosenzweig and beyond—wearing mutually overdetermined masks. This is what drives Wolfson's subtle readings of texts that, at first blush, ought to have nothing to say to one another. As nomadic thinker, Wolfson, artfully avoids the presumed existence of metaphysical absolutes or ontological essences, those communal abodes that invite us to dwell in comfort and that enable us to hear the mesmerizing cadences of sociability that often betray nothing more than a political or ideological patois.

The arc of Wolfson's thinking, the time-swerve that guides his hermeneutic discernment, is the avoidance of historical positivism that confines the past to its immediate and contemporaneous contexts. His attunement to philology combined with his unwillingness to be shackled by a simplistic chronological thinking has meant that Wolfson has forged a different foundation for himself and for those of us who have struggled with these issues, and no doubt others who will struggle with them in the future.

The Essays

The first essay, "Occultation of the Feminine and the Body of Secrecy in Medieval Kabbalah," finds Wolfson engaging a topic that, as we have seen above, has intrigued him throughout his career, namely, the nature of secrecy. Wolfson argues that although the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of the text are distinguishable from one another, according to the medieval kabbalists, each is paradoxically expressed by and through the other. The exoteric sense of the Torah, in other words, sustains its esoteric sense by masking it in the guise of what it is not. "In the final analysis," writes Wolfson, "the hermeneutical position adopted in Zohar is such that there can be no unveiling of naked truth, for truth that is stark naked—divested of all appearance—is mere simulation. If the secret is the truth that is completely disrobed, then the secret is nothing to see." This link between concealment and disclosure leads Wolfson to posit a connection between esotericism and eroticism, which in zoharic literature is connected to the phallic aspect of the divine. The uncovering of secrecy is thus linked, for Wolfson, to a phallocentric eroticism. Indeed, it is the subsequent occultation of the feminine that becomes the symbol par excellence of zoharic secrecy, something that must be uncovered through the male gaze.

The second essay, "Iconicity of the Text: Reification of the Torah and the Idolatrous Impulse of Zoharic Kabbalah," shows Wolfson using kabbalistic texts to think philosophically by exploring the phenomenological texture and hermeneutical presuppositions of the kabbalah. The essay pivots

around another two central themes that reappear in much of his writings: the imagination and the idolatrous impulse that resides at the heart of monotheism. The thrust of this essay is the kabbalistic desire to reify the Torah in the imaginative faculty as the incarnate form of the divine. Phenomenologically, this is important because it means that the image is that of which has no image. For Wolfson, "the enduring quest to attain a vision of the image of that which has no image may be termed the impulse for idolatry. This impulse has been fed by the paradox that the God seen is the invisible God."

The third essay, "Iconic Visualization and the Imaginal Body of God: The Role of Intention in the Rabbinic Conception of Prayer," challenges the assumption that Judaism has rejected incarnationism. If we opt not to buy into this assumption, however, we are presented with acknowledging "the common ground and the uniqueness of this doctrine in the two religious cultures." For Wolfson, as for Jacob Neusner, incarnation is related to the topic of anthropomorphism; unlike Neusner who takes incarnation to be metaphorical, however, Wolfson argues that the concept necessarily means God can be embodied. As a result he uses "the word `incarnation' to refer to the ontic presencing of God in a theophanic image."

To make his argument, he examines the notion of kawwanah (intention) in rabbinic theology as it relates to prayer, which becomes one of the primary ways to access the incarnated body of the divine. Through the proper intention in prayer, Wolfson claims that the devotee's heart "becomes the throne upon which God dwells at the same time that God is transformed into the throne upon which the devotee dwells." Wolfson argues that philologically kawwanah is derived from the root kwn, which implies a turning, as in a facing representing a form of mental concentration. This concentration entails, in some rabbinic sources, "conjuring a mental image of God." The locus of such imagining is the imaginative faculty. This means that the devotee is required to represent the divine presence by imaging God in human form, something that becomes, in prayer, connected to the visualization of the holy, celestial Temple.

The fourth and final essay, "Not Yet Now: Speaking of the End and the End of Speaking," which is previously unpublished, clearly reveals many of the philosophical issues that I have raised above. It is a richly textured and deeply poetic-philosophical meditation on "the end," the end of language and of temporality; the end, in other words, that is death, which must necessarily be connected to its opposite, birth and the beginning that it engenders. The finality of death, for Wolfson, is not a matter of extinction but hope—hope for, what Levinas calls, the "promise of transcendence," and what Wolfson here calls desire for "the relentless becoming of the future that signals the end that never ends in virtue of its being the consummate end " Wolfson envisages death as "not the deficiency of no more but the surplus of not yet," by which he means that the moment of death functions as the "mirror-image" of the beginning, "and thus we can say of it that its point of departure is contained in its point of arrival, and much like the beginning, the end is a withdrawal in the very heart of the present." But if the moment of birth is the creation of self, the moment of death is the creation of another, which alludes to the ethical implications of his thought.

This means that, for Wolfson, in conversation with the likes of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, we know that we die, but we never experience our death. Death becomes "quintessentially the nonevent of the terminus delimited as the limit always to be delimited," writes Wolfson, " the limit beyond which there is no limit, and hence the limit of what cannot be delimited, the threshold that may be crossed only by not-crossing." Wolfson then brings this discussion into conversation with some of the key terms of Judaism, interpreted through the lens of Rosenzweig, for whom redemption is in the future but in such a manner that it retrieves the past and rupture the present, "thereby bending the timeline such that not-yet is already there insofar as already-there is not-yet." It is also important to note that Wolfson does not slavishly follow Rosenzweig here, but uses the thought of Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and Ernst Bloch to read against hilt Redemption, framed somewhat differently, is not the end, but that which is always possible, always in the process of coming-to-be.

Wolfson the threads in traditional Jewish sources to reinforce his philosophical point: "The Messiah is the one that comes by not-coming, the one that is present. by being absent. Waiting for the end is the adjournment of time that occasions the fostering of time."

Taken together, these four essays clearly show the breadth and scope of Wolfson's poetic thinking.
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Jonathan Sacks: Universalizing Particularity by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, Aaron W Hughes [Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers, Brill, 9789004249806]

This volume features the thought and writings of Jonathan Sacks, one of today's leading Jewish public thinkers. It brings together an intellectual portrait, four of his most original and influential philosophical essays, and an interview with him. This volume showcases the work of Sacks, a philosopher who seeks to confront and offer solutions to the numerous problems besetting Judaism and its confrontation with modernity. In addition, the reader will also encounter an important social philosopher and proponent of interfaith dialogue, who articulates how it is possible to cultivate a culture of civility based on the twin notions of the dignity of difference and the ethic of responsibility. Jonathan Sacks has been Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth from September 1991 to September 2013 and a member of the House of Lords since 2009.

CONTENTS

Excerpt: Jonathan Sacks: An Intellectual Portrait by Aaron W. Hughes

Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks represents one of the most important voices in current discussions that concern the plight of Judaism—and, indeed, of religion more generally—in the modern world. While his vision emerges out of the sources of Judaism, Sacks's inclusive and highly accessible approach ensures that his writings reach a large audience within the general reading public. Although his earliest work dealt specifically with the problems besetting Judaism and its confrontation with modernity beginning in the nineteenth century, his more recent writings examine the importance of cultivating a culture of civility based on the twin notions of the dignity of difference and the ethic of responsibility. Responding to all of these issues, Sacks writes, simultaneously, as a rabbi, a social philosopher, a proponent of interfaith dialogue, and a public intellectual. In so doing, his vision—informed as it is by the concerns of modern Orthodoxy—is paradoxically one of the most universalizing voices within contemporary Judaism.

Sacks possesses a rare ability to hold in delicate balance the universal demands of the modern, multicultural world with the particularism associated with Judaism. It is certainly no coincidence that Maimonides, the twelfth-century philosopher and halakhist, and Samson Raphael Hirsch, the nineteenth century "founder" of modern Orthodoxy, both figure highly in his writings. Equally at home in the world of philosophy and the Jewish tradition, thinkers as diverse as Plato, Judah Halevi, Friedrich Nietzsche, Menachem Schneerson, and Alasdair MacIntyre inhabit his intellectual world. Such diverse figures effectively become his conversation partners as he confronts both the promises and fractures inherent to philosophy. While drawn to the rationalism of philosophy, Sacks—having grown up in post–World War II Britain—is also highly critical that its universalism threatens the very existence of the particular and the diversity that informs it. If universalism represents one such threat to potential coexistence, its handmaiden is the cult of the individual, wherein the rights of the latter

trumps those of the collective. In response to such threats, he argues that only an ethic that demands mutual responsibility that is connected to the idea of giving and belonging can confront that which threatens contemporary society. Although critical of secularism, Sacks is equally critical of religious extremism or radicalism, which represents no less of a roadblock to human diversity.

What role does Judaism play in all of this? An examination of Sacks's diverse oeuvre quickly reveals that he conceives of Judaism as a response, both intellectually and religiously, to the universalizing tendencies inherent to the West. This universalism incorrectly assumes that everyone, all of humanity, is essentially the same. Judaism, perhaps more than any other tradition, has paid the price for this universalism over the centuries because it has consistently been perceived to undermine the West's values. The result, as should be evident to even the most passive observer, is that Jews and Judaism have been made to conform, often violently, to the parameters that the West sets for itself in the name of universalism. As a Jew and as someone critical of the unchecked philosophical enterprise, Sacks resists such view. Although he will subsequently argue that, even though there may exist only one truth for all of humanity, the only way to access it is through the particularity of one's own tradition. Whereas God exists for all of humanity, Sacks is fond of saying, only Judaism exists for Jews. Or, as he himself eloquently puts it, "The God of the Israelites is the God of all mankind, but the demands made of the Israelites are not asked of all mankind."

Far from offering an insular philosophy of the tradition, Sacks conceives of Judaism as the intersection of the universal and the particular. Although he speaks to Judaism in all of its particularity, he is still able to articulate how this tradition is nevertheless able to speak to humanity in all of its universality. His is a Judaism that does not exist alone, but becomes a partner with God and other religions in the never-ending struggle for human dignity and social justice.

Biography

Jonathan Sacks was born on March 8, 1948, to a traditional Orthodox family in London, England. Educated at Saint Mary's Primary School and Christ's College School in London, he then went to Cambridge where, at Gonville and Caius College, he read Philosophy. From a young age, then, Sacks has been firmly embedded in the customs and habits of post-WWII England. His education did not take place in isolation, solely the product

of Jewish day schools and yeshivot, but occurred in a largely public and secular environment. as a young Jew growing up in the aftermath of the Holocaust, he was able to become, simultaneously, a religious Jew and a citizen of a multiethnic society.

In a recent autobiographical essay, "Finding God" (reprinted as the first chapter below), Sacks writes eloquently of the demands this balance caused him, and the repercussion on his intellectual journey. Drawn to the universalism of philosophy on the one hand, he was also aware of the particularity of his own situatedness as a Jew. To reconcile philosophy and Judaism in the 1960s, the period associated with the rise of the analytical tradition, was no easy matter. at the time of his undergraduate education, he writes, "the words 'religion' and 'philosophy' went together like cricket and thunderstorms. You often found them together but the latter generally put an end to the former. Philosophers were atheists, or at least agnostics."

Rather than choose one—philosophy or Judaism—over the other, Sacks looked to the medieval Jewish philosophical tradition for inspiration. Therein he found numerous individuals, at the head of which stood the towering figure of Maimonides, who refused to acknowledge such a bifurcation. One could, using the paradigm set up by Maimonides and other medieval Jewish rationalists, ostensibly reconcile these otherwise diverse worldviews. Thus, the medieval Jewish philosophical tradition demonstrated to Sacks that the relationship between philosophy and religion need not be antagonistic to one another, so long as one understood the place, role, and purview of each.

At Cambridge, Sacks studied with Bernard Williams (1929–2003), often described as among the most important British moral philosophers in the twentieth century. Sacks credits Williams, a committed atheist, with forcing him to articulate the

rationality of his religious belief. Sacks says that Williams, although an atheist, was not critical of his religious beliefs, a healthy respect that he finds lacking in contemporary atheists, such as Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens. If a religious belief cannot be stated coherently, Sacks informs us—under the influence of Williams— then there is no reason that we should believe in it. Sacks also credits Williams with getting him to clarify the nature of the relationship between God and history. If God is eternal and beyond history, how can he effectively be involved in it? Sacks answers this question by disentangling the God of Israel from the God of philosophy. He writes that

> what Williams saw as a contradiction within faith, I recognized as a contradiction between the Jewish and Greek conceptions of God. The changeless, unmoved mover was the God of Plato and Aristotle. The God of history was the God of Abraham.

This is a distinction that goes back at least to the work of the medieval Judah halevi. It is a distinction, moreover, that defines the raison d'être of the medieval Jewish philosophical tradition: how to reconcile the demands of the natural world with that of revelation. Whereas many are content to keep these two spheres apart, Sacks—as heir to the medieval Jewish philosophical world—seeks to show how they are ultimately compatible with another. This is especially the case in his recent writings on the compatibility of religion and science. Even though philosophy aims at universality—that its propositions and conclusions are true in all situations—meaning is ultimately expressed in particularity. Judaism, representing the particular par excellence, now becomes an important tradition to both reflect upon and articulate universal concerns. This focus on tradition and the particular, as we shall see shortly, would resonate with the thought of others, most notably Alasdair MacIntyre, who would, in turn, become an important influence on Sacks's work.

Around this time, the mid-1960s, Commentary magazine published a series of responses to the nature of Jewish belief and contemporary concerns by leading rabbis. Wrestling with many of the ideas that he had, even if inchoately, Sacks decided to travel to the United States and Canada to meet with as many of these individuals as he possible could. Two encounters seem to have left an indelible mark on the young Sacks— those with Joseph Soloveitchik, Rosh Yeshivah of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary at Yeshiva University in New York, and Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Sacks describes how it was Soloveitchik who helped him to appreciate how law (halakha) was the true and only essence of Judaism and that the problem with previous Jewish philosophy was that it had conformed too closely with Western philosophy with the result that it had failed to express what was unique about Judaism. of the encounter, Sacks writes, "for two hours he spoke with an intellectual passion and depth far beyond anything I had experienced at cambridge." Furthermore, Sacks credits Schneerson with inculcating in him a responsibility for the fate of the Jewish people and of Judaism in the modern world. How can we succeed as individual Jews in our professions, so the gist of the conversation went, if the collective state of the Jewish people is in disarray? Of the two encounters, Sacks writes that they were "life-changing": "Rabbi Soloveitchik had challenged me to think. Rabbi Schneerson had challenged me to lead."

Although he would eventually complete a PhD at the University of London in 1981, the force of these two encounters led him far beyond the academy. As a result, Sacks decided to devote his life to the serious study of Jewish sources and to ensuring the future continuity of Jewish engagement with the tradition. In 1976 he received rabbinic ordination (smicha) at both Yeshivat Etz Hayyim, an Orthodox yeshiva in the Golders Green neighborhood of London, and at Jews' College, also in London. In 1978 he was appointed rabbi of Golders Green Synagogue, London, a position he held until 1983 whereupon he became rabbi of the Marble Arch Synagogue, a leading modern Orthodox congregation in London. In addition to his rabbinical duties, Sacks also served as Principal of Jews' College, now known as the London School of Jewish Studies, where he taught Talmud, Jewish Law, and Bible Commentary. He had previously served as Lecturer in Jewish Thought and, in 1982,

was appointed as the initial holder of the Chief Rabbi Lord Jakobovits's Chair in Modern Jewish Thought…

In September 1991 Jonathan Sacks succeeded Immanuel Jakobovits as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth. This prestigious position grants him spiritual authority over all British and Commonwealth Orthodox synagogues. Since his appointment, Sacks has received numerous visiting professorships (e.g., at King's College London, Oxford, Hebrew University of Jerusalem), in addition to fifteen honorary doctorates (e.g., Yeshiva University in New York, University of Glasgow, Bar Ilan University). In 2005, Sacks was knighted in the Queen's Birthday Honors "for services to the Community and to Inter-faith Relations." In July 2009, he was recommended for a life peerage with a seat in the House of Lords by the House of Lords Appointment Commission.

To this day, Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks remains a highly influential voice not only within and for British Jewry, but also an important social theorist and public intellectual. He is read by people of all faiths; indeed, many non-Jews have responded to his work. Eight of his books, for example, have been serialized or excerpted in the British press. In addition, he engages the general public through his writings in The Times and his broadcasts on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). he has also advised three British Prime Ministers (John Major, Tony Blair, and Gordon Brown) on matters pertaining to religion and social responsibility. Finally, Sacks's work has been the subject of a recent collection wherein major scholars (including Menachem Kellner and Charles Taylor) engage and comment upon it. This all attests to Sacks's belief that when Jews enter the larger human conversation they make a difference not just to Jews but to the very conversation.

The Chapters

The following four chapters show these many diverse and overlapping trajectories at work in Sacks's writings. The first chapter, "Finding God," which originally appeared in The Great Partnership, provides a compelling autobiographical account of how Sacks went from being a young student majoring in Philosophy to the Chief Rabbi of Britain and the Commonwealth. Of particular relevance is Sacks's relationship to his doctoral advisor, the intellectually formidable Bernard Williams, a committed atheist, who first encouraged Sacks to think coherently through his positions. It goes on to relate how it was two encounters in particular—the one with the lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, and the other with the doyen of modern Orthodoxy, Joseph Soloveitchik—that altered the course of his life. It was these encounters that led Sacks to give up a solely academic career in favor of a rabbinic life devoted to the spiritual and intellectual care of Jews.

These autobiographical details all take place against the larger rubric of a book that, as we have seen, reflects on the integrative relationship between religion and science. Sacks provides this account of his encounters with the atheist Bernard Williams and the religiously devout Schneerson and Soloveitchik to demonstrate that the stark choice that the new atheists offer us—science or religion—need not be the only one. On the contrary, religion offers us that which science cannot: meaning. Sacks's faith is not a naïve faith, one in which we pray for our personal salvation or invoke formulae to provide us with luck or miracles on a small scale. Religion, for Sacks, is about love, trust, family, community, giving, study, atonement, and prayer. Rather than envisage these as counterproductive to the scientific enterprise, Sacks argues that they function as its partner as we make sense of our world.

Another important feature that emerges from this chapter, one that we have seen time and again above, is Sacks's inclusivism. Judaism holds no stranglehold on religious truth, for Sacks, but takes its place along the other great religious traditions. Since all humans are created in the image of God, Sacks believes that we must see the beauty and wisdom in faiths that are not our own. For only when we acknowledge the diversity of the world's religious traditions can we, as Jews, take our place alongside others in the quest to change the world for the better.

The second chapter, "The Dignity of Difference: Exorcizing Plato's Ghost," originally appeared in The Dignity of Difference. The latter deals, as we have seen, with the importance of diversity in the world. We see and appreciate diversity in the world's flora and fauna, so Sacks argues why should we not appreciate it in people and their religious beliefs? Rather than envisage a uniform culture that some argue would solve all our problems because it would get rid of tribalism and put an end to difference, Sacks argues that such a view actually succeeds in exacerbating tension because it assumes—incorrectly and against the evidence supplied by the historical record—that all are essentially the same. Our dignity, rather, is rooted in the notion that none of us is exactly like any other.

The concept of universalism, the "Plato's Ghost" of this chapter's title, holds that there is but one truth about the essentials of the human condition and that it holds for all peoples at all times. This is not just a philosophical proposition—I am right, you are wrong—but a worldview that has been responsible for some of the greatest crimes of history (e.g., the Inquisition, the Holocaust). The desire for uniformity, however, is not confined to philosophy. Recent years have seen the rise of totalitarianism, consumerism, imperialism, and fundamentalism—all of which are just as pernicious to human existence because they demand similar uniformity. Juxtaposed against Plato and his modern epigones, Sacks turns to the Bible, a work that—in the aftermath of the Tower of Babel—celebrates the dignity of difference.

The ramifications of Sacks's assessment are significant. It is what enables Jews to be particular and universal, the same and different as all others. The monotheism that emerges from the Bible teaches that, while there is one God, there is no single gateway to His presence. The unity of God, on the contrary, emerges from the diversity of creation.

The third chapter, "An Agenda of Future Jewish Thought," was originally published in his Tradition in an Untraditional Age. In the Introduction to the book, Sacks remarks, "In theory, Jewish philosophy should have become a central discipline of Jewish life. But at this juncture, the terms that comprise it have lost their lucidity. For what is Judaism in the modern age? And what is philosophy? And what is the conceivable relationship between them?" As we have seen already above, Sacks laments that the central terms of Judaism—the terms with which Jewish philosophy has always dealt—no longer hold. Reform Jews, secular Zionists, and Orthodox can no longer agree on their meaning. The goal of a renewed Jewish philosophy must be to wrestle with these terms, with contemporary culture, with the Diaspora, with the Jewish State, and with the Jewish people as a whole if it is be successful.

In this chapter in particular, Sacks examines the conflict between Jewish tradition and secular modernity. Surveying the extreme options from assimilation to and withdrawal from the world, Sacks argues for an engagement with the world that, simultaneously, does not take away from the intricacies of Jewish life. Rather than claim that there is one size that fits all, he argues that the task for Jewish thought is to articulate which types of Jewish life can function for models of emulation. Within this context, Sacks defines the task for Orthodoxy not to retreat within the walls of its own constituency, but to provide religious leadership without relinquishing the ideal standard of halakha, an ideal to which all Jews ought to aspire.

Once again, we see the universalist streak in his discussion of the particular. Although Judaism, writes Sacks—and here he invokes the thought of Soloveitchik and Hirsch—may well be the religion of a particular people, the Jews, it carries a much larger responsibility. The future of Judaism is not just about survival, but about the cognizance of a people whose fidelity has the potential to lead the entire world to God. The goal of the Jewish people, framed in this manner, is to serve as an inspiration and model to the rest of humanity. Just as the particular needs the universal to remove its blinders, so, too, does the universal need the particular to prevent it from its dogmatist dangers.

The fourth chapter, "Future Tense: The Voice of Hope in the Conversation of Humankind," originally appeared in his Future Tense. In this chapter, Sacks tells us what he finds special about Judaism. For this tradition, according to him, is uniquely able to exist

in the future tense. By the latter he means that Judaism is, as he calls it, "supremely the religion of the not-yet." God, in other words, is not confined simply to the realm of science or deducible from the past. Rather, on Sacks's understanding, Judaism—like God himself—is open-ended. The result is that Jews, and those who learn from them, live with the possibility of redemption. Another way of saying this is that God awaits us in the unknown and unknowable future. The genius of Judaism, for Sacks, is that God is now found in time, in history, as opposed to nature. Sacks proceeds to numerate several features that he believes to be distinctive to Judaism's ability to be open to the future. These include an acknowledgment of the future (seen, for example, in the very name that God gives to Moses: "I will be what I will be"), a sense of time (something that does not endlessly repeat itself), the introduction of messianism, and a sense of narrative (that is not about closure).

Once again, however, Sacks is quick to show that the genius of Judaism is not meant for Jews alone. On the contrary, Judaism functions as a blueprint for repairing an imperfect world, and this is something that has the potential to resonate with all peoples of the globe, regardless of their faith. The faith of Judaism—with its ability to endow every human with dignity as being created in the image of God, its endowment of freedom and human responsibility, and its insistence on the sanctity of life—functions as a model for one and all.

In the conclusion of this chapter, Sacks sums up his life's work. It is a passage worth quoting in its entirety:

> I have argued for a Judaism that has the courage to engage with the world and its challenges. Faith begets confidence, which creates courage. That is how Jews lived in the past and should live in the future. For they are the people of the journey to a distant destination, begun by Abraham, continued by a hundred generations of ancestors, and it still beckons. Judaism is a faith in the future tense. Jews were and are still called on to be the voice of hope in the conversation of humankind. <>

Michael Fishbane: Jewish Hermeneutical Theology edited by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Aaron W Hughes [Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers, Brill, 9789004285439]

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CONTENTS

Excerpt: Michael Fishbane: An Intellectual Portrait by Sam Berrin Shonkoff

Michael Fishbane is one of the most prodigious and dynamic forces alive in Jewish scholarship. His articles, books, seminars, and lectures have invigorated the study of Judaism for nearly fifty years now, and his work today is as inspired and energized as ever. To consider his scholarly contributions, one must broaden one's gaze to behold the entire expanse of Jewish history, for

Fishbane has composed seminal works in the areas of Hebrew Bible (and history of the ancient Near East more generally), Midrash, medieval Jewish philosophy and mysticism, Hasidism, modern Jewish philosophy, and Hebrew poetry. Furthermore, in recent years Fishbane has turned many heads and hearts with his own constructive theological writings. It is ultimately this latter material that sealed Fishbane's place in this collection, the Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers. However, the historical and constructive phases of his career constitute an integrated whole— not only because there are thematic and theological correlations between them, but because they together reflect a lifetime of strivings for truth and meaning that interrogate the very binary of scholarship and spirituality.

The unifying theme throughout Fishbane's corpus of writings is Jewish hermeneutics. He has attuned his readers and students to the fact that Jewish thought throughout history has been exegetical through and through. In his groundbreaking work Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel he demonstrated that this is no less true in the Hebrew Bible itself than in the postbiblical commentary traditions.1 Jewish individuals and communities have characteristically expressed Jewish wisdom vis-à-vis the texts and con-texts of Jewish tradition and history. A person is a palimpsest, always already bearing inscriptions of "texts" (literally and figuratively) from the past in her being, even while exercising faculties of reflection and imagination. [The notion that human consciousness is always already shaped by "texts" of the past is, of course, a foundational insight of philosophical hermeneutics. This pertains to Heidegger's conception of the "hermeneutic circle," where every hermeneutical act is conducted within one's prior hermeneutical situatedness. Heidegger's student Gadamer later reformulated this principle according to his notion of prejudice (Vorurteil), whereby all understanding involves prejudgments rooted in prior influences, as well as his concept of "historically effected consciousness" (wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein), which further affirms that the "texts" of the past delineate the horizons of all consciousness. Fishbane himself points to contemporary conceptions of "intertextuality," citing philosophers such as Julia Kristeva and Jonathan Culler. According to Fishbane's own summation of this concept, "one may say that we are constituted—even appropriated—by the texts we read. They are our interior Tower of Babel, filling us with the many voices of the many texts that make us who we are." See Fishbane, Garments of Torah, 126–27. However, it would be reductionist to conclude that Fishbane merely borrows such notions of hermeneutical situatedness from the discourse of philosophical hermeneutics and then applies it to Jewish thought. Indeed, as we shall see, much of Fishbane's scholarship highlights the extent to which Jewish exegetes themselves throughout the centuries have regarded the textual matrix of Jewish tradition as inseparable from all cognition and creativity, perception and existence. My references to other philosophers here and elsewhere in this introduction are not intended so much to address questions of "influence"—such inquiries are notoriously tricky, and they rarely illuminate the heart of a person's work—but rather to situate Fishbane's thought in a broader intellectual context.] The natural self and the cultural self bleed together, and Jewish theology thus springs from what Fishbane calls the "exegetical imagination"—a confluence of primary sources and primordial intuitions, raw experience and the language of tradition. It is both canonically rooted and richly creative. Even the most wildly imaginative myths in Judaism—those of sea monsters and heavenly battles, godly weeping and divine eros—invariably incorporate canonical citations into their literary structures, reworking the old as they express the new. In Saussure's terminology, the speech-acts or parole of Jewish thought arise out of the lingual matrix or langue of Jewish sources. And all of this is no more and no less than Jewish theology, which is "not propositional but concrete through and through." The exegetical imagination extends as well beyond verbal expressions into the very concreteness of life. Fishbane embraces Thomas Mann's concept of "zitathaftes Leben" (textualized life or citational existence) to refer to ways in which thought, behavior, and life-perceptions all arise in relation to textual sources. Jewish lives shape Jewish texts, and Jewish texts shape Jewish lives. While this reflects a dimension of all cultures to varying degrees, Fishbane suggests that it is especially salient in the Jewish case. "Among the historical religions, none so much prizes 'zitathaftes Leben' as does Judaism," he writes. And inasmuch as Jewish theology is fundamentally exegetical, for Fishbane, even the most embodied enactments of Jewish textuality are indeed constitutive of Jewish "thought."

When Fishbane published his Sacred Attunement in 2008, this represented a pronounced turn from historical theology to constructive theology. However, that work incorporated many themes from Fishbane's scholarly corpus. In that book, as well as in subsequent essays such as those in this volume, Fishbane attempts to articulate a contemporary Jewish theology that is both concrete and hermeneutical to the core, and thus consonant with the exegetical spirituality he observes in the history of Jewish thought. If one defines the field of "Jewish philosophy" narrowly to include only rationalist attempts to prove metaphysical doctrines or to read Scripture allegorically through the prism of philosophical principles, then Fishbane would not belong. However, such a conclusion would be misguided. To be sure, Fishbane does appreciate the limits of philosophical discourse, and he suggests in his constructive work that heady speculations and abstractions can actually distract us from the concreteness of dialogical life where human-divine encounter takes place. However, one must consider three points: First of all, meditations on the limits of philosophy—and decisions to reorient one's ways of thinking and living accordingly—are philosophically engaged processes. Second, Fishbane does in fact situate his thinking in relation to a particular school of thought, namely, philosophical hermeneutics. Regarding his convictions that, say, thinking is mediated by "traditional" forms of language and culture, intertextuality is a fundamental feature of subjectivity, and articulations of truth are always contextual—if one dismisses such views as anti-philosophical, then one must also dismiss the likes of Gadamer, Ricoeur, and Kristeva as anti-philosophical. Third, Fishbane affirms that philosophical theologians such as Philo, Saadia, and Maimonides are no less hermeneutical theologians than the rabbis of Midrash or the mystics of Kabbalah were. All these disparate figures committed themselves to the interpretation of Jewish sources according to particular paradigms and experiences that they deemed to be true, and Fishbane does no less in his own historical and constructive work—and, moreover, he demonstrates how one can appreciate this very hermeneutical process, in all its myriad forms, in philosophical terms.

Fishbane's historical and constructive works are the offspring of dynamic unions between philological prowess and psychological sophistication. His current theological meditations reveal how academic scholars of religion may be in unique positions after all to make crucial contributions to constructive religious thought. He is not only intimately familiar with the texts of Jewish tradition, but he is also acutely aware of contemporary obstacles to the very discourse of theology, from both the dark disillusionments of history and the undeniable deconstructions of philosophy. As we shall see, Fishbane's hermeneutical theology takes all this into account. It is dynamic enough to reflect the spectrum of exegetical diversity and ritual life in the history of Judaism, and it is humble enough to stand firm amidst the anxieties and uncertainties of our century.

Biography and Career

Michael Fishbane was born in Brookline, Massachusetts, in 1943. He grew up in a traditional Jewish household in the way that Conservative Judaism was traditional in the 1950s. His maternal grandparents had a significant influence on Fishbane's early Jewish consciousness. Every day during his high school years he went to his grandfather's house and learned Rashi's commentaries on the Torah—and he was not allowed to eat dinner until he could recite the teachings from memory. Aside from traditional Torah commentaries, Louis Maltzman would speak to his grandson about Jewish persecution in Russia, his escape to America near the turn of the century, and what it meant to rebuild Jewish life. In Fishbane's family, the coordinates of Judaism lay largely in relation to images of war and pogroms, survival and preservation. His father Philip was wounded on D-Day at Normandy and only rescued from the beach days later—young Michael met him for the
first time upon his homecoming—and the traumas of those war years were alluded to repeatedly, with and without words. And no one spoke directly about the Holocaust.

Fishbane's religious identity was rooted concretely in Jewish practices and personalities, yet the strength of his personal attraction to Jewish wisdom and spirituality (without yet having such language) was somewhat mysterious, as visceral attractions tend to be. He recalls being reflective about his Jewishness already in elementary school and laying tefillin every morning in his preteen years. He imagined being a rabbi when he grew up, yet when he interviewed local rabbis for a school project in eighth grade, he found himself utterly uninspired. Only a few of these men mentioned intellectual or spiritual reasons for entering the

rabbinate. In Fishbane's memory, there was a sort of spiritual muteness in that era of American Judaism. There was not yet a developed language for shedding light on the shadows of human interiority or spiritual yearnings. Mainstream American Judaism in the 1950s, as Fishbane experienced it, was whitewashed and sterilized. After the intellectual intoxications of Enlightenment, in the wake of fights for Jewish emancipation and social integration, and following generations of apologetic contortions to appear respectable before Christian gazes, many European and American Jews had suppressed elements of Judaism that smelled irrational, mystical, or otherwise shameful—and it required great suppression to squeeze the vivacity of Jewish thought into cookiecutter essences of ethical monotheism.

In Fishbane's retrospective reflections, he recalls moments when he caught glimpses—however vaguely—of the vital energies pulsing beneath the manicured surfaces of the American Jewish landscape. As a freshman in high school, he sat mesmerized in the front row of an Abraham Joshua Heschel lecture in old Jewish Mattapan. The precise details of the complex lecture—it was on space and time in Judaism, and a philosopher named Kant—were less memorable to the adolescent than the image of Heschel working his way through a mountain of note cards. As Heschel finished with each card, he transferred them one by one to a stack on the other side of the podium, so the second pile gradually grew to the height of the first. Jewish temporality unfurled itself in this speech-act as Heschel waxed philosophical on his theme. Young Fishbane sensed that there was something powerful at stake here—but he had no vocabulary for such intuitions. In a similar way, Fishbane studied evenings at the Hebrew College's Prozdor, where Eastern European intellectuals and rabbis expounded about "Hebraic" culture and Jewish literature of all periods. Fishbane sensed that these teachers embodied rich religious and intellectual backgrounds, yet there was a meager bridge connecting his world to theirs, and this gap deepened his sense of cultural and spiritual isolation. However inchoately at that time, he perceived untapped depths to be explored, and he began to mine voraciously in the Boston Public Library and old bookstores of the city. In this way he discovered the luminous voices of Nietzsche and Tillich, and he mused at how Bialik interwove ancient Hebrew language with imaginative articulations of presence. However, Fishbane generally felt alone in such feasts and fascinations. "There was no one to discuss spiritual questions with," he reflected recently. "The notion of an interlocutor wasn't real to me then . . . In a sense, my interlocutors were books that I read for personal dialogue . . . and I think that shaped me even to this point . . . The interior discourse was always the primary one."

As an undergraduate, and later as a graduate student at Brandeis University, Fishbane further pursued his interests in Jewish studies and developed a deep fascination with the history of religions more generally. In these years, along with the classics of Western civilization, he became fascinated with Buddhist and Hindu texts, especially the Upanishads. This language gave voice to profound spiritual intuitions and illuminated vistas of a cosmic wholeness beneath perception and thought, breath and heartbeat. This was a private affair, mostly limited to reading rooms and the silent space between reader and text. Although these Eastern works inspired and awakened him in various ways that Jewish texts had not, he could not quite shake his sense that this was not his primary language.

In 1962 Fishbane studied abroad at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he plunged into new eye-opening regions of Jewish study. He encountered Kabbalah in a seminar with Gershom Scholem (taught mainly by his assistant Efraim Gottlieb), and Fishbane devoured these strange texts that were as far from Brookline's Jewish world as one could get. The faculty he studied with in Jerusalem also included the likes of Yehudah Amichai, Shlomo Pines, and Ernst Simon. It was an "astonishing encounter," Fishbane recalls. The scholarly mentalities of his professors in Jerusalem were inspiring, especially their radical openness to all texts and sources as legitimate glimpses into Jewish history. Whereas the rabbis Fishbane knew from his youth tended to present the contents of Judaism through the filters of their own apologetic aims and faddish ideologies, these academic scholars seemed courageously committed to revealing the truth of Judaism, even in its strangest phases and murkiest memories. He would later praise his Brandeis teacher Nahum Glatzer (1903–1990), a disciple of Buber and Rosenzweig, as "an example of the ideal that nothing Jewish be alien to us." In this respect, Fishbane sensed that clear-sighted and engaged scholarship had the power to unearth human experience and wisdom from the

forgotten—or repressed—depths of personal and collective consciousness. In this vein, Fishbane would later observe in 1975 that scholarly investigation of historical sources involves soundings into the archeology of the imagination. The manifest layer of culture is stripped back and deepened by the uncovering of latent levels of cultural consciousness found in the texts. It is here that the task of learning performs a maieutic role: it becomes a mid-wife for the rebirth and release of long-forgotten or long-repressed memories of the culture. The movement is toward a cultural anamnesis, a cultural remembering . . . [T]he scholar seeks to . . . release repressed layers of culture and response, and to insure the integrity and availability of the past to consciousness. We need merely to recall the monumental work of Gershom Scholem anent the history and forms of Jewish mysticism to appreciate this dialectical process of discovery and recovery. Hereby the task of scholarship becomes a moral task; it seeks to restore to us our fullest memory of ourselves and to renew inner power by unchaining the forces of repression and ignorance . . . Diverse levels of humanity are disclosed; one's humanitas is understood and expanded through an encounter with humanity in its historical manifold.

Such potencies and potentials of historical scholarship fueled Fishbane's early attractions to mythology, a primordial and prerational mode of world-perception and discourse that resided deeply in the "archeology of the imagination" that Fishbane sought to excavate. His fascinations with mythic thinking drew great momentum from Henri Frankfort's volume Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man, as well as Ernst Cassirer's Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, particularly the second volume on mythic thought. Cassirer affirmed that ancient myth was not simply poetry or symbolism, but a genuine saying of the world—and it did not originate from "a purely invented or made-up world," but from "its own mode of reality" and its own distinct logic. To learn this logic was, for Fishbane, to penetrate ever deeper into the substrates of human culture.

Fishbane knew by the end of his undergraduate years that he wanted to pursue graduate work in the history of religion. After considering options to study with Mircea Eliade at the University of Chicago and Thorkild Jacobsen at Harvard (Jacobsen was a contributor to the Before Philosophy volume mentioned above), Fishbane ultimately decided to pursue his Ph.D. in biblical studies with Nahum Sarna (1923–2005) at Brandeis. On this academic path, he would reground his Jewish studies in foundational texts, building from the bottom up. He sensed that the commitment to critical study of primary sources was stronger in this program at Brandeis than it was in the more general "history of religions" programs elsewhere, where theoretical frameworks and conceptual typologies of the day often spoke louder than the ancient texts themselves. Indeed, Fishbane wanted to encounter cultural documents in their mysterious alterity—this was and remained his intellectual passion. It is also clear to Fishbane (at least in retrospect) that his attraction to Jewish studies was simply too strong to deny. This was the language of his own cultural self, and this textual tradition was the grounds of his own archeology of consciousness. Fishbane wrote his dissertation on themes of magic and divination in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near East—that is, precisely one of the themes, along with mythology itself, that rationalist apologists had sought to purge from the image of Jewish monotheism. Fishbane would later recall that this project was largely deconstructive in nature and not reflective of the culturally formative concerns that would later animate his scholarship. At this stage in Fishbane's development, his Jewish explorations were still largely internal and monological.

Of course, scholarly development and spiritual growth alike are gradual, and they rarely (if ever) happen entirely on one's own. In the winter of 1965, Fishbane took his friend's sister Mona DeKoven out on a date. After a local screening of Doctor Zhivago, he drove her back to her Wellesley College dormitory where she had to return before curfew.

"So what do you study?" Mona asked as they made their way down the snow-covered road.

"Mythopoeic thought and subsurface culture," Fishbane responded. Although Mona was highly intelligent and a philosophy major to boot, she of course had no idea what Fishbane was talking about. She challenged him to explain, and as he proceeded to elucidate the intricacies of his investigations, he completely missed the turn-off for Wellesley and ended up bringing Mona home late. In accordance with parietal rules, she was prohibited from going out for a week, and this event deferred their relationship.

Beginnings say volumes. This was the first of countless moments in which Mona DeKoven Fishbane would challenge her husband to get out of his head, so to speak, and to communicate his

intellectual-spiritual stirrings in ways that could engage other people directly, beyond subjective chambers of inner reflection. From the beginning, then, Mona challenged Fishbane to be more dialogical, both in his speech and in his writing. One should refrain from essentializing individuals and their professions, but it is illuminating to consider the fact that Mona is a couple's therapist by trade, a vocation whose day-to-day practices differ quite remarkably from the monastic tendencies of a scholar-theologian. Of course, her impact on Fishbane's intellectual trajectory went far deeper than matters of phrasing and word choice. Mona has challenged Fishbane in general to be more relational and trusting with people. Without her own optimism and curiosity—and nudging—Fishbane might never have joined, let alone been a founding member and core teacher of Havurat Shalom, an experimental community founded primarily by Arthur Green, who was then a young rabbi fresh out of the Jewish Theological Seminary. The havurah (fellowship), which launched in September 1968, would have an indelible impact on Fishbane's spiritual-scholarly development.

Most of the active members and teachers of Havurat Shalom were either trained rabbis, Jewish studies scholars, or both. It was originally founded as a "community seminary," and although members soon thereafter abandoned the vision of an accredited (non-)institution of learning, the community nonetheless remained an effervescent cauldron of study. From the beginning, course-offerings ranged from Hebrew Bible with Fishbane to Hasidism with Green, along with New Age spirituality with Zalman Schachter (1924–2014)—and the spirit of study and prayer at Havurat Shalom continued to swell for years. One of the most distinctive (and radical) aspects of Havurat Shalom was its deconstruction of the scholarly-spiritual binary. In its daily gatherings, text study, prayer practices, and personal relationships were all enmeshed in one sacred matrix of spiritual life. Boundaries there between public and private, text and life, interpersonal dynamics and human-divine encounters wore thin. This setting posed rich challenges to Fishbane that opened him up in profound ways to new potencies and possibilities in his vocation as a Jewish scholar.

Fishbane, Green, and other founding members of Havurat Shalom self-consciously envisioned their community as a contemporary project in the spirit of the Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus, founded by Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929) in Frankfurt in 1920. However, it is significant that Rosenzweig regarded the Lehrhaus project as antithetical to academic scholarship. Indeed, he abandoned a promising academic career amidst "scholars" in order to write and teach amidst "people." Fishbane and his friends at Havurat Shalom, however, sought to dismantle those dichotomies and develop a new synthesis. They promoted a dialogical hermeneutic wherein the whole intellectual-spiritual reader might approach texts in all their historical, philological, spiritual, and phenomenological dimensions. Fishbane, as an academic scholar, came to identify as "very much a disciple of Franz Rosenzweig" precisely due to his "deep conviction that genuine questions are those that seize us and from which there can be no honest evasion."

Such hermeneutical and pedagogical syntheses were of course difficult to implement. By 1969, Fishbane was teaching regularly at both Havurat Shalom and Brandeis, and the dissonance between those contexts was striking to him. He entered the field of Hebrew Bible studies at a time when it was very much still in the spirit of Wissenschaft des Judentums, the "science" of Judaism: historical positivism was a foundational tenet, reconstruction of objective truth was the goal, and source criticism was the way. In many respects, Fishbane shared these ideals, but he started to sense that discourse in his academic sphere at that time was somewhat dogmatic and shortsighted. If the text study at Havurat Shalom risked excessive subjectivization, then the text study at Brandeis risked excessive objectification. While the modus operandi in havurah classes was engaging study with inflated feelings of human-Torah immediacy, Brandeis classes devoted so much attention to the background of the Bible that they drowned out the foreground of the text itself. For Fishbane, this was not exclusively a "spiritual matter" or a "scholarly matter"—it was both. This was a question of how a person can attain the deepest possible understanding of a text. If historical-critical scholars overlook their own personal positions before the text, then subjectivist seekers overlook the historical otherness of the text. Fishbane sought a middle way, which he later described as "a genuine textual life that may hope to balance (if not integrate) a respect for the objective otherness of the text within the subjective involvement of the reader."

Fishbane came to realize, along with the values and visions of Havurat Shalom, that the most illuminating hermeneutic—for scholars and seekers

alike—is one that is most dialogical. Near the end of his doctoral work, as a twenty-eight-year-old, he wrote:

> Such a dialogue need never take place at the expense of scholarship and methodological rigor. Rather, it is only after the careful and accurate reconstruction of the materials that a text-dialogue can develop. For in text as in life true meeting takes place only when the integrity of the other is preserved. This idea of immediate text study and the corresponding synthesis of the encounter lie at the vital center of why I am and remain in Jewish scholarship, and is my bridge to the wider Jewish community.

One perceives echoes of Buber's dialogical hermeneutics in Fishbane's formulations. Indeed, Fishbane himself notes how Buber similarly "sought to integrate research, reading, and life instruction" and exemplified "a more involved notion of scholarship." Buber, too, developed a dialogical approach to Scripture that included both historical-critical clarity and subjective-spiritual receptivity. According to Fishbane, Buber "had no use for programs of so-called objective, historical-philological scholarship, which eclipsed the enduring meaning of the text; nor was he interested in a private subjectivization of the text, which obscured or ignored its concrete, historical otherness. For him, the two approaches were one and inseparable—when properly pursued." Fishbane notes, however, that Buber, in practice, often obscured boundaries between "historical understanding" and "personal transformation" in scholarship. Thus, in a sense, Fishbane sought to develop a scholarly methodology that was more Buberian than that of Buber himself.

Over time, Fishbane developed a distinctive approach to religious language and study that sought to straddle the dialogical divide. Teaching was a great catalyst for this spiritual-intellectual growth, and his classes at Brandeis became popular for a new generation of scholars. His 1979 book Text and Texture provides glimpses into his early hermeneutical breakthroughs. In this work, which appealed to both academic and nonacademic audiences and was pivotal for the "Bible and literature" approach of recent decades, Fishbane demonstrated how modern readers might attune themselves simultaneously to the historical, literary, and theological dimensions of the text, which all interpenetrate in the text's contextual texture. His exegesis in this work—as well as in his commentary on the Haftarot (prophetic lectionary) and in his most recent masterpiece on the Song of Songs—reveal how truly critical reading requires thoughtful sensitivity to various hermeneutical layers of the text in its multidimensional wholeness. His concurrent commitments to write for both scholarly and religious communities reflect his deep sense that those disparate methods and concerns can speak to one another. For instance, while he maintains that historical considerations can enrich spiritual contemplations, he has also suggested that premodern Jewish hermeneutics might support crucial correctives in modern biblical studies. He asserts, for example, that the fourfold method of Jewish exegesis known by the medieval acronym PaRDeS—peshat (plain sense), remez (allegorical interpretation), derash (intertextual commentary drawing from the entire canon as a seamless whole), and sod (mystical meaning)—may enhance the multifocal gaze that critical study requires:

> PaRDeS was, itself, a programme or strategy of reading and interpretation in the deepest sense. It allowed a reader to distinguish different levels of meaning in the Bible, but without having to relinquish any one of them. We moderns are faced no less with the need to conceptualize the multiple dynamics of the hermeneutical task, to analyze them severally and together, and to delineate their interpenetration with teaching and learning.

With such considerations, Fishbane hopes "to revitalize modern text study with the energies and coherence of sacred learning—wherein simultaneous meanings are concurrent."

In the spiritual interstices of this scholarly orientation—and surely in spaces opened up by other life experiences and personal realizations—new religious identities and commitments have emerged. Although Fishbane continues to hold values and viewpoints from his roots in Conservative Judaism and his immersion in Havurat Shalom, as well as from other twists and turns in his spiritual path, Fishbane now finds his religious home

in Orthodoxy. This shift was fueled by his ever-deepening faith in traditional Jewish praxis, and his increasing sense that theological sensibilities must be embodied in concrete practices in order to be maximally transformative for the individual and transmissible for the community.

One may call Fishbane's approach to scholarship unconventional, but one can hardly deny that it has been extraordinarily fruitful. He is one of the most productive and praised scholars in the academic study of religion, and he is the preeminent scholar of Jewish hermeneutics. As a professor for twenty years at Brandeis and now twenty-five years (and counting) at the University of Chicago, he has published numerous books and articles that remain landmark contributions to fields in Jewish studies ranging from ancient through modern eras. His Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel (1985) and Kiss of God (1994) both won National Jewish Book awards. He has earned many prestigious fellowships, including a Guggenheim, and has twice been a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is an elected member of the American Academy of Jewish Research and the illustrious American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He received a Lifetime Achievement Award in Textual Studies from the National Foundation of Jewish Culture, and an entry on Fishbane appears in the latest edition of the Encyclopaedia Judaica. However, these honors and awards only hint at the immense value and richness of Fishbane's thought. I use the word "thought" here mindfully, for even Fishbane's hard-core historical scholarship bears repeatedly upon themes and questions with great implications for Jewish philosophy and theology. Without positing ulterior motives or intellectual compromises, we may observe (now more than ever before) that Fishbane's groundbreaking historical work nourished foundations for constructive thought. Indeed, it is his very transparent and uncompromising methodologies that opened up such rich theological pathways.

The Essays

The selection of essays in this volume provides a unique and unprecedented panorama of Fishbane's thought. The first essay, "Modern Jewish Theology and Traditional Hermeneutics," offers a rich introduction to his constructive thought, and it has never before been published in the present form. He situates his own theology between the poles of (1) theologies that are "self-assured" and "without evident doubts" about their arguments and convictions, such as those of Maimonides or even the Book of Zohar, and (2) radical affirmations of foundationlessness and uncertainty, whether in the philosophical deconstructions of Derrida or the mystical annihilations of Rabbi Nahman. Without simplistic dismissals of either of those two extremes, Fishbane presents his hermeneutical theology as an attempt to find fertile ground between despondency and overconfidence—one that involves being a humble "disciple of things" in the spirit of Nietzsche, Rilke, and the variegated vastness of Jewish tradition itself. The exegetical practice of Jewish hermeneutics is a model of attentive and rooted, yet transient and open-ended theological discourse. It is grounded in normative sources, and yet responsive to the unique questions and challenges of the present moment. In this essay, Fishbane discusses inner-biblical exegesis and emphasizes how hermeneutical theology is already present in Scripture itself. Nowhere else does he articulate more explicitly the continuities between his historical observations about the formation of Scripture and his constructive formulations of hermeneutical theology.

The next three essays in this volume are exemplary works of Fishbane's historical scholarship, capturing the hermeneutics of Midrash, myth, and mysticism. However, the content of these essays sheds light nonetheless—however retrospectively—on his constructive thought as well. In the second essay, "Midrash and the Nature of Scripture," Fishbane offers a penetrating analysis of the hermeneutics of derash—that is, a dimension of the fourfold PaRDeS hermeneutic that he develops in his constructive theology. Fishbane describes the dynamics of radical intertextuality in rabbinic exegesis, wherein the whole Written Torah becomes the language (langue) for all subsequent speech-acts (parole) of Oral Torah, no matter how imaginative and innovative those utterances come to be. This linguistic scheme does not stress the normative confines of exegetical tradition as much

as it emphasizes the inexhaustible vastness of biblical sources. For Fishbane, a central principle in this regard is the rabbinic concept of harizah (enchainment), according to which every textual stitch of Scripture—every narrative, phrase, and letter, regardless of its original context in the canon—is interconnected fundamentally. In Midrash, the elements of Scripture are constantly integrated, disintegrated, and reintegrated anew in ephemeral bodies of intertextual meaning—and this is no less than the perpetual restoking of Sinaitic speech, the very practice of Jewish theology. Thus, midrashic hermeneutics opens up a seemingly ceaseless stream of possibilities for the revelation of the divine langue, while also delimiting the horizons—and, indeed, the boundaries—of legitimate interpretation.

The third essay, "Five Stages of Jewish Myth and Mythmaking," is a sweeping overview of some of Fishbane's key observations about the history of Jewish hermeneutics. Of course, the very notion that mythmaking recurs throughout the lifespan of Jewish thought is itself a bold rejection of the conventional idea that monotheism dispelled mythology. Indeed, Fishbane affirms that mythic vitalities erupt again and again in the history of Judaism—and not only in marginal sources, but in the most foundational texts. One of his main theses in this essay is that hermeneutics lies consistently at the core of Jewish mythmaking. First of all, biblical scribes, rabbinic exegetes, and medieval kabbalists all interpret mythical forms of the past through their formulations of new literary works. Moreover, Fishbane suggests that these sages, no less than prebiblical mythmakers and modern poets, also "interpret" the very sights and sounds of existence as they give human voice to those otherwise mute and indifferent happenings. For Fishbane, interpretation and imagination are always alive and breathing in moments of mythmaking.

Fishbane's fourth essay in this volume, "The Bible in the Jewish Mystical Tradition," presents the contours of Jewish mystical hermeneutics from the Hebrew Bible through twentieth-century Hasidism. Aside from the fact that this chapter unearths a rich trove of sources for anyone interested in the history of Jewish mysticism, it is an especially illuminating sample of Fishbane's corpus insofar as it stresses the intrinsic relation between Jewish spirituality and hermeneutics. In contrast to portrayals of mystical experience as immediate and unconditioned, spontaneous and individualistic, Fishbane characterizes Jewish mysticism in terms of its textual and cultural mediations, and defines it as "fundamentally a tradition of commentary." The religious practice of Torah study both expands and anchors the mystical mind, elevating thought and imagination beyond the bounds of private subjectivity while also rooting them in sources of revelation and tradition. Thus, this essay elucidates Fishbane's notion of the "exegetical imagination," as it highlights the interpenetration of commentary and creativity, tradition and vision. After all, Fishbane suggests, even the mystical mind can only perceive so much on its own. Although he does not altogether deny the power and profundity of spiritual illuminations that spring from inward depths, Fishbane echoes kabbalistic cautions against such monological mysticism: "One has to fit the measure of one's mind to the measures of Scripture, not fit Scripture to one's natural state of mind."

The final two essays in this volume are works of Fishbane's constructive theology. The fifth essay, "A Jewish Hermeneutical Theology," is a selection from Sacred Attunement, and this is likely the formulation of Fishbane's theology that is most familiar to his readers (as of now). In this section, Fishbane articulates his understanding of the "threefold chord" of Torah— the torah kelulah, the Written Torah, and the Oral Torah—and articulates the dynamics among these various dimensions. In this process, he sheds light on his concept of divine Revelation through a rich meditation on the image of Moses atop Sinai. Furthermore, Fishbane presents the fourfold hermeneutic of PaRDeS and uses these interpretive modes as instruments of theological reflection. This chapter is required reading for anyone interested in Fishbane's constructive theology.

The last essay in this volume, "Biblical Hermeneutics and Philosophical Theology," appears here in print for the first time. In this chapter, more than any other work published thus far, Fishbane situates his theology in a philosophical context and reflects on

the pursuit of this endeavor. “For me,” he writes, “philosophical hermeneutics is fundamental, insofar as it seeks to ground our humanity in acts of interpretation at every stage and in every way.” If Gadamer and Ricoeur offer a “general hermeneutic,” Fishbane suggests, then Jewish theology introduces a “regional hermeneutic,” and there can be a fruitful dialogue between them. Fishbane strives to think beyond the old conflict of Athens and Jerusalem, and regards philosophy (qua philosophical hermeneutics) and theology (qua biblical hermeneutics) as mutually enriching and perhaps even mutually dependent endeavors. “Biblical hermeneutics needs philosophy to reach beyond historical theology and its regional assertions of value; and philosophical theology, for its part, also needs biblical hermeneutics, to ground it in historical traditions and the particulars of human inquiry.” For example, philosophical concepts such as the “hermeneutic circle” and the “horizons” of understanding may provide crucial points of reflection in Jewish theology, while theological practices such as the hermeneutics of PaRDeS may, in turn, give flesh to abstract philosophical principles. After a series of theoretical considerations, Fishbane then proceeds to clarify—indeed, enact— his philosophical theology through an exquisite reading of the Song of Songs, a biblical source that lies especially close to his heart. <>

Arthur Green: Hasidism for Tomorrow edited by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Aaron W Hughes [Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers, Brill, 9789004308404]

Arthur Green is Rector of the post-denominational Rabbinical School and Irving Brudnick Professor of Jewish Philosophy and Religion at Hebrew College in Newton, Massachusetts. Originally ordained as a Conservative rabbi, Green considers himself a neo-Hasidic Jew, identifying with none of the established Jewish denominations. He combines historical knowledge of the Jewish mystical tradition with an original constructive theology. Recognized as both a rabbi and a scholar, Green has sought to make spiritual pursuit an essential part of committed Jewish life. Through scholarship, educational work, and popular teaching, he has contributed to the growth and vitality of Judaism in America and helped promote neo-Hasidism as Jewish spirituality for the 21st century.

CONTENTS

Excerpt: Arthur Green: An Intellectual Profile by Ariel Evan Mayse

Rabbi Arthur Green (b. 1941) is a theologian, professor of Jewish mysticism, and the teacher of two generations of American rabbis and scholars. Yet above all he is, by his own description, a spiritual seeker. Green has devoted over five decades to developing a vibrant new expression of Judaism that is “all about challenge and response, one that by definition has to change and grow in each generation and even in the course of single lives.” Green argues that without such growth Judaism will not survive the confrontation with modernity and postmodernity. Religious traditions must be reinterpreted and reframed in our day if they are to remain a compelling voice for new generations.

The unique challenges facing contemporary Jews include modern science and theories of evolution, biblical criticism, the Holocaust, the reestablishment of a Jewish state, life in an open democracy, impending ecological disaster, and the morally bankrupt materialism of our society. Meeting these challenges with authenticity and integrity may at times demand that we radically reinterpret the Judaism we have inherited from very different eras, but confronting these issues also requires us to listen carefully to the wisdom and vitality embedded in our tradition. The legacy of Jewish learning must be reshaped for contemporary Jews, but tradition’s authentic voice should also challenge

and inspire us. As a contemporary reinterpreter of Jewish tradition, Green freely acknowledges that he himself is constantly being shaped and challenged by the traditional texts with which he is working.

Green's theology is grounded in the Jewish mystical tradition. More specifically, he has described his approach as "neo-Hasidic." This means that Green draws particular inspiration from Hasidic texts but rejects the strictures of living in a traditional Hasidic community, including its dismissal of Western education and the critical study of Judaism. Inspired more by the textual sources of early Hasidism than by contemporary Hasidim, he feels free to engage with those teachings somewhat selectively. He values the teachings of Kabbalah and Hasidism as holding deep insights into the human psyche and spiritual life, but does not look to them for any literal sense of metaphysical or cosmological truth. He rejects elements of the mystical tradition, such as the degradation of non-Jews or the disenfranchisement of women, which he feels conflict with his morality. Green understands that these aspects of Jewish mysticism reflect the historical contexts in which these texts were written, and insists that the modern seeker need not accept them whole cloth. This selective reading allows for the possibility of rediscovering the beauty and potential contemporary relevance of the sources. The teachings of Jewish mysticism, argues Green, give us access to some of the deepest wellsprings of human creativity and spirituality, and point toward a mysterious, elusive reality within them that we humans call by the name Y-H-W-H, or "God." A modern renewal of Judaism can flow forth only from these.

Green knows that he lives in an age of seekers. Often confronted by superficial manifestations of Judaism without any deep roots in our authentic spiritual language, many of his generation and those he teaches have turned to other religious traditions for wisdom and guidance. Many others have turned away from religion entirely. This was true in the 1960s and 1970s, and this sense of spiritual emptiness in much of what passes for liberal Judaism has remained a defining element of contemporary Jewish life into the twenty-first century. Answering this call, Green has dedicated his life to developing an authentic Jewish spirituality that is at once boldly creative and deeply grounded in tradition.

Biography and Career

Arthur Green was born into a secular Jewish family and raised in an ethnically diverse neighborhood of Newark, New Jersey. Green's mother died when he was eleven, an event that he would later identify as crucial to his entire biography. His maternal grandparents, who were immigrants from Eastern Europe, lived nearby. As a link to the intensely Jewish, Yiddish-speaking cultural milieu of Europe, they were to have an important influence on him. Despite the objections of his militantly atheistic father, Green attended Hebrew school and Camp Ramah, where he developed excellent Hebrew skills and fluency in reading Jewish texts. He became attracted to religion in early adolescence and increasingly took on a strict level of ritual observance. This often put him into conflict at home, leading to considerable anxiety.

At the age of sixteen Green left for Brandeis University, where he was free to live the rigorous Jewish practice he had adopted. By the second year of his undergraduate education, however, he had largely abandoned it. Green felt that his strict religiosity had been a form of compulsive behavior, an attempt to replace his tragic loss rather than an honest quest for God. The façade of observance was also challenged when he began studying religion in an academic setting and reading the classics of modern philosophy, especially the existentialists, as well as psychology and literature. In these years he was particularly influenced by the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Erich Fromm, Sigmund Freud, Franz Kafka, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Hermann Hesse, and Nikos Kazantzakis, all of whom had an impact on his later theology.

Nietzsche's description of the collapse of traditional religious authority resonated with the breakdown in Green's own attachment to orthodoxy, the liberation from which he experienced as itself a religious event, one worthy of celebration. The challenge of finding a source of truth and moral authority in the post-Nietzschean world took him to the existentialists, particularly Sartre and Camus. In their writings, a world without God led, after that

first moment of liberating exultation, to a confrontation with emptiness and absurdity, the landscape he also came to know so well also in the pages of Kafka, in whose work he became quite immersed. But Camus in particular, reinforced by Kazantzakis, called for the seeker to seize the day and actively create a meaning beyond absurdity within the realm of human action. Only this could redeem from the bleakness of a world without the God who had once provided that meaning. Understanding that his quest was still a religious one, and continuing to think within a Jewish context, Green took this as a challenge to redraw the face of God in a place where all the old images had failed him, and ultimately to rebuild human community around that new approach to Judaism. But in doing so, he came to understand that he was inevitably—and rather happily—drawing on the wellsprings of the past, ultimately becoming more reinterpreter than revolutionary.

Here Brandeis scholar Simon Rawidowicz's article on Jewish hermeneutics played a crucial role in Green's development, because it described the ongoing strength of Judaism as lying in its power to constantly and freely reinterpret ancient text and tradition. Rawidowicz believed that the Jewish

interpretive project had essentially ended with Spinoza and his insistence on a rational and scientific reading of the Bible. But over the next several decades, Green became increasingly aware of the fact that he was living in a time of great spiritual and intellectual rebirth. He saw this renewal and rediscovery of meaning as a regeneration of the midrashic paradigm, and a continuation of what the Hasidic masters had done for themselves at the end of the eighteenth century. If Spinoza and Mendelssohn had been the founders of Jewish modernity, Green would seek in Hasidic teachings the foundations of a Jewish postmodernity.

Brandeis was home to a number of remarkable middle European scholars cast out by the Nazis in the years preceding the Holocaust, including Nahum Glatzer and Alexander Altmann. Glatzer, a close disciple of Franz Rosenzweig, introduced Green to both Rosenzweig and Martin Buber. Rosenzweig's "new thinking" and the intellectual atmosphere of the Frankfurt Lehrhaus, in which Glatzer had played a central role, were formative for Green. These scholars gave Green an excellent education in the humanities, especially literature and religion, in addition to his training in Judaic studies. Their new ideas challenged the depth of his adolescent conceptions of religion. Under Altmann's tutelage, he began reading academic studies in religion, including works by Carl Gustav Jung, Erich Neumann, Rudolph Otto, and Mircea Eliade. In these years Green also drank deeply of the counter-cultural ethos of the 1960s: the exhilarating quest for personal inner freedom and new awareness of the need for deep societal transformation. Already the product of a liberal upbringing, Green's social and political views became somewhat more radicalized in the era of Civil Rights and the Vietnam War.

But thanks to Professor Altmann, at Brandeis University Green also encountered the study of Jewish mysticism in a serious way. He began reading the Hasidic masters and the Zohar, and he quickly fell in love with this literature. An essay by the Polish-Jewish writer Hillel Zeitlin, a prewar neo-Hasidic thinker of great profundity, had a decisive influence on Green's decision to devote his life to these teachings. In these years he also met Zalman Schachter, a charismatic young Chabad Hasid who would later become the founder of the Jewish Renewal movement and Green's lifelong friend and mentor. By the end of college Green had recommitted himself to religious life, but he did so from a very different perspective than in his adolescence. Green had begun his quest to find an authentically Jewish language in which to express his religious yearnings and experiences, without readopting strict ritual observance or dualistic conceptions of a personified (and, in his experience, ultimately punishing) God.

Green's encounter with Jewish mysticism inspired him to pursue a doctorate in Kabbalah and Hasidism. This career would allow him to spend his life immersed in these texts, examining them from both historical and phenomenological perspectives. Green spent a year in Jerusalem, where he honed his philological-historical skills by studying Jewish mysticism with Gershom Scholem and Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer. In 1962 he decided to attend the

Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in New York in order to gain the further text skills necessary for his scholarly project. The intellectual environment was intense, and Green shared many important discussions with fellow students at JTS. However, his experience there was largely unhappy. He found himself confronted by a Jewish discourse in which Talmud and Jewish law were vaunted above any personal spiritual quest, and where scholarly cynicism had, for many, replaced any real search for faith. Green recalls that he metaphorically walked the halls of JTS with a copy of Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" in one pocket, and Kedushat Levi (an important early Hasidic book) in the other—both of which were equally unwelcome at the Seminary.

Seeing Green's unhappiness, the administration arranged for him to have a private course of study with Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–1972), who became his mentor for the next four years. Green had read Heschel's works of theology in his adolescence and had been deeply moved, but in his college years he had dismissed Heschel as somewhat naïve and overly pietistic. Now he had a new appreciation of the profundity of Heschel's reading of Judaism. Green came to see Heschel's project of "Depth Theology" as an approach that allowed for multiple levels of truth, appealing to the mythic sense (a term Heschel eschewed) and the imagination more than the rational mind.

Their relationship was never simple, and Green later reflected that he refused to become Heschel's hasid—his unwavering disciple. But in these years he deepened his knowledge of Hasidic texts and Kabbalah, learning from one of the foremost experts in the field. Heschel also became Green's role model of a scholar who was an academic, but also a public intellectual, communal activist, and a deeply religious person engaged reading the classical sources to create a Jewish theology for the twentieth century. During his years at JTS, he already became a mentor to a group of fellow rabbinical students, teaching a class in Hasidic sources in the Seminary chapel.

In 1967 Green returned to Boston to begin a doctorate at Brandeis under the tutelage of Alexander Altmann. In 1968 he married fellow-seeker Kathy Held, to whom he had been introduced by Zalman Schachter. They lived first in Cambridge, then in Somerville, where Green became the founder of Havurat Shalom. The havurah was a new type of Jewish intentional community and institute for learning and prayer. Green was not alone in feeling alienated by the hyper-institutionalization and formality of American synagogue life that reached its peak in the 1950s. The seekers who joined in forming the havurah in its early years, many of whom later became well-known Jewish scholars and communal leaders, longed to create a new and participatory style of Jewish experience that would be meaningful for the individual in the context of an intense sense of fellowship. Green sometimes characterized it as "a shtibl (an informal prayer-room) for non-Orthodox Jews," where they might find the same sort of intimacy and authentic community as was present in the world of Hasidism, at least as seen through the eyes of their well-thumbed copies of works by Martin Buber. They were deeply committed to Torah study and willing to experiment with forms of Jewish practice, but always with a personal spiritual focus and an eye toward societal change. Havurat Shalom inspired many other such efforts across the United States.

Something needs to be said here about both the intellectual and the devotional/spiritual world of Havurat Shalom in its early years. The five years Green spent in the havurah, as its founder and sometime leader (problematically so in a self-defined democratic and egalitarian community) were transformative for him, setting the tone for much of his ensuing life and career.

Because Havurat Shalom originally defined itself as both alternative Jewish community and seminary (the fact that it offered "divinity student" draft deferments in the Vietnam War era was not incidental to its initial success in recruiting members), an intensive course of study was central from the beginning. Green taught alongside his fellow Brandeis graduate student Michael Fishbane, rabbis Everett Gendler and Joseph Lukinsky, Reb Zalman, who visited during that first year, and several other friends who had recently been ordained at JTS. Although all but Zalman had been trained in institutions that viewed Jewish texts

through a historical-critical lens, they shared a critique of that view and were collectively in search of an alternative way of reading and teaching the sources. The two models toward which they naturally turned were those of Hasidism and religious existentialism. Green, teaching courses primarily on kabbalistic and Hasidic sources, saw the creative midrash that was alive in the Hasidic imagination as a model for a contemporary revival of the ability to "hear" the divine voice from within the text. He insisted, to be sure, that his students retain the ability to distinguish between peshat and derash in reading both the mystical sources and the biblical passages on which they were expounding. In this he remained loyal to the academic training he had received from Altmann and others. But he understood that the living kernel of religious life was to be found in a reopening of the derash process. This was evident within the range of what was considered permissible in the havurah classroom, but was even more present in Shabbat morning "Torah discussions," replacing the sermon slot in the group's main weekly service and sometimes lasting nearly an hour.

The "existential" aspect of this approach was derived partly from Martin Buber, especially through his rereading of Hasidism, but mostly from the memory of Franz Rosenzweig's "new thinking" and his Freies Juedisches Lehrhaus in Frankfurt, conveyed to Green but especially to Fishbane by their teacher Nahum Glatzer. Already in the 1920s, Rosenzweig had sensed the spiritual dryness of the historical/critical approach to the Hebrew Bible and had insisted in a different approach in the Lehrhaus classroom. This fed directly into the rediscovery of the old/new sacred voice that he and Buber were to seek in their German/Jewish translation of the Bible, beginning in those same years (later rendered into English by havurah member and Fishbane student Everett Fox). Schachter, Gendler, Edward Feld, and other

teachers were very sympathetic to this sense of post-critical reading that was emerging in the havurah. So too were some of the more intellectually sophisticated and self-aware students in the group (including Barry Holtz, Joseph Reimer, Michael Brooks, James Kugel, David Roskies, Lawrence Fine, George Savran, and others).

The prayer life of the havurah was marked by a combination of creativity and spiritual intensity that paralleled this approach to study. Friday evening and Shabbat morning services included long, drawn-out singing of soulful wordless niggunim, interjected semi-spontaneous interpretations of the traditional Hebrew liturgy (recited in the Sephardic version, a statement of the group's neo-Hasidic leaning), chanted davening in English, learned from Zalman, and a variety of inserted poetic readings and listenings to both classical and contemporary music. Zalman modeled to the group a passionate yet sometimes playful mode of prayer leadership, one well learned and integrated by several of the younger haverim. Green found himself deeply moved by prayer in this context, and especially by the frequent shared silences that were a part of the group's spiritual rhythms. In 1969, he and several others havurah members, including Kathy, began to experiment with a daily morning meditation period in the Havurat Shalom prayer room. This was Green's first regular exposure to meditation, another aspect of spiritual life that remained important to him. In general, the sense of religion as expressing both the rich inner life of the individual and the power of intimate community was an essential legacy of the havurah years to Green's future development, carried forth especially into his work in training and teaching rabbis.

Green left Boston when he was offered a position at the University of Pennsylvania in 1973, where he taught in the Department of Religious Studies for the next eleven years. Green enjoyed the opportunity to train his first group of graduate students, but he had a decidedly mixed experience at the university. Most of the undergraduates he taught were in preprofessional tracks of study, and this large professionally oriented school was a shock after his rich education in the humanities at Brandeis, his studies with Heschel at JTS, and the intense devotional community of Havurat Shalom. Green felt that the Department of Religious Studies in which he was located saw little value in his theological writings or communal activism, interests which were actively disparaged by some of the senior faculty. But he gained from exposure to the methodology of comparative religion and

teachings of other traditions, engaging also in various interfaith symposia and conversations.

One of Green's neighbors in Philadelphia came to be friend and mentor Zalman Schachter, who had also been in Boston for the first year of the havurah and now became professor at Temple University. Schachter embarked on founding a new Jewish religious community called B'nai Or ("Children of Light"), which was deeply influenced by the spirit of the "Age of Aquarius" and New Age religion. While earlier iterations of Schachter's vision—more influenced by a combination of Hasidism and Christian monasticism—had once attracted both Green and his wife, they did not join Schachter in this new project. Green felt that it was too casually syncretistic, incorporating language and practices from other faith traditions, and too little demanding of Jewish depth and knowledge. The trajectories of Schachter and Green's lives had them at different places. Schachter was in the heady days of escaping the confines of Chabad's disciplined and restrictive framework. Green was in the mode of reexamining and (gradually) re-embracing tradition, for the second time coming at it from the outside. While both had been influenced by countercultural spirituality, and especially by an encounter with psychedelic drugs, Schachter's embrace of Aquarian religion and its vaunted New Age optimism remained a point of difference between them.

Green left the University of Pennsylvania in 1984 to join the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC), serving first as dean and then as president. Green had never previously seen himself as a Reconstructionist, although his theology shares a number of important ideas in common the thought of founder Mordecai M. Kaplan. These include his understanding of Judaism as a full civilization, the embrace of religious humanism, commitment to renewal, a theology that moved beyond a personal God, and a deep respect for tradition without feeling bound to it. Indeed, Green's was a voice for tradition at the RRC, and there was some conflict both with more classical Reconstructionists and with female students who declared themselves neo-pagans. Though Green continued to publish scholarly works, being outside of a strictly academic setting encouraged him to devote more time to writing about Jewish spirituality. At RRC Green came into his own as a theologian, and during these years he published a series of influential articles in The Reconstructionist and elsewhere. These efforts culminated in his first book of Jewish theology, published in 1992, based on a series of lectures first delivered at a Reconstructionist congregation in New York.

Green returned to Brandeis in 1994 when offered the Philip W. Lown Chair in Jewish Studies, once held by his teacher Alexander Altmann. He continued to train graduate students and published a number of important studies of Jewish mysticism, devoting time to writing theology as well. But Green left this position after a decade. He was still seeking something that could not be afforded by a purely academic environment, and in 2004 he founded a post-denominational rabbinical school at Hebrew College in Boston. There he has been a professor, dean, and now rector, over the past dozen years. Green has maintained his commitment to Jewish scholarship as well as theological writing, and has continued to publish books and articles. At the age of 74 he is still teaching full time, engaged in administrative duties, and working on a number of significant publications. He is also an actively engaged caregiver for his wife, who is afflicted with a chronic illness. His daughter, son-in-law, and two grandchildren live nearby.

Literary Works

Arthur Green's written works may be roughly divided into three categories: academic studies, contemporary theology, and communal affairs. While Green's greatest originality lies in the realm of theology, he has made significant contributions in all of these areas. Furthermore, one must examine all of Green's writings in order to understand the totality of his project. The boundaries between them are less than rigid, and Green's works sometimes deliberately blend scholarship and theology. Their intended audience includes both the scholarly and broader intellectual community. He often presents his work as intended to form a bridge between these.

Academic Studies

Green was trained in the classical methods of intellectual history, and his studies of Jewish

mysticism draw heavily upon historical context and the complex inner textual and interpretive trajectories of terms and ideas that constitute the fabric of Judaic sources. Jewish tradition is a multilayered one, and the Hasidic writings in which Green has specialized reflect both deep knowledge and a spirit of highly free and sometimes playful reinterpretation of sacred texts. His academic work is best characterized as the history of language and ideas, and several of his important diachronic studies trace the ways in which kabbalistic ideas and symbols have evolved from the rabbinic time onward. Green is well aware that vectors of historical influence often move across cultural borders, and he has demonstrated how different religious communities have influenced one another in both subtle and explicit ways.

Despite his commitment to intellectual history, Green is also wary of an exclusively reductionist approach that fragments texts into footnotes and excessive references to earlier sources. His studies of Jewish mysticism also employ the tools of phenomenology, including the critical and cross-cultural subjective religious experience. This allows him to explore the conceptual and theological similarities between texts written in different times and places, while recognizing the uniqueness of each text and thinker, including those writing "late" in the history of Judaism's highly developed literary tradition. Throughout his career Green has reiterated his belief that the texts as we have them reflect embodied mystical experiences. Jewish mystics rarely write in a self-revelatory or confessional manner, and they have produced relatively few autobiographical testimonies. But Green insists that when the writings of mystical illuminati are read carefully, a subtle experiential element begins to emerge from their words; this is true of both complicated theosophical tracts and the relatively accessible Hasidic texts. The "reality" of these experiences may indeed be that of fantasy or imagination, but they need to be treated as legitimate creations of the religious mind. Evaluation of mystical literature reveals that no clean lines may be drawn between fantasy, revelation, and religious experience.

Green believes that mysticism begins with the overwhelming experience of something incredible, profound, and essentially ineffable, which the mystic then seeks to articulate, however inadequately, by means of words. This understanding puts him in the company of the perennialist philosophers, stemming from William James but including Aldous Huxley, Frijtof Schuon, and Wilfred Cantwell Smith, who believed that all mystical experiences share an ineffable core. But Green avoids their tendency to over-simplify and universalize, and underscores that mystical texts of diverse traditions, while reflecting parallel experiences, must be read with attention to nuances in their respective languages. The core experiences that animate Jewish mysticism have much in common with those described by devotional texts of other religious traditions, but the accounts of these experiences in mystical works (which are all the scholar has before him) are distinguished from one another in both cultural context and typology of experience. They are not all reducible to a single notion of "mysticism."

Green's first major academic contribution was a biography of R. Nahman of Bratslav. This landmark study, based on his doctoral dissertation, was the first scholarly monograph to examine the life and teachings of an early Hasidic master in a holistic manner. Green gives special attention to psychological aspects of R. Nahman's spiritual journey, and interprets R. Nahman's writings as anticipating many of the lessons of modern existentialism. In the appendix "Faith, Doubt and Reason," he explored this Hasidic master's relationship with uncertainty. Though written purely as a work of well-documented historical scholarship, to some degree this provocative chapter also reflects Green's own experience in the struggle with faith and theological uncertainty. Since then Green has published a number of interesting and important articles exploring the typologies of Hasidic leadership and the phenomenology of Hasidic spirituality. He has also written studies of both Heschel and Zeitlin, in which he discusses their relationship to the Jewish mystical tradition and explores their neo-Hasidic project of reinterpreting rabbinic and mystical sources for contemporary readers.

While at RRC Green edited a two-volume collection of studies called Jewish Spirituality

(Crossroad, 1986–1987). Gathering these articles proved to be a difficult task, since some would-be contributors denied the very existence of "Jewish spirituality." For these critics, the term "spirituality" is one that is awkwardly imported from other religions, particularly Christianity. The studies brought together in these volumes dispel that notion, offering a very different perspective of Judaism. Green gives the following reflection on his understanding of Jewish spirituality:

> Life in the presence of God—or the cultivation of a life in the ordinary world bearing the holiness once associated with sacred space and time, with Temple and with holy days—is perhaps as close as one can come to a definition of "spirituality" that is native to the Jewish tradition and indeed faithful to its Semitic roots.

Spirituality, as Green understands it, includes but is not limited to the type of religious life and experience called "mysticism." It embraces the life of piety of the prophet, the philosopher, and the halakhist as well as the mystic. It is the innate desire of the human heart to live in the divine presence, whether in the sacred or the mundane realm. The studies assembled in these two volumes demonstrate that spirituality thus defined has been an integral part of Jewish theology and religious life since biblical Antiquity and into contemporary times. There is place within the realm of Jewish spirituality for the Reform prophet-inspired social activist alongside the modern Orthodox devotee of Joseph B. Soleveitchik's Halakhic Man, together with Zeitlin, Heschel, and the Hasidic masters themselves. All of them are seeking a Judaism devoted to the cultivation and embodiment of divine presence in the human heart as a force for the transformation of the outer world. Through this and other more popular writings, Green has had a major role in legitimizing both the word "spirituality" and the complex of notions and attitudes embraced by it within the Jewish community.

In the introduction to Jewish Spirituality Green also first undertakes his ongoing project of describing and understanding the symbolic language of Kabbalah. One element that has united Jewish mystics across the centuries is a shared commitment to the rich matrix of associations and symbols inspired by biblical verses and rabbinic teachings, expanded and reinterpreted over the centuries. The sefirot (sing., sefirah), a series of ten emanations that bridges between the abstract, unknowable Deity and the immanent presence in this world, are the heart of this language. But when seen functionally rather than metaphysically, they have also become the anchors to which the vast array of symbols adheres. Green understands this symbolic language to be one of the defining elements of Jewish mysticism, and it is a subject treated with great subtlety in his studies. Green authored a major study of the evolution of the symbols associated with the first of the ten sefirot in his Keter: The Crown of God in Early Judaism, where he traced the motif of divine coronation back to its early sources. Another study, "Shekhinah, the Virgin Mary, and the Song of Songs" deals with the tenth sefirah, malkhut or shekhinah, and the feminine symbols associated with it, emerging in the setting of medieval Christendom.

Green has also published several volumes of Hasidic texts in English translation. The first of these was a small compendium of teachings on the art of prayer, translated together with his friend Barry Holtz. This was followed some years later by selected translations from two of the great classics of Hasidic literature: R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl's Me'or 'Eynayim, and R. Judah Leib Alter's Sefat Emet. Most recently he edited a two-volume collection of early Hasidic texts entitled Speaking Torah: Spiritual Teachings from around the Maggid's Table (Jewish Lights, 2013), together with three of his closest students. Green's efforts as a translator reflect his larger project to make the sources of the mystical tradition accessible and relevant to the modern English readership; this element was inspired by the works of his teacher Nahum Glatzer in particular. The target audience is primarily Jewish, but by no means exclusively so. Indeed, Green's first two books of translations were published by the Paulist Press, a Catholic publishing house interested in devotional literature and spiritual texts at a time in which no Jewish publishers were printing such works.

Contemporary Theology

Green's theology may rightly be described as a mystical and monistic panentheism. He is committed to many elements of traditional religious language, but he is ultimately a monist, understanding the Jewish faith in one God as pointing beyond itself toward the ultimate oneness of all being. His ideas are deeply informed by the teachings and symbolic world of Jewish mysticism, which he reads intensively but selectively. As a neo-Hasidic thinker, he is attracted to the philosophical underpinnings and spiritual psychology of Hasidism as well as the mythic structures and language of Kabbalah. Green's project builds upon the work of Martin Buber, Hillel Zeitlin, and Abraham Joshua Heschel, who creatively reinterpreted the legacy of the Hasidic masters in order to share them with modern Jews.

The Essays That Follow

The four essays included in this volume demonstrate the breadth and scope of Green's theological writings. In each of these works we see the different ways in which he has sought to fulfill the task he set out for himself in the early 1970s: reclaiming the Jewish mystical tradition. Over the past forty years Green has done so through writings that span history, constructive theology, and personal devotion.

The first essay, "Three Warsaw Mystics," was originally published in a memorial volume for Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, professor of Jewish mysticism at the Hebrew University. Though this essay is an academic study, it offers a glimpse into Green's quest for intellectual lineage. He compares the thought and theology of R. Judah Leib Alter of Ger (author of the Sefat Emet), Hillel Zeitlin, and Abraham Joshua Heschel. All three of these important figures, who lived in Warsaw in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were what Green calls "experiential mystics." That is, they used the rich symbolic language of Jewish mysticism to articulate the profound, nearly ineffable wellsprings of their inner spiritual lives. They articulate a powerful unitive vision in which the divine presence is immanently expressed in the world, accessed through moments of intense devotion.

Each of these three mystics adds something special to the project. Green sees R. Judah Leib as an authentic Jewish mystic who was deeply influenced by the language of Kabbalah but who moved beyond the limits the hypercomplexity and obsession with details found in its later expressions. The boundaries of R. Judah Leib's theology were to some degree determined by his role as a leader of a traditional Hasidic community, which tempered his universalistic inclinations. In many ways Green's religious quest has mirrored that of Hillel Zeitlin. Both grew disenchanted with traditional theistic religion, turning to Western philosophy and religious studies, and then returned to tradition by developing a formulation of Jewish theology inspired by a reinterpretation of Kabbalah and Hasidism. Abraham Joshua Heschel was in many ways Green's most important teacher. Though Green has since moved away from elements of Heschel's theology, particularly Heschel's conceptions of a personal, transcendent God, Green carried forward his project of translating the sources of Hasidism and Jewish mysticism into a theology for the contemporary American community. In fact, the sensitive reader will see that Green has striven to embody parts of all three of these important figures.

The next two selections come from Green's theological trilogy. The essay "Jewish Theology: A New Beginning" first appeared as the introduction and first chapter of Radical Judaism. Here Green offers his fullest reading of Creation as a sacred drama, embracing the theory of evolution as a way of describing the Divine's endless quest for expression through the fullness of all life. Green moves to a description of his understanding of "God," a term that he employs only grudgingly because of its personified and theistic connotations. As a mystical panentheist he prefers to refer to the Divine as Y-HW-H, a name which signifies nothing less than the totality of Being itself. Though at times he does embrace mythic and personalist language, Green's philosophy aims to transcend the more dualistic and theistic conceptions of the Divine. Encounters with Y-H-W-H are moments of overwhelming awareness of the immanent presence, to which we are called to respond with sacred deeds.

The third essay, "Road Back to Sinai: The Post-Critical Seeker" was originally the third part of Seek My Face. In this essay Green discusses the central questions of Revelation. While this piece is less concerned with incorporating the finds of biblical criticism than his later writings, here we find a mystical reframing of Revelation. Green describes the events of Mt. Sinai as an encounter in which divine wisdom was drawn forth from the innermost realm of silence into the world of language and speech. The text of the Torah is our response to the ineffable sacred encounter with Y-H-W-H. But the biblical account of Revelation, rather than being read literally, serves as a mythic description of an uninterrupted process in which we are called to take an active role. In Torah study, and indeed through Jewish theology, we continue to give verbal articulation to the ongoing self-revelation of divine wisdom. The life of the commandments is our daily embodiment of that revelation.

The final essay, "A Neo-Hasidic Life: Credo and Reflections," was published in a Festschrift dedicated to Rabbi Neil Gillman, a theologian at Green's alma mater, the Jewish Theological Seminary. This piece was written in Green's seventies, and it is the most recent work included in this book. Green reflects upon his personal journey of some fifty years. He describes the thrill of finding a Jewish language in which to describe the spiritual quest of his youth, and the long task of articulating it over the succeeding years and decades. Green offers a series of ideas that are the cornerstones of his personal religious life; some are theological points, while others are devotional practices. He then comments upon each of them in turn. "Three Warsaw Mystics" and this concluding piece may be seen to serve here as bookends. The former is Green's quest to establish his intellectual heritage, and "A Neo-Hasidic Life" is his intentional contribution to the ongoing and future-oriented project of revitalizing and reinterpreting Hasidic mysticism for the contemporary Jewish seeker.

Epilogue

Green has been a collector of early American glass for many years. This is a part of his deeply American identity, but it also reflects his profound appreciation of aesthetic beauty and the mysterious qualities of glass. He will permit me, then, to conclude this introduction with a brief text attributed to the eighteenth-century mystic R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto that employs a metaphor he will appreciate:

> The principle is as follows: if you cover the window to a room with a glass of many different hues, the sun will strike it just as it is, without any differentiation. Yet a great many colors will be visible in the room. These come from rays of the sun itself—as if it too is polychromatic. This [vision of the colors] is all you can see when you are in the room. It is impossible to understand the ray of light in any other manner.
> The blessed Infinite One works in a similar way. The veil of tsimtsum has been placed before Him, and all the many colors depend on it. These are the laws of nature, from beginning to end. Of course, all of these things are quite different for the Infinite One, and we cannot ever understand them. But this we do know: the things we see in our reality are not the things as they truly are, for that is something much more sublime. They only appear thus because of the glass covering the sun . . . Understand this well.

We see the world around us in all of its multiplicity and distinction. While many elements are in need of loving repair, it is also true that this imperfect world is suffused with a radiant and beautiful divine light expressed in many different hues. But only in those rare, fleeting moments of heightened sensitivity do we remember our perception is based on the light flooding through a stained glass window. The polychromatic illusion of tsimtsum holds back Y-H-W-H's infinite light, granting us the blessings of free choice and individual identity. Beyond this veil, or window, there shines an overwhelmingly brilliant light, which forever seeks out new hues and forms of expression.

But perhaps Green would ask us to take this metaphor one step further. We are active partners in the projects of Creation, Revelation, and Redemption. It is not enough for us to study the

contours of the stained glass window and thus come to realize that there is a hidden unity expressed in the polychromatic light. Through our quest, our deeds, and our theology, we become the glaziers of the Jewish tradition in each generation. We are charged with the task of recasting the glass window through which the sacred light of Y-H-W-H enters into our world. <>

Judith Plaskow: Feminism, Theology, and Justice edited by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Aaron W Hughes [Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers, Brill, 9789004279797]

Judith Plaskow, Professor of Religious Studies Emerita at Manhattan College in New York, is a leading Jewish feminist theologian. She has forged a revolutionary vision of Judaism as an egalitarian religion and has argued for the inclusion of sexually marginalized groups in society in general and in Jewish society in particular. Rooted in the experience of women, her feminist Jewish theology reflects the impact of several philosophical strands, including hermeneutics, dialogical philosophy, critical theory, and process philosophy. Most active in the American Academy of Religion, she has shaped the academic discourse on women in religion while critiquing Christian feminism for lingering forms of anti-Judaism.

CONTENTS

Excerpt: Judith Plaskow: An Intellectual Portrait by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson

Judith Plaskow is perhaps the most famous and influential Jewish feminist theologian. For the past four decades she has been a preeminent voice among Jewish feminists, contributing to the profound transformation of contemporary Judaism. With a passion for justice that took its inspiration from biblical prophets, Plaskow has substantiated the claim that Judaism is a patriarchal religion based on inequality and injustice and, in its place, has called for the creation of feminist Judaism. Plaskow was the first feminist to argue that the problem of women in Judaism is neither sociological nor political but rather theological. Because the sacred texts of the Jewish tradition have been composed, transmitted, and interpreted by men alone, they have constructed a male-centered God-language that ignored women's experience, made maleness normative, and created a Jewish society that subordinated and marginalized women. If contemporary Judaism is to achieve the prophetic vision of justice, Jewish God-language has to change; the three pillars of Judaism—God, Torah, and Israel—have to be reinterpreted; and new religious rituals have to be composed. Plaskow's reconstruction of Judaism in accord with feminism is truly revolutionary.

The Feminist Vision: Methodology, Critique, and Reconstruction

Wishing to end millennia of male dominance which has been harmful to all women, including Jewish women, Plaskow offered a radical liberation theology. It is "radical" in the original sense of the term, namely, going back to roots. Since the revelation of the Torah at Sinai is the root experience of Judaism, Plaskow has shown how Jewish men have written the experiences of women out of the tradition by simultaneously silencing women and excluding them from the process of interpretation. The only way to respond to this profound injustice is to move women from the margins to the center, making it possible for women to become equal interpreters of divine revelation whose wisdom matters. The recognition of women's full humanity has implications for all aspects of society (e.g., law, politics, economics, religion, education, and culture), but it is most poignant in terms of human sexuality. The unequal power relation between men and women is the mark of

heterosexuality, which has become even doubly oppressive because it was posited as the only normative form of relationship. To be fully liberated from male oppression it is necessary for humanity to recognize all forms of human sexuality—lesbian, homosexual, bisexual, and transgendered—as valid and treat those who manifest nonheterosexual behavior with dignity and respect. Plaskow's radical liberation theology is thus inseparable from her woman-centered sexual ethics and her social activism.

Although she has more recently rejected this dichotomy as overly simple, Plaskow's critique begins with the basic feminist distinction between sex (i.e., biological differences between men and women) and gender (i.e., socially constructed roles and expectations of men and women). in patriarchal society gender and sex overlap: a given trait or mode of behavior is considered "masculine" when it relates to power, control, and prestige; conversely, traits associated with marginal social locations are considered "feminine." Moreover, in patriarchal society "masculine" terms stand for what is human and male, while "feminine" terms connote only femaleness, as if the female is a less-worthy variant of the male standard. From a feminist perspective, the imbalance between the "masculine" and the "feminine" operates throughout culture, giving rise to unequal and unjust gender-based social practices. This aspect of patriarchy is especially pernicious when we consider religion, which expresses our ultimate concerns. if God is conceptualized in masculine terms (e.g., "lord," "master," "king," "judge," and "warrior"), we not only privilege the male over the female, we also sanction these relations of domination to be normative, since humans (especially Jewish males) are supposed to imitate God. To uproot injustice to women we must repudiate male-centered language and construct a new God-language that comes out of women's experience, offering metaphors that facilitate nonhierarchical, egalitarian relations and that reflect an understanding of power as "power-with" rather than as domination.

Plaskow's life, career, and academic writings demonstrate the ambiguity and complexity of the term "Jewish philosophy." if by "Jewish philosophy" we refer to reasoned reflections about the Jewish religious beliefs, authoritative texts, rituals and practices, and historical experience, Plaskow is undoubtedly a Jewish philosopher. When she subjects Judaism to a scathing feminist critique, she weighs the relative merits of various arguments, points out the logical flaws of various claims, and generalizes about what is right, good, and true. However, if by "Jewish philosophy" we refer more narrowly to an academic activity of engaging a well-defined body of philosophical literature (by non-Jewish and Jewish philosophers), then defining Plaskow as a Jewish philosopher is more complex. Although Plaskow holds a B.A. in philosophy, her graduate training and academic career took shape not in the discipline of philosophy but rather in the discipline of religious studies. at Yale Divinity School she was trained in systematic (Christian) theology and (to a lesser degree) the comparative study of world religions and her conversation with Jewish and non-Jewish philosophical texts was shaped by feminist concerns. Occasionally Plaskow refers to (male) Jewish philosophers, but her point of departure is always feminist, that is to say, she concerns herself with ideas of male philosophers only to the extent that they are relevant to her feminist analysis. She is not interested in the philosophic exposition of other people's thought (be they Jews or non-Jews) for its own sake.

Indeed, Plaskow never refers to herself as a "Jewish philosopher," but sees herself as a "Jewish theologian," or more precisely as a "Jewish feminist theologian," and she regards her work not as "Jewish philosophy" but as "Jewish theology" or "Jewish thought." as a theologian, Plaskow is concerned primarily with the interpretation of sacred texts, explaining how the canonic tradition shaped the social location of Jewish women over the centuries. Plaskow's theology is quite different from that of other Jewish theologians, because hers is a grass-roots theology. Her point of departure is not the received texts but the lived experience of the texts' interpreters, the women who refused to accept their exclusion from the act of interpretation and who courageously began to confront the canonic tradition. Feminist consciousness-raising groups forged this experience in the 1960s and 1970s, in which Plaskow took very active part. That group experience has shaped the style of

Plaskow's writing: instead of promoting her own individual originality, Plaskow always speaks in the name of a larger vision—religious feminism—and as part of a larger group, be they women, feminists, or Jewish feminists. More specifically, Plaskow forged her fusion of Judaism and feminism in the context of B'not esh (Daughters of Fire), a feminist "spirituality collective," as Plaskow defined it, that she co-founded in 1981. Writing as a spokesperson of a larger group to which she belongs, Plaskow always acknowledges the work of others with whom she forged her revolutionary vision and to whom she is intellectually indebted. Plaskow's feminist theology is thus a collective endeavor rooted in collective experience and not just the musing of an individual philosopher. As a feminist, Plaskow's primary loyalty is to other feminists, but her theorizing as a feminist reflects the influence of several philosophical strands, especially hermeneutics, dialogical philosophy, critical theory, and process philosophy. The hermeneutical tradition in western philosophy was rooted in the activity of Scriptural interpretation. From the Greek verb hermeneuein, "hermeneutics" means "to interpret," "to exegete," "to explain," or "to translate." Named after the Greek god Hermes, the messenger of the gods, hermeneutics was understood as a way to communicate knowledge, but the knowledge conveyed was not simply theoretical or abstract; rather the knowledge is intended to instruct and to direct the recipient of knowledge toward living rightly, very much as Torah does. Positioning itself against scientific Positivism, philosophical hermeneutics articulated the theory that explored the conditions and possibility of interpretation not only of literary texts but of all "texts," including art and artifacts. Plaskow's feminist project is thoroughly hermeneutical, although she does not devote her energy to the exposition of the leading figures of philosophical hermeneutics (e.g., Wilhelm Dilthey, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricouer).

Plaskow's project is hermeneutical because she wishes to understand what transpires between texts and interpreters and how the act of interpretation shapes lived reality at the same time that social location shapes the act of interpretation. in agreement with philosophical hermeneutics, Plaskow's feminist hermeneutics is based on one crucial philosophical point: understanding is not possible without pre-understanding, or prejudgment. Best expressed by Gadamer, this insight is her point of departure: to theorize as a feminist requires one to be acutely self-aware of one's own positionality, one's own prejudices, and one's own horizon of meaning. Acknowledging positionality entails that no matter how abstract the pursuit of truth is, philosophy is always historically grounded and socially embedded, and it requires the thinker to declare where she stands rather than hide behind the "veil of objectivity," as male philosophers or nonfeminist female philosophers tend to do. This is why Plaskow openly discusses her biography and intellectual development to shed light on her feminist reinterpretation of Judaism. For Plaskow, philosophy does not consist of disembodied, value-neutral theorizing; rather, philosophizing begins with lived historical experience, be it the experience of all women or specifically the experience of Jewish women or a Jewish woman, herself.

The emphasis on positionality is linked to yet another theoretical claim: all knowledge is linguistical, contextual, and inseparable from a tradition. Although Plaskow is not a philosopher of language per se, her feminist project presupposed a certain understanding of language: language does not mirror or reflect reality because language is not transparent. Rather, language construes reality, especially social reality in interhuman relations. if we want to change social relations, especially the relations between men and women, we must first be attentive to language, in particular the language about the ultimate reality we call "God." How we (or more precisely the men who construct and control social reality) have imaged God tells us not about the nature of God, who is beyond description or understanding, but about the nature of human beings and their values, ideals, and norms. The linguisticality of human existence means that not only is knowledge always refracted through language, but that all social reforms must begin with language since it frames how we think, speak, and act.

Human claims to knowledge are always socially embedded, emerging out of lived experience and

in specific sociocultural conditions. These conditions necessarily reflect underlying (but often unacknowledged) power relations, including the power imbalance between men and women within the context of patriarchy. Patriarchy, Plaskow charges along with other feminists, is neither "natural" nor "divinely ordained," although she does not regard sexism as more fundamental than racism or ethnocentrism, as other feminists have argued. For Plaskow, patriarchy is a set of social institutions that emerged at a certain point in human development, privileging men over women. Once in place, patriarchy has pervaded all aspects of society and culture, making maleness the norm of being human: women are the Other, defined only in relations to men, against which they are found wanting. in the words of Aristotle, women are "incomplete males," a perception that persisted since antiquity to our own day.

Since patriarchy has shaped all aspects of culture, the feminist must realize that all cultural products, including canonic texts, reflect the assumptions, values, and norms of patriarchy. Therefore, the feminist must approach all texts with the "hermeneutics of suspicion" that subjects all expressions of patriarchal culture, especially canonic texts, to close analysis in order to show their inherent partiality. Even when these texts claim to speak truth about God, the world, and human beings, they in fact speak only about men and for men, because these truth claims were made by men. The hermeneutics of suspicion is thus a hermeneutic of refusal, namely, the refusal to accept what men have said as authoritative and normative, even though the men-centered tradition has presented itself as such. By expositing the exclusion of women from the formation of the tradition, by demanding inclusion, and by offering alternative readings of the canonic texts, the hermeneutics of suspicion and refusal is the first step in the liberation of women from the oppression and abuses of patriarchy.

As historical entities human beings are necessarily "children of tradition," as Gadamer aptly put it. Tradition itself, with its unique religious symbols, beliefs, ritual practices, ethical norms, moral sensibilities, and social ideals, shapes the human horizon necessarily and inescapably. To be immersed in tradition means that feminists, especially those who define themselves in religious terms, cannot critique "religion" in general; rather, they must carry out the critical project within their own particular religious tradition. To critique a given religious tradition from within means that feminists must engage not only in "hermeneutics of suspicion," but also in "hermeneutics of remembrance." As a Liberal/Progressive Jew, Plaskow defines herself in religious categories and feels deep connection to Judaism as a religious way of life. After several years of engaging in feminist critique, Plaskow realized that she is not just a religious feminist who critiques the abuses of patriarchy but a Jewish feminist who cares deeply about Judaism and Jews. The feminist revolution that Plaskow sought to accomplish had to take place from within Judaism, by focusing on the interpretation, exposition, and application of the canonic sources of Judaism, first and foremost the Bible and secondarily the rabbinic corpus. The task of the feminist philosopher is thus dual: critique and analysis as well as recovery and reconstruction. Standing within the Jewish tradition, she insists on rereading the canonic sources against their male-centered grain, exposing their biases, gaps, and silences. The feminist reading of the traditional sources is not simply an act of claiming to decipher what God wants the Jews to be and to do; it is rather a reflexive and critical reading of Judaism that calls Jews to reconsider everything they take for granted about it.

To be a feminist, then, entails taking a critical stance toward a socially constructed reality constituted by language and a particular historical experience. This posture makes Plaskow's thought critical in the broad sense of the term, even though she does not engage the leading thinkers of Critical Theory (e.g., Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Walter Benjamin) in sustained analysis. As a critical theorist she weighs, evaluates, judges, and adjudicates claims, situations, and texts with the intent of exposing their distorting "blind spots," gaps, and silences of the ruling ideology (i.e., patriarchy). This critical engagement with the patriarchal Jewish tradition exposes the injustice done to women when they were silenced, excluded, or marginalized by Jewish men who claimed to be

the exclusive interpreters of divine revelation. Since in rabbinic Judaism the act of interpreting Torah is the very activity by which Jews communicate with God and reach the ultimate end of human life, the exclusion of women from the act of interpretation is not just morally unjust but also religiously harmful. The feminist interpreter cannot limit herself to uncovering that truth or theorizing about the past; rather, she must act within the social spheres that reform and transform the social reality that brought about the marginalization, exclusion, and subordination of women. With the feminist recovery of women's experience and the restoration of the female voice to the Jewish tradition, Plaskow offers Jewish philosophers a different way of philosophizing: philosophy begins with the lived experience of the philosopher, engages pressing social issues, and leads to action in the social world. As a critical activity, the task of philosophy (like the task of feminism) is ultimately practical: to make the world into a just place by ending oppression, exclusion, or marginalization of individuals and groups. To philosophize as Plaskow calls us to do is to engage in tikkun olam, the very lofty rabbinic goal to which Plaskow gave a new feminist interpretation…

Jewish Feminist Theology

Plaskow's life work is governed by one overarching and purposeful vision: to create a feminist Judaism. This mission has been articulated in numerous essays and public addresses but its most systematic expression is Plaskow's Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective (1990). Based on over two decades of sustained work as a feminist theologian, scholar of religion, editor of an academic journal, and social activist, this powerful book has transformed contemporary Judaism, generating a robust examination of Judaism in light of feminism among academics and nonacademics, Jews and non-Jews, men and women, and across the religious spectrum of Judaism. no one writing about feminism and Judaism since then has ignored (or could have afforded to ignore) this compelling book; by the same token, no one today could deny that Judaism has been profoundly transformed because of the feminist vision, most powerfully articulated by Judith Plaskow.

Let's look more closely at Plaskow's seminal work, presenting her feminist theology in her own words. As stated above, Plaskow was the first to argue that the problem of women in Judaism is first and foremost theological, because "theology surreptitiously affects many aspects of Jewish practice" (Sinai, 23). Since all aspects of Jewish society and culture have been shaped by theological presuppositions that have normative power, all Jews today, no matter how religious or secular they are, must pay attention to theology, if they wish to address the marginalization, exclusion, or subordination of women in Judaism. Plaskow names this theological enterprise, "Godwrestling" (Sinai, 33), a term coined and popularized by Arthur Waskow, a fellow, Left-leaning Jewish theologian. Godwrestling is an invitation to Jews to ask poignant theological questions and not to shirk from inconvenient truths about inherent injustice within Judaism. As much as Jacob's wrestling with the angel transformed him into "Israel," giving birth to a nation, so will contemporary wrestling with problematic Jewish theology give rise to a more just and egalitarian Judaism.

The feminist critical engagement with Jewish theology, however, does not begin with exposition of Jewish sacred texts in an attempt to fathom what they say and what they mean. Rather, the feminist theological critique begins with historiography, precisely because human beings are temporal beings who live in history. Understanding how the past is recorded, transmitted, and interpreted is precisely the point of departure for feminist theology. In patriarchal Judaism that task was the exclusive privilege of men: only men composed the sacred texts of Judaism; only men interpreted their meaning for all Jews; only men translated that meaning into normative legislation; and only men created and staffed the social institutions which turned law into daily practice. Thus, even though the Jewish People, or Jewish society through the ages, comprises of both men and women, the experience of Jewish women did not shape the tradition.

By "women's experience" (a topic analyzed already in her doctoral dissertation) Plaskow refers to "the daily, lived substance of women's lives, the conscious events, thoughts, and feelings that

constitute women's reality" (Sinai, 11). Women's experience, Plaskow reminds her readers, is "not an essence" or "some innate capacity of women". Rather, women's experience is a "product of culture" and as such needs to be and indeed can be recovered through historical research, once we acknowledge the partial nature of the records we have at our disposal. Yet, that partiality does not mean that women were historically absent. Indeed, women were and always are present in Jewish society and collective experience, but they were made to be silent, their voice taken away from them. Feminism has restored voice to Jewish women, enabling them not only to express and share their present experiences, but also to recover the experiences of women through the ages, beginning with the root experience of Judaism: Sinai. "Standing again at Sinai" is thus the most appropriate symbol for the task of Jewish women: they need to reassert the historicity of women's presence as recipients of divine revelation and they must engage in the reinterpretation of the entire Jewish tradition in order to create a Judaism in which women are active and equal participants.

The creation of feminist Judaism required the reinterpretation of the three pillars of Judaism: Torah, Israel, and God. "Torah" does not refer just to the Five Books of Moses, the Bible in its entirety, or even to the Bible as interpreted by the rabbinic tradition. "Torah" is that and more because it consists of the memory and traces of the root experience in which Torah was given to Israel at Sinai. The Torah, namely, instruction, that Israel received at Sinai included also "women's words, teachings and actions hitherto unseen" (Sinai, 28), the rich and diverse women's experiences which the Jewish tradition has silenced, occluded, and marginalized. To recover the full meaning of Torah we must use the modern historiographical method "of careful and critical sifting of sources" (Sinai, 35) in order to recover what Yosef Haim Yerushalmi called "Jewish group memory." Although Yerushalmi was no feminist, Plaskow shows how his analysis of Jewish history and Jewish memory is precisely the method that Jewish feminists adopt when they recover the full meaning of Torah. As feminist historians look "at history from a woman-centered perspective, they have tried to reconstruct independent women's cultures developed within or over against the prevailing assumptions of patriarchal society" (Sinai, 37). Plaskow makes clear then that her interest in historiography is "theological rather than historical" because she is "concerned with the way in which feminist historiography can open up our understanding of Torah by offering as Torah a new range of sources".

Feminist biblical hermeneutic begins with the awareness that men's editorial work read women out of existence. Even though the biblical records themselves are therefore partial, they can provide information about "patterns and ideologies of sex roles, evidence that might shed some light on the social and religious situation of the mass of women in a given time" (Sinai, 40). Feminist biblical scholarship offers an entire new way of reading the biblical narratives written in the early periods of Israelite history, uncovering the leadership role women played in ancient society as well as "women's religious lives outside of 'normative' structures" (Sinai, 42). When the Bible is read through a feminist lens we "see a larger Torah behind the Torah, a Torah in which women's experience is rendered visible, and the social and religious forms to which they adhered are depicted in their complexity and power" (Sinai, 43). Thus the feminist "reconception of Torah," "reveals another world around and underneath the textual tradition, a world in which women are historical agents struggling within and against patriarchal culture" (Sinai, 50). Once we recognize that women's experience is part of "the fuller Torah we need to recover," we can no longer take "any Jewish text as given, as having emerged organically from an eternal, unambiguous, uncontested religion vision" (Sinai, 50). The feminist approach necessarily relativizes the normative tradition, reminding us that the Judaism we have is not for all Jews but only "the Judaism of the male elite" (Sinai, 51). Judaism is much "richer, more complex and more diverse than either 'normative' sources or most branches of modern Judaism would admit".

From this critical and incontrovertible argument follows the constructive or reconstructive dimension of feminist Judaism. All Jewish women, but especially the feminists among them, must become

actively engaged in the reconstruction of Torah, of Jewish collective memory, and of Jewish social and religious life. They must (as indeed they have done) be engaged in composition of new midrashim, new rituals, and new liturgy that express their religiosity, spirituality, sensibility, and values. Plaskow celebrates and promotes feminist creativity and inventiveness, through the innovative ceremonies of Rosh hodesh, feminist haggadot, feminist welcoming of a baby girl, and Sabbath liturgy. The new feminist rituals, however, could not remain mere feminist fancy, whim, or intellectual entertainment. if they are to transform contemporary Judaism once and for all, they have to become regarded as legally binding. halakha, much more than midrash or liturgy, is the real challenge to feminism and its innovative, progressive spirit. So long as halakha is presented as an unchanging and in principle unchangeable divine revelation to be interpreted by expert men, a feminist Judaism will remain untenable.

Plaskow addresses the halakhic challenge in two ways. First she invokes Martin Buber's philosophy of relation or dialogical philosophy in support of her view, since Buber insisted that divine-human relations are not law-governed. Law belongs to the functional and instrumental i-it relations, whereas true dialogue between the human "i" and the "Eternal Thou" is direct, unmediated, and in principle not amenable to systemization. Divine revelation, then, cannot be reduced to law and halakha must not replace God as the center of Jewish life. Second, and more importantly but provocatively, Plaskow challenges the very assumption that halakha as we have it is authoritative. halakha, like all legal systems, is a human product, the work of human beings who operated within certain historical conditions. The human origins of halakha, Plaskow asserts as a Liberal/Progressive Jew, means that halakha is inherently subject to change, reinterpretation, and reformation. Rabbinic Judaism was itself a novel interpretation of Judaism and the rabbis "believed that their interpretations gave the true meaning of Scripture," but the rabbis represented their own views and not the views of the community in its entirety. Precisely because religious authority, Plaskow argues, always rests "in a community of interpreters" the definition of the interpretative community must be as inclusive as possible so that the halakhic tradition must continue to respond to "the experience of ever-widening communities." In the ideal, future feminist Judaism, laws that govern human relations, especially the formation and dissolution of relationship, will have "to acknowledge women's full agency" and women will have to be active participants in the interpretation of the halakhic tradition and the process of decision making about women. Plaskow does not exclude halakha from the ideal future but she maintains that "any halakha that is part of a feminist Judaism would have to look very different from halakha as it has been" (Sinai, 72). Needless to say, most Orthodox Jews, including Orthodox women, would not endorse Plaskow's understanding of Jewish law. However, there is no denying her point that feminist theology is inseparable from feminist legal theory and that the debate about women and gender touches the most fundamental aspects of Jewish religious self-understanding.

Plaskow's understanding of "Torah" is inseparable from her understanding of "Israel." Plaskow puts it succinctly: "If Torah is Jewish memory as it lives in and forms the present, Israel is the people that remembers and transforms the memory" (Sinai, 75). The feminist reconstruction of Judaism demands a new understanding of "Israel," the recipient of divine revelation. To begin, Plaskow argues for a new understanding of human selfhood, or personhood. Contrary to the dominant trend in modern philosophy since Descartes, the human person is not an autonomous entity that is the bearer of human rights by virtue of rationality, but a relational being whose "personhood is shaped, nourished and sustained in community." Plaskow's emphasis on the relational or social nature of the human self is indebted to Buber's philosophy of relation no less than to Judaism's belief that God entered a covenant with Israel. The covenant means that the "Jewish relationship to God is mediated through this community" (Sinai, 80); a Jew cannot have a relationship to God outside the community. Because "God is fully present only with and among the community" (ibid.), it is necessary to define the community inclusively rather than exclusively and

remember that the community of "Israel" has continued to evolve in history.

The rabbinic understanding of "Israel," alas, is inadequate because the rabbis excluded women from Torah study, exempted women from time-bound commandments, forbade women to lead public prayers, and regulated women's place within the patriarchal family. In so doing the rabbis underscored the Otherness of women. Plaskow's analysis of Otherness is indebted mainly to Simone de Beauvoir and it stands in contrast to the interpretation by Emmanuel Levinas, the philosopher who made Otherness the center of his Jewish critique of Western philosophy. Whereas for Levinas Otherness is understood positively, the Other is the source of ethical obligation, for Plaskow, following de Beauvoir, Otherness is understood negatively; the Other is always the one-who-is-not-the-norm, the one who is less-than-the standard, the one who-has-no-selfhood. The reason for Plaskow's preference of de Beauvoir over Levinas is quite obvious: whereas the French non-Jewish female philosopher offers a vantage point for the critique of patriarchal Judaism, the French male Jewish philosopher perpetuates the traditional stereotypes of the female in Judaism, which Plaskow calls into question.

Plaskow's feminist redefinition of Israel has far-reaching consequences for contemporary Judaism, because she insists that "women's contributions to Jewish community are not driven underground, thwarted, or distorted, and men's are not given more weight and status than they ought to enjoy" (Sinai, 87). The feminist revolution empowers women to define themselves, reassess the causes of their oppression, and restate how women differ from men. The more women take ownership of their life and their place in the society the more they have to struggle with the problem of difference, diversity, and hierarchy. After all, Judaism insists on the inherent and inheritable difference between Jews and all other nations and interprets the covenantal relationship with God in hierarchical terms of being the Chosen People. In the morning prayers the observant male Jew expresses gratitude to God for not being a Gentile, a slave, or a woman, three groups who are either precluded from the observance of Jewish law, or excluded from some aspects of the Jewish law. As a feminist Plaskow is justly troubled by the hierarchical understanding of chosenness and endorses the reconstructionist theology of Mordecai Kaplan who explicitly rejected such concept. Plaskow's project is to show the interconnection between the "rejection of chosenness and the rejection of women's Otherness" (Sinai, 103). Jews were emancipated because of the assumption that they possess humanity, but they were denied their particularity as Jews. Plaskow flatly rejects the notion of "generic humanity," because she maintains that selfhood is always communal, but she also argues that communal identity does not necessitate the negation of other groups. The challenge for Jews today is how to continue to see themselves as covenantal people, without interpreting the covenant with God in hierarchical and exclusive terms.

As a religious person and a theologian, Plaskow rejects a strictly secular understanding of Jewish existence, because the root experience at Sinai was profoundly religious. To reconstitute Judaism as egalitarian, nonhierarchical, and pluralistic is a religious project that requires first the critique of male-centered God-language and then the creation of a new God-language. Traditional Judaism images God as a masculine, albeit asexual, deity. This has far-reaching consequences for women: "When God is pictured as male in a community that understands 'man' to have been created in God's image, it only makes sense that maleness functions as the norm of Jewish humanity" and "when maleness becomes normative, women are necessarily Other, excluded from Torah and subordinated in the community of Israel" (Sinai, 127). androcentric God-language is wrong not only because it inevitably marginalizes women, but also because of its understanding of divine power as domination, or as "power over" (Sinai, 130). Whether divine power is asserted over nature, over history, over other gods, or over humans, this understanding of power is itself the cause of injustice because it is perpetuated in human "schemes of dominance." To construct a just and egalitarian Judaism, it is necessary to articulate a new, nonhierarchical, pluralistic God-language that expresses fluidity, multiplicity, and movement in

God as the source of all being. The first generation of Jewish feminists (e.g., Marcia Falk, Lynn Gottlieb, Elyse Goldstein, and Maggie Wenig among others) have done precisely that when they wrote their own midrashim, liturgy, and rituals. Plaskow embraces the work of other feminist theologians who called for employing feminine imagery (e.g., "bride," "queen," "mother," etc.) when one prays to the Goddess, or nonpersonal, nature-based symbols (e.g., "fountain," and "source"). Her own preference is to retain a personalist language of God, but to think about God not as a "dominating Other" but as a "friend, lover, companion and co-creator" (Sinai, 164). God's power should be understood not as dominion or domination but as "empowerment," and God is understood not as the Other who stands over us but the one "who is with us . . . a partner in dialogue who ever and again summons us to responsible action" (ibid.). Plaskow's alternative God-language resonates with Buber's dialogical philosophy as well as with process philosophy, although Plaskow herself does not engage process philosophers systematically. That task was accomplished by Carol P. Christ, Plaskow's long-term academic collaborator, whose influence on Plaskow is unmistakable.

The Chapters

Plaskow is a utopian thinker whose commitment to the pursuit of truth about sex and gender is an expression of the rabbinic ideal of tikkun olam. She has had the courage to imagine ideal reality and the tenacity to turn the ideal into a social reality. Standing in the intersection of feminism, Jewish feminism, religious studies, Jewish studies, and women and gender studies, Plaskow has paved the way for a new generation of scholars and activists who are all indebted to her. Today, non-Orthodox Jewish women are ordained as rabbis, serve as cantors, religious educators, and leaders of Jewish organizations, and even Orthodox women have access to formal education, including halakhic learning, serving as legal advocates to other women in rabbinic courts and generating their own interpretation of the sacred texts.38 Within the academy, all fields of Jewish studies (i.e., history, literature, philosophy, biblical studies, rabbinics, politics, sociology and ethnography, Holocaust studies, Israel studies, and film studies) have been thoroughly transformed by feminism. In retrospect, then, the feminist revolution has been exceedingly successful, and Plaskow should be credited for it, even though she has not done so singlehandedly. Indeed, as she reminds her readers repeatedly, the feminist revolution is necessarily a collective enterprise. To this day the feminist discourse remains a collective endeavor expressed in anthologies more than in monographs, it forges a close link between theory and practice, it is thoroughly (though not exclusively) hermeneutical, and it is profoundly interested in challenging us to understand the complexity of sex and gender. "Third-wave Jewish feminists," as they are now called, perpetuated Plaskow's vision but also go beyond it and even criticize it. For example, third-wave feminists have continued to enrich our understanding of human sexuality and the place of sexuality in Judaism, but they do so with more detailed engagement with postmodern and queer theories, and some Jewish feminists have argued that Jewish feminism is not about equality and justice for women, but rather, ironically enough, "about power," that is, the power to be in control of the tradition. it is doubtful that Plaskow would agree, since she has worked so tirelessly to dismantle the conceptual validity of "power over," but there is no doubt that third-wave feminists all walk in Plaskow's footsteps. Plaskow's feminist revolution has also impacted the academic discipline of Jewish philosophy, despite its resistance and reluctance to take feminist philosophy seriously. Her feminist methodology has paved the way for doing Jewish philosophy in a personally involved, historically grounded, ethically concerned, and socially responsible manner. Philosophy, and especially Jewish philosophy, is not "a view from nowhere," to borrow from Thomas Nagel; it is instead a form of personal Godwrestling.

The chapters that follow give a taste of Plaskow's life's work. The first essay is her presidential address to the American Academy of Religion, delivered in November 1998. The essay spells out Plaskow's conviction that "the academy is very much part of real life," and showcases the impact of feminism on the academic study of religion, highlighting the interplay between the academy

and the society at large and arguing for the socially embedded nature of feminist theorizing. The second essay, “Jewish Theology in Feminist Perspective,” presents the methodology of Jewish feminist theology and summarizes the accomplishments of the feminist theological discourse from 1970–1990, featuring Plaskow as a spokesperson of the discourse. The third essay, “Authority, Resistance, and Transformation: Jewish Feminist Reflection on Good sex,” exemplifies the expansion of feminist liberation theology to the realm of human sexuality, and offers an argument for the inclusion of sexually marginalized and oppressed groups within Judaism. The essay argues that the “authority for singling out the self-critical and dissident elements in our textual traditions comes not from the traditions themselves, but rather from the new possibilities envisioned and created by the particular communities of solidarity and resistance within which we participate.” The fourth and final essay, “Anti-Judaism in Feminist Christian interpretation,” exemplifies her Jewish critique of feminist anti-Judaism, inspired by traditional Christology. Together these four essays illustrate how theology, hermeneutics of canonic texts, social criticism, and political activism are intertwined in the life, career, and writings of Judith Plaskow. <>

The Soul of the Stranger: Reading God and Torah from a Transgender Perspective by Joy Ladin [HBI Series on Jewish Women, Brandeis University Press, 9781512600667]

Reading some of the best-known Torah stories through the lens of transgender experience, Joy Ladin explores fundamental questions about how religious texts, traditions, and the understanding of God can be enriched by transgender perspectives, and how the Torah and trans lives can illuminate one another. Drawing on her own experience and lifelong reading practice, Ladin shows how the Torah, a collection of ancient texts that assume human beings are either male or female, speaks both to practical transgender concerns, such as marginalization, and to the challenges of living without a body or social role that renders one intelligible to others—challenges that can help us understand a God who defies all human categories. These creative, evocative readings transform our understanding of the Torah’s portrayals of God, humanity, and relationships between them.

Excerpt: Shipwrecked with God

I'm often asked how I reconcile being religious with being transgender. For me, there has never been a conflict between them. For as long as I can remember, I felt that I was female, and for as long as I can remember, I have sensed God's presence.

I've become used to talking about being transgender, but no matter how much I talk about my relationship with God, it still makes me squirm to say, "I feel God's presence" I grew up surrounded by people for whom God is "God," an empty word, an outdated superstition, a target for rage about the Holocaust and other tragedies, a symbol of ideals that human beings find hard to live up to. Even at Hebrew school and synagogue, I dared not let anyone guess that, to me, God was not an abstraction but someone who was there, invisible but as real as cold or warmth or humidity.

No one else I knew seemed to experience God as a living presence. But when I read the Torah—the Hebrew Bible, what Christians call "the Old Testament"—that was the God I found there. The Torah portrays God as passionately involved with human lives—not just with extraordinary individuals like Abraham and Sarah, but with everyone. God doesn't buy or sell, but insists that human beings do so honestly. God doesn't have parents, but is concerned about how we treat ours. God doesn't live in space or time, is not subject to famine or plenty, day or night, birth or death, but wants us to give meaning to the seasons and places of our lives.

But the Torah also makes it clear that although God is present and personally involved in human lives,

God is not human. God has no face, no form, no beginning or end, and can't be understood in any of the terms we use to understand ourselves and our world. As God tells Moses at the burning bush, God is what God is, and will be what God will be (Exod. 3:14).

This invisible, incomprehensible, but undeniably present God is the God I grew up with, not because my family was religious (they weren't), not because we read the Torah together (we didn't), not because religious teachers or leaders taught me to think of God this way (they didn't teach me to think about God at all), but because, for as long as I can remember, this was the God to whom I woke and with whom I fell asleep, the God to whom I whispered and whimpered, pleaded, and sometimes screamed.

To me, God was not a mystical experience; God was a fact of life, like my parents. But I felt closer to God than to my parents. My parents, like other human beings, identified me with my male body. To them, I was a boy named Jay, and both because I loved them and because I was terrified of being rejected if they guessed the truth, I did my best to act like the boy they thought I was.

God never mistook me for the body others saw. God knew who I truly was, and understood how alone I felt, because God, like me, had no body to make God visible, no face human beings could see.

Unlike God, apart from gender, I wasn't so different from the kids I grew up with. Like other children, I ate and slept and went to school, rode my bike, played, was self-centered and sometimes cruel, careless of the truth and others' feelings. Even though I knew that the way I looked on the outside didn't express who I was on the inside, I still judged others by the color of their skin, the fitness of their bodies, and the shabbiness or sharpness of their clothes, and assumed that, unlike me, other people really were the boys or girls, men or women, they appeared to be.

But despite the many ways I was like other children, I always felt I was something else, something that had no name or place in the world. Nowadays, I would say that because I didn't fit into the gender binary that defines everyone as either male or female, I couldn't feel that I was really part of humanity. But when I was child, all I knew was that my sense of being female made me different in ways that were shameful and dangerous, ways that kept others from seeing or understanding or loving me. Present but invisible, I felt like a ghost, hidden within and haunting the boy everyone thought I was.

Of course, none of us is exactly who we seem to be. Few people old enough to think about it would say that their bodies perfectly express who they are, or that they always feel and act in ways that fit others' ideas of who they ought to be. Gender and other identities are always compromises that require each of us to sacrifice some of our messy individuality in order to fit into our families, friendships, and communities.

But when it came to gender, I couldn't make that compromise. I could, and did, act like the boy I was supposed to be, but I couldn't feel that I was really that boy, couldn't identify myself with other boys, couldn't feel I was really present in any relationship, because every relationship was based on gender. I wasn't just my parents' child; I was supposed to be their son.

I wasn't just a kid on the block; I was supposed to be one of the boys. I wasn't just a Jew; I was supposed to be a Jewish male. And so, even though I was surrounded by people who thought they knew me, I grew up feeling invisible, afraid, and alone.

But I was alone with God. All the things that cut me off from other people—my lack of a body that felt like mine, my inability to fit into gender categories, my sense of being utterly, unspeakably different—made me feel closer to God. God knew who and what I was. God had created me, fitting my mismatched body and soul together. God was always there, day and night, as I tried to live and sometimes tried to die. We were an odd couple, me struggling with a body that didn't feel like mine, God existing beyond all that is, was, and will be. But when it came to relating to human beings, God and I had something in common: neither of us could be seen or understood by those we dwelt among and loved.

And so, for as long as I can remember, being transgender has brought me closer to God. That may seem strange. Both religious and nonreligious people tend to think of transgender identities as inherently secular. But there are many religious people whose relationships with God have been profoundly shaped by being transgender because, as they wrestled with suffering, isolation, and questions about who they were and how they should live, they, like other religious people, turned to God for the understanding they couldn't find among human beings.

Most religious traditions recognize that conditions that cut us off from other people can bring us closer to God. But if I had I told my rabbi or Hebrew school teachers or parents or community leaders that God and I regularly commiserated about the difficulties of loving people who couldn't see or understand us, they would, no doubt, have let me know that the Creator of the Universe is not in the habit of talking with children, and certainly not with children who don't fit into the categories of male or female. Though there is much more awareness of transgender people today than when I was growing up, and more religious communities that accept openly transgender members, even the most welcoming communities have just begun to consider how religious traditions based on the assumption that human beings are either and always male or female can speak to people who don't fit those categories.

I was in my mid-forties before I knew any rabbis who would accept me as a transgender Jew, but I heard Jewish tradition speak to my life every Yom Kippur afternoon, when Jews traditionally read the Book of Jonah, which tells a story every transgender person knows: the story of someone desperate to avoid living as the person (in Jonah's case, as the prophet) they know themselves to be.

From the beginning of the book, when God orders him to "Go at once to Nineveh ... and proclaim judgment upon it; for their wickedness has come before Me," Jonah knows he is a prophet (Jon. 1:2). Jonah doesn't ask why God chose him to deliver this message, or argue, as Moses does at the burning bush, that he isn't qualified to do so. He just runs away, because, as he explains in the final chapter, he knows God won't destroy Nineveh, no matter how wicked the people are: "That is why I fled ... I know that You are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, renouncing punishment" (4:2). Even as God tells him of God's impending judgment, Jonah, as befits a prophet, already knows that God will spare them.

Jonah is so desperate to avoid being a prophet that he abandons whatever life he has been living and boards a ship to Tarshish. But as many transgender people know, when we flee from being who we are, we flee from life itself. While his ship is tossed by a God-sent storm, Jonah stays asleep in the hold of the heaving ship, in a slumber so deep that it overrides even his instinct for self-preservation. When the captain wakes him and tells him to "call upon your god" for deliverance, Jonah responds not with prayer but with a suicidal gesture, telling the sailors, "Heave me overboard, and the sea will calm down for you" (1:6, 12).

Why would Jonah respond this way? God sent the storm because he refused to go to Nineveh, so it would have made sense for Jonah to appease God's anger by telling God he would do what God ordered him to do. Jonah's self-destructive response reflects a psychological pattern that is all too familiar among transgender people: flee from yourself for as long as you can, and when you can no longer endure the internal and external storms, kill yourself for the sake of others, so you can avoid ever having to live as who you are. Jonah may have thought he was killing himself for the sake of the sailors, but the truth is that he is so desperate to avoid living as the prophet he is that he prefers not to live at all.

Transgender people often tell ourselves that suicide will resolve the conflict between our need to be, and not be, who we truly are. Our families, our communities, and our world will be better off without us, we think, and we, released from the shame of hiding and the terror of living as who we are, will finally be at peace. In Jonah's case, this suicidal fantasy seems to come true: when Jonah is thrown overboard, the sea stops raging, and he sinks peacefully "into the depths, into the heart of

the sea," where he is "swallowed" by a "huge fish" (1:15, 2:3).

But Jonah, miraculously, doesn't die. In the depths of the sea, in the belly of the fish, Jonah finds himself alone with the God he fled. God literally surrounds him, providing him with breath, warmth, and protection, sustaining his life in the midst of death.

In other words, Jonah's flight from himself leads him simultaneously closer to death and closer to God. That spiritual paradox is at the heart of his story, and it was at the heart of the story of my life when I was living as a man I knew I wasn't. Like Jonah, I was so desperate to avoid living as who I was that I eagerly chose death over life, despair over hope, isolation over human connection. Even in the midst of family and friends, I felt like I was alone at the bottom of the ocean. But I wasn't alone: though suicidal depression swallowed me for decades, God was there, surrounding me, holding me, keeping me alive.

Even while Jonah is in the belly of the fish, he sees his miraculous deliverance as a turning point: "I sank to the base of the mountains; the bars of the earth closed upon me forever; yet You brought my life up from the pit, O LORD my God!" (2:7). Jonah is so grateful that God has saved him that when the fish vomits him out on shore, he overcomes his reluctance to present himself as a prophet and heads to Nineveh.

Unlike Jonah, I experienced God as preserving me in the depths rather than delivering me to life. God didn't want me to live as who I really was, I told myself. God wanted me—and was helping me—to submerge my true self forever. That's what love is, I told myself: pretending to be what others want you to be. Suffering in silence. Embracing loneliness. Giving up on joy.

Year after year, when the ram's horn blew on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, I wept, not because I was repenting of my sins, but because I knew that no matter how heartfelt my confessions, as long as I lived as a man, I would never feel grateful, or even truly alive. God could preserve my life in the depths of suicidal despair, but even God couldn't deliver me from those depths until I did what Jonah did: accept that I had to live as who I truly was.

Despite his gratitude for God's deliverance, Jonah still isn't thrilled about being a prophet, which in his case means walking through Nineveh proclaiming, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (3:4). As Jonah no doubt knew, prophets often paid a heavy price for expressing God's displeasure with the social order. Jeremiah was thrown into a pit; four hundred of Elijah's fellow prophets were murdered. Though Jonah isn't imprisoned or killed, his work as a prophet requires him to disrupt the community and challenge social norms by acting in ways that call unseemly attention to himself.

Like Jonah, I knew that I couldn't live as who I was without being stared at, treated as an embarrassment or public menace, and risking the ridicule and violence that transgender people face every day. It was easy to imagine how I and those I loved might suffer if I dared to express my female gender identity, but what good, I wondered, could possibly come of living a truth that would mark me, publicly and permanently, as "other"?

That is Jonah's question, too. Despite his firsthand knowledge of God's plans, Jonah never understands what good comes of him living as a prophet, because, as he says at the end of the book, he always knew that God would be merciful whether or not he marched through Nineveh proclaiming that the city was going to be destroyed. But unlike Jonah, the people of Nineveh couldn't hear God summoning them to change their lives. They needed to hear that message from a human throat, from a body they could see, from a person who not only saw things differently than they did but who was also willing to stand up, and stand out, as different. Jonah saved Nineveh—or rather, enabled Nineveh to save itself—by accepting the discomfort and the risk of being the prophet he was.

Most transgender people aren't leaders, visionaries, or prophets. Some day, being transgender will be no harder to understand or accept than other ways of being human. When that day comes, we won't have to wonder whether we

should kill ourselves for the sake of others, or pretend to be other than who we are. We will face our human share of sorrow and struggle, and when we look to religious communities for help, we will know that the traditions that sustain, comfort, and guide others are there to sustain, comfort, and guide us, too.

But for most of us, that future is still a distant dream, and so transgen-der people daily face the kinds of choices Jonah faced: will we run away, sink into despair, throw ourselves into the sea, or will we live as who we are, even when that means being seen as different, disruptive, or a threat to social order?

I don't mean to suggest that the Book of Jonah is about being transgender. The Book of Jonah is about being human. But transgender experience is human experience, and questions transgender people face are questions that we all face. Everyone, transgender or not, has to decide what parts of ourselves we will and will not live. Each of us has to decide when we can't and when we must sacrifice our individuality for the sake of our families and communities, when we have to be what others count on us to be, and when, like Jonah, we have to live the truths that set us apart from others and reveal to the world what we have only revealed to God. When we read the Book of Jonah in the light of transgender experience, we are reminded that the crisis it dramatizes is one that most people face sooner or later: the crisis of realizing that we must live what makes us different, or we cannot live at all.

As I hope this reading and other readings in this book show, religious traditions based on the assumption that everyone is simply male or female can and do speak to the lives of those who do not fit binary gender categories—which means that religious communities can include openly transgender people without abandoning or betraying those traditions. Every religious community that embraces people who don't make sense in terms of binary gender categories honors the image of the incomprehensible God in which, the first chapter of Genesis tells us, all human beings are created. In fact, if we take seriously the idea that human beings are created in the image of God, then whenever we expand our understanding of humanity, we can expand our understanding of God.

Religious traditions based on the Torah tend to think of humanity in terms of men. The Torah is filled with stories about men and laws directed toward men, and the assumption that male experience is the most important aspect of human experience shapes the way God is portrayed. Though the Torah doesn't portray God as a man, the Torah uses male pronouns to refer to God. When God talks to individuals, they are almost always men. When God is glorified in song, most of the metaphors used—"king," "warrior," "father," and so on—are based on male figures and experience. Because humanity is largely conceived in terms of men, so is God.

As Judith Plaskow and other feminist theologians have argued, when we expand our idea of humanity to give as much attention to women as to men, we expand the aspects of human experience we can draw on to understand God. We can understand God as female as well as male, mother as well as father, queen as well as king, nurturer as well as warrior, "She" as well as "He." God, of course, is no more female than male, but thinking of God in terms of women's as well as men's experience draws attention to aspects of God we tend to overlook otherwise.

Male-centered and feminist theologies draw our attention to ways in which God can be understood by analogy to human maleness and femaleness. By extension, expanding our definition of humanity to include transgender people draws our attention to ways in which God can be understood by analogy to transgender lives—the lives of those who, like God, do not fit traditional roles and categories.

But when I started reading the Torah as a child, I was struck more by how its stories of God resonated with my life than by how my life could help me understand God. This was the 1960s. There was no Laverne Cox, no Caitlyn Jenner, no Internet blogs or discussion boards. The Torah's stories about God were the first I had seen about someone who, like me, didn't fit binary gender categories, someone who didn't have a body to

make them visible, someone who had no place in the human world.

Although my reading of the Torah has always been shaped by my experience of being someone who doesn't make sense in terms of binary gender, I haven't always read it from a transgender perspective. For most of my life, I didn't think of myself as "transgender," a word I didn't learn until my mid-forties. I thought of myself as a "transsexual," a medical term coined to refer to people born into bodies of one sex who identify so strongly with the other that they feel the need to change themselves and live as the opposite gender. I didn't see "transsexual" as an identity I embraced and shared with others. I saw it as a life-threatening condition I had to live with, receive treatment for, and someday, I hoped, be cured of and leave behind, so that I could live as a woman.

When I started writing this book, I realized that I wanted to read the Torah from a transgender rather than a transsexual perspective. My sense of kinship with the God I saw in the Torah didn't grow out of feeling female despite having a male body; it grew out of my more general experience of not fitting into a world in which it is assumed that everyone is either and always male or female. That's what "transgender" means in this book: having a sense of self that does not fit the traditional binary gender categories of male and female.

Of course, there is no such thing as a general or universal transgender perspective. "Transgender" is a catchall term that gathers together many kinds of people who don't fit binary gender categories, people with very different relations to gender and identity. Some transgender people identify as both male and female; some don't identify as either. Some look forward to a day when everyone will accept any gender an individual expresses; some hope for a world in which gender is no longer important, or doesn't exist at all. To make things even more complicated, the terms for people who don't identify as simply male or female are changing all the time. It's possible that a few years from now the word "transgender" will seem as dated as the term "transsexual" sounds to many college students today. The readings of the Torah I offer in this book reflect my particular transgender perspective, which has been shaped by many factors, including growing up white, middle class, and ethnically but not religiously Jewish in upstate New York in the 1960s and 1970s. As my experience and understanding of being transgender (and being human) have changed over the course of my life, so has the way I read the Torah.

Although my readings grow out of my personal experience, I don't mean this book to be memoir or spiritual autobiography. When I write about my own life, my goal is to offer specific examples of transgender experience that I know some (not all) trans people share. Similarly, my goal in offering readings of the Torah is not to explain how I personally read the text, but to suggest how the Torah may speak to and be illuminated by trans perspectives and lives.

It may seem wrong to some people to read the Torah from this perspective. After all, though there have always been human beings and human bodies that do not fit binary gender categories, the ideas about gender, identity, and humanity implied by the word "transgender" are recent inventions. But according to Jewish tradition, there is nothing wrong with reading the Torah in terms of ideas and perspectives that arose after the Torah was written. As Barry Holtz explains in Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts, the ancient rabbis who wrestled with the Torah's meaning after the destruction of the Second Temple saw the Torah as including not just the text itself but all future interpretations of it:

> [T]he assumption in rabbinic thought is always that new interpretation is implied by the Torah itself.... Torah, to the rabbis, was an eternally relevant book because it was written (dictated, inspired—it doesn't matter) by a perfect Author, an Author who intended it to be eternal.... The rabbis could not help but believe that this wondrous and sacred text, the Torah, was intended for all Jews and for all times. Surely God could foresee the need for new interpretations; all interpretations, therefore, are already in the Torah text.

In other words, the Torah's later readers are simply discovering meaning that, according to the rabbis, God has planted in its words.

To those who see the Torah as a human document, written by, for, and in the language of ancient Israelites, the idea that the Torah includes every interpretation of it will probably seem absurd. But to the rabbis, as to many traditionally religious readers, the Torah is more than a human document: it is God's word, human language imbued with God's divine perspective.

If the rabbis are right, it is not heretical to claim that the Torah speaks to transgender lives and concerns, or to suggest that reading the Torah from trans perspectives can uncover its truths; it is deeply traditional. Indeed, to say otherwise is to read the Torah as merely human language, as language that speaks from and to limited human perspectives, rather than as divine language that speaks to each reader across time, space, and culture.

In reading the Torah from a transgender perspective, I am not trying to "queer," "trans," or otherwise reimagine the text. Like the rabbis, I believe that all interpretations, including those from this perspective, are already planted in the Torah, waiting for us to discover them, and like the rabbis, I believe that new interpretations add to rather than compete with traditional understandings. It is not my intention to show how the Torah should be read by trans or non-trans people. My hope is that these readings will help bridge the chasm that too often yawns between transgender people and religious communities by suggesting ways in which reading from a transgender perspective can grow out of and contribute to religious tradition, and that the Torah and transgender lives can speak to and illuminate one another. To those ends, I have tried to hold the readings of the Torah I offer to the following standards:

1. They must be grounded in what Jewish tradition calls the pshat, the plain sense of the text.
2. They must be true to me personally: true to the way I read the text; true to my relationship with God; and true to my experience of being transgender.
3. They must not just be true to me: they must also be true to aspects of transgender or religious experience that I share with others.
4. They must acknowledge the ways in which my understanding of the Torah has changed as my situation, experience, and understanding of myself as a trans person have changed.
5. They must acknowledge the tensions, conflicts, and contradictions among transgender perspectives, the plain text of the Torah, and the traditions that have grown out of that text. Rather than avoiding or pretending to resolve such problems, they must describe and consider them.

Instead of presenting an overarching argument, each chapter of this book explores questions raised by reading the Torah from a transgender perspective.

I begin by exploring a question that often arises in debates about whether religious traditions can include people who are not simply male or female: how can we reconcile transgender identities with the opening of Genesis, in which God, by creating human beings male and female, seems to build binary gender into the definition of humanity? Chapter 1, "The Genesis of Gender," examines God's relationship to gender and the gender binary by looking closely at the role gender plays in God's creation of humanity in the first three chapters of Genesis. These chapters present gender not as a divine decree but as a human invention, a means by which human beings identify and relate to one another that changes over time.

Even though Genesis doesn't say that God created the gender binary, the only adults we see in the Torah are men who were born male and women who were born female. Does the Torah allow for the possibility that people may not fit the gender roles they were born to, that some of us may become something other than the men and women our families and societies believe we should be? I explore this question in chapter 2, "Trans Experience in the Torah," by examining stories in Genesis about Abraham, Sarah, and Jacob that

center on how their gender roles are transformed by their relationships with God. Although God does not change their sex, God gives each of them the trans experience of becoming people who violate traditional ideas of what men and women should be by, for example, ordering Abraham to abandon his firstborn role of caring for his elderly father, making Sarah a new mother in old age, and requiring Jacob to steal his firstborn brother Esau's blessing to fulfill his spiritual destiny. In these stories, the Torah not only allows for the possibility that people may not fit their assigned gender roles; it connects the trans experience of violating gender roles to intimacy with God.

But these stories do not suggest what trans experience has to do with relating to God. I explore that question in chapter 3, "Close Encounters with an Incomprehensible God." Here I read God's efforts to relate to people even though God does not make sense in human terms in light of my struggles to relate to other human beings as someone who does not make sense in terms of binary gender. Before my gender transition, I felt that being transgender brought me closer to God because I, like God, was invisible and incomprehensible to those around me. These trans experiences helped me understand the scenes in the Torah in which God struggles to relate to and be recognized by human beings. But when God interacts with Abraham and Moses, God finds ways to relate to and be recognized by them despite being invisible and incomprehensible. Reading those interactions in light of my post-transition experiences of relating to others as someone who is openly transgender highlights the difficulties God and human beings face in relating to one another, and suggests how, in the Torah and out, we can negotiate them.

Trans experiences can speak to the Torah's stories about God's efforts to relate to human beings because anyone, even God, who does not fit human roles and categories will face similar social problems in human relationships. But the Torah is not just stories about God. Much of it is devoted to laws based on the gender binary assumption that human beings are always and only male or female. How can the Torah speak to the lives and concerns of transgender people when so many of its laws are based on binary gender? I explore this question in chapter 4, "Reading between the Binaries," by comparing ideas about gender and identity we find in the Torah's laws to the ways in which gender and identity figure in the lives of transgender people today.

Although much has changed since biblical times, in many ways, the power given to the gender binary in the Torah's laws is surprisingly similar to the power the gender binary has in the contemporary United States. For example, the U.S. census and the Levite census commanded in Numbers both require that human beings be identified as either male or female based on their biological sex, instead of treating gender as self-determined by individuals—an idea that is the basis for transgender identities. But though the Torah's laws don't recognize gender as self-determined, the laws of Nazirite vows empower people to change their behavior and appearance in ways that, like gender transition, violate social norms, mark them as different, and set them apart from those around them. And though the Torah uses binary, either-or language to describe not only gender but also Israelite identity, even the laws of Passover, the festival God founds to define and celebrate Israelite identity, include exceptions that recognize that human lives are too messy and complicated to fit binary terms. The recognition that human beings can never be fully described in binary terms is the basis for transgender identities and lives, and God's acknowledgment of it in the laws of Passover lays the basis for even the most traditional religious communities to accept members who do not fit binary gender categories.

Even when we recognize how religious traditions and transgender lives can speak to and illuminate one another, it can still be hard for traditional religious communities to include transgender members, because so many traditional practices, roles, and relationships are based on the assumption that everyone is either and always male or female. Although some traditional religious communities are working to include openly trans-gender people, others see accommodating trans members as disruptive, disrespectful of tradition, and a distraction from, if not a threat to, the communal worship. What, if anything, does the

work of including openly trans people have to do with what the Torah portrays as the fundamental work of religious community—making a place for God in our midst? I explore this question in chapter 5, "Knowing the Soul of the Stranger," by examining the Torah's portrayals of God's difficulty in finding a place in the Israelite community and the Israelites' difficulties in accommodating the God who dwells among them, and comparing them with the difficulties faced by transgender people and others who are seen as too different to fit in or be seen as "one of us."

People who come out as trans in traditional religious communities are often treated as strangers, even by those who have known them all their lives, because they no longer act in ways that make sense in terms of binary gender. Similarly, the human rebellions and divine rages recorded in the Book of Numbers make it clear that even after decades of wandering with God in their midst, to the Israelites, God remains a stranger, a deity whose feelings and actions make no sense to them. Perhaps that is why God repeatedly commands the Israelites to accommodate and include "the stranger who dwells among you," the non-Israelite who embraces the Israelite community as home. For God, the inclusion of those we see as different is not a disruption or a distraction for religious communities; it is an essential religious practice, part of making a place for the ultimate stranger, God.

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The questions I explore in this book have shaped my relationship to the Torah from the time I was a child, growing within me as I have grown, summoning me to recognize and honor my kinship with humanity and God. After Jews read from the Torah in synagogue, we sing a verse from Proverbs affirming that we see the Torah as "a tree of life" (Prov. 3:18). To me, the Torah is not just a tree of life in general—it is the tree of my life. Through the terror and loneliness of being a child without a body, to the isolation and despair of living for decades as a man I knew I wasn't, to the daily miracle of waking as my still unfinished self, I have clung to that tree, knowing the Torah is holding me, speaking to me, reminding me that my life, like the lives of my ancestors, is a day that God has made, a tiny incomprehensible expression of the vast incomprehensible God who incomprehensibly created each of us. <>

Lenn E. Goodman: Judaism, Humanity, and Nature edited by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Aaron W Hughes [Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers, Brill, 9789004280748]

Lenn E. Goodman is Professor of Philosophy and Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Trained in medieval Arabic and Hebrew philosophy and intellectual history, his prolific scholarship has covered the entire history of philosophy from antiquity to the present with a focus on medieval Jewish philosophy. A synthetic philosopher, Goodman has drawn on Jewish religious sources (e.g., Bible, Midrash, Mishnah, and Talmud) as well as philosophic sources (Jewish, Muslim, and Christian), in an attempt to construct his own distinctive theory about the natural basis of morality and justice. Taking his cue from medieval Jewish philosophers such as Maimonides, Goodman offers a new theoretical framework for Jewish communal life that is attentive to contemporary philosophy and science.

CONTENTS

Excerpt: Lenn E. Goodman: An Intellectual Portrait by Alan Mittleman

Lenn Goodman is an American Jewish philosopher, currently serving as Professor of Philosophy and as the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Vanderbilt University. Goodman's additional appointment to a chair of Humanities reflects the

breadth of his interests, erudition, and work. Trained in medieval Arabic and Hebrew philosophy and intellectual history, he is also a scholar of ancient philosophy and—most importantly for our purposes—a prolific constructive philosopher in his own right. One of Goodman's distinctions is his ability to bring not just Plato and Aristotle but Saadia, Maimonides, Bahya ibn Pakuda, not to mention Avicenna and al-Ghazali, among others, into a contemporary conversation. Goodman draws not only on classical and medieval thinkers in his constructive work but from the same sources which nourished his medieval philosophical predecessors: Bible and midrash, mishnah and Talmud, Quran and hadith. Against the conventional academic style of our time ("analytic philosophy"), Goodman describes himself as a "synthetic philosopher." No one should imagine, however, that synthesis entails inattention to analysis, rigorous argument, or deep, critical engagement with contemporary analytic philosophy and its central problems. Goodman's work is no less technical or fundamental than the work of a Quine, a Nelson Goodman, a John Rawls, a Christine Korsgaard, or a Thomas Nagel. But it is incomparably more richly textured, more historically capacious. To read books or essays by Lenn Goodman, such as the ones comprising this volume, is a demanding but deeply rewarding experience. The intrepid reader who has never encountered his work before is in for an experience of unparalleled intellectual stimulation.

Biography and Career

Goodman was born in 1944 in Detroit, and raised in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Putney, Vermont, before his family settled in Los Angeles. He is the son of the late Calvin Goodman, a Harvard-educated World War II veteran, whose career path led him to being an arts consultant, and Florence Goodman, a poet and professor of English. His frequent references to art, his focus on the theme of human creativity, and the peculiar artistry and power of his prose no doubt may be traced to these early influences. He was educated, like his father, at Harvard, where he pursued Arabic language and literature, as well as philosophy, graduating in 1965, summa cum laude. His work in Arabic actually preceded his undergraduate career, as he had begun a study of the language at UCLA when he was still in high school. His undergraduate thesis was a translation of Ibn Tufayl's philosophical novel, Hayy ibn Yaqzan. Remarkably, Goodman was able to publish the translation and study of Ibn Tufayl in 1972; it remains in print, expanded and updated, with the University of Chicago Press. It is doubtful that many undergraduate theses have such a distinguished afterlife.

Goodman won a Marshall Scholarship in 1965 and journeyed to Oxford for doctoral work. Once there, he continued his medieval and Arabic studies with Richard Walzer and Samuel Stern, read modern Islamic thinkers with Albert Hourani, and deepened his study of philosophy with J. O. Urmson, Isaiah Berlin, Gilbert Ryle, A. N. Prior, and others. He earned his doctorate in 1968, writing on the Muslim theologian al-Ghazali. His dissertation focused on al-Ghazali's arguments for the creation (as opposed to the Aristotelian eternity) of the world and "his critique of the rationalist/ intellectualist notion that causality is a matter of logical necessity." The interest in creation as a concept that supports an empirically encountered, contingent world discoverable through experience and inductive reason is, as we shall see below, ongoing and basic to Goodman's mature views.

Before arriving at Vanderbilt University in 1994, he taught at UCLA (1968–1969) and at the University of Hawaii (1969–1994) in the Department of Philosophy. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Baumgardt Memorial Award of the American Philosophical Association, the Gratz Centennial Prize, and the Earl Sutherland Prize, Vanderbilt University's top research award. Most notably, he was a Gifford Lecturer at the University of Glasgow in 2005. Goodman was a Littman Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, a Humanities Fellow at the East-West Center, an Arts and Humanities Faculty Fellow of the University of Hawaii, and a fellow of the Center for the Study of Religion and Culture at Vanderbilt University. In 1995, he was at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He is the recipient of grants from the National Endowment

for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Matchette Foundation.

Aside from masterful critical translations of medieval Arabic works and reconstructions of Muslim and Jewish thought, Goodman's oeuvre consists of constructive contributions to Jewish (and general) philosophy. With respect to the former, he is the translator of Saadia Gaon's Arabic commentary to the Book of Job, The Book of Theodicy (Yale, 1988). A contribution to the authoritative Yale Judaica Series, the book recovers a medieval Jewish classic of philosophical theology previously unavailable to the reader without Arabic. Goodman's book-length study of the Muslim philosopher, Avicenna, has gone into a second, updated edition (Avicenna, Cornell, 2005). Rich essays exploring the "crosspollinations" of Muslim and Jewish philosophy may be found in his Jewish and Islamic Philosophy (Rutgers, 1999), where the arguments of ancients such as Epicurus and medievals such as Bahya ibn Pakuda, al-Ghazali and Moses Maimonides are brought into conversation with moderns such as Benedict Spinoza and Immanuel Kant. His critical translation and commentary of The Case of the Animals versus Man before the King of Jinn, with Richard McGregor (Oxford, 2009), brings thoughts from a medieval philosophical fable to bear on modern views of nature and ecological responsibility. Goodman's purely constructive, general philosophical work appears in many articles and also in his book-length study of truth, In Defense of Truth: A Pluralistic Approach (Humanity Press, 2001), to which reference is made below. A select bibliography may be found at the end of this volume; I simply want to indicate the scope of his work here.

It is axiomatic for Goodman that contemporary Jewish philosophy must not be cut off from prior eras and exempla of Jewish thought. What is needed is a critical appropriation (or reappropriation) of tradition. Jewish history is long and reflective. Indeed, it is often reflexive, taking its own experience as the matter to work with. But disruptions have been frequent, and continuity is hard won. Repeatedly, Jewish thinkers have had to rediscover or reinvent what was lost or forgotten, reframing the old stories to live again and light up a new context, rediscovering old meanings, and plumbing the old texts for meanings not yet brought to light.

Thus, the tradition of Jewish philosophy, arcing back to Philo, is not one of continuous development. It is a tradition of interruptions, gains and losses, forgetting and remembering. Intellectual paradigms shift and shatter, but always the same task remains: making sense of existence and of Judaism at the same time. Goodman does not see any unbridgeable gaps between the ancients and the moderns. No veracious teaching of the past, whether moral or metaphysical, whether scriptural or interpretive, can be treated as a mere artifact. All may (or must) be responsibly retrieved, critically appropriated, and given a voice in a contemporary conversation. The ancients and medievals did not think or speak "more slowly than we do." The fundamental philosophical and religious questions abide. Modern skepticism, scientism, and atheism were encountered in older dress by our philosophical ancestors in antiquity and in the Middle Ages. They cannot, in their modern uniforms, defeat the core commitments and insights of the Jewish tradition...

Belief and Truth

This confidence, which pervades his methods and substantive arguments, seems partly a matter of his scientific (but never scientistic) naturalism and partly a matter of faith. Let us come—carefully—to the "believing" part of what I would characterize as a believing naturalism. Goodman is, after all, a constructive Jewish philosopher whose aim is not only a sound general metaphysics and ethics but the critical reappropriation of Jewish ideas and normative commitments. Belief, in the sense of responsible fidelity to core Jewish concepts, is crucial to his project. Belief does not imply blind faith, leaps of faith, fideism, dogmatism, second naïveté, or anything suppositious or lacking in evidence or warrant. Religious belief, as a subset of belief, has for Goodman, as for Maimonides and Spinoza no "credo quia absurdum" quality to it; religious beliefs must cohere with everything else we hold about the world and our place in it. Religious beliefs do not get a free pass; faith should be rational. (Piety is a virtue but it must be

united with other moral and intellectual virtues. The rationality that piety helps virtuously to support is crucial to happiness, to human flourishing.)

Goodman's general account of belief is holistic and coherentist, albeit with anchorage in a correspondence view of truth. A coherent view of the world is to be sought, but "a relatively coherent account of an integrated world does not guarantee the truth of that account." (Hence, Goodman is not a pure coherentist.) Nonetheless, a relatively coherent account positions us to grasp the mind-independent facts of nature and correctly evaluate them:

> The mind detects patterns—symmetries, asymmetries, likenesses, unlikenesses, complementarities and oppositions, rhythms, and (may we say it) gaps and distortions, in the data that comes before it. It translates these into local knowledge. Linking up such bits of knowledge, putting coherence into the service of correspondence and explaining one phenomenon by reference to another, we create a record so formidable that rival accounts become mere fables, sent gibbering to the margins of the epistemic realm, much as the disparate gods and spirits of pagan piety are scattered, by their very ineptness to integration, to become the sprites and jinn of legend. For integrated theses can explain one another. Mere disparate givens remain undigested surds. Integrated accounts map a world in charts that gain clarity and authority with every connection they make, confirming externally and unasked what was supposed internally and heuristically, or metaphysically, all along: That the world in itself is an integrated system, its causal connections reflected in our causal narratives.

Ontic realism underlies epistemic coherence. A coherent causal account tells stories that can capture the way the relevant slice of the world so accounted for actually works. A coherent account helps us to see what is truly going on externally, to make valid inductions and predictions, and to make abstractions and generalizations about underlying principles. What is truly going on externally affords beliefs or knowledge claims the traction to survive and come into coherence with one another. True, the context in which accounts are given, the intentions imputed to them by their speakers, the conventions of natural languages, and other factors condition their relation to extra-linguistic, mind-independent reality. But language should not be imagined to create reality ex nihilo: "The world that made us is not the world we made."

Religious beliefs accordingly must stand before the bar of reality. They can't just cohere among themselves, sequestered in a mental fantasy world. Yet the initial expression of religious beliefs seems to constitute just such a domain. Religious beliefs are often embedded in myths, highly fluid, symbolic, category-confusing accounts that "more faithfully [serve] to celebrate than to explain." Goodman devotes a full chapter to getting myths right in his In Defense of Truth. Myths should neither be dismissed by scientific reductionists as botched physical explanations nor celebrated by romantics as tokens of an enchanted universe. They ought to be seen in terms of their truth-bearing relation to reality: myths express, teach, and preserve values, often more vividly than do other forms of expression. Religions have mythic content, but religion also crucially refines and parses myth: "Religion," Goodman writes, "has among its core functions the creation of a milieu in which the values that myths may voice can be articulated, explored, and critiqued, even apart from any question of the empiric truth of the language to which those values are entrusted, or the pragmatic efficacy of the corresponding symbolic actions." The biblical creation stories are myths in this sense. ("Biblically, the story of creation takes the form not of science but of myth, an account kept alive by the values it projects.") They are not competitive accounts vis-à-vis scientific cosmology, nor are they pure exaltations of fecund imagination; they are rich fictions that capture values such as the goodness of being, the generosity and dynamism of nature, the reality of growth and change, beauty and order, and the intelligibility of the world. They enshrine the belief in the contingency of the world—it need not have been—and in the goodness of its Source, who granted all beings the gift of being, thus underwriting gratitude as a fundamental orientation toward existence.

The Philosophic Implications of Creation

Creation is a major topic in Goodman's thought, as the various pieces collected in this volume all attest. Goodman's approach to the biblical creation stories is decidedly non-literalist; they are, after all, myths. (This basic stance allows him to show the complementarity of creation with a Darwinian evolutionary account of nature since what is at stake is the values that motivate both explanatory frameworks, not the literal truth of the scriptural one.) However, he does not take the concept of divine creation or its possible actuality a parte ante as a mere useful fiction. The possibility that the universe was created by God, the evidence in favor of creation (over eternalism), the work that the concept of creation does, and the biblical stories in which the motivating values and concepts are canonically expressed must be analytically distinguished. What work then does the concept of creation do and what argues in favor of creation over its alternatives? First, a methodological point: "We must remember Saadiah's advice: when we set out to find the cause of nature we are not seeking yet another natural phenomenon but something that transcends time, change, perception, and so can explain natural events rather than simply needing explanation along with them . . . Our thirst for sensory evidence should not trap us into taking our principle of explanation back to the level it was invoked to explain." Thus, the atheist's frequent taunt that positing a Creator God cannot account for the origin of the world for, after all, who or what created God, has no purchase. God cannot be another contingent, caused being, nor can our sensory encounters with the things that make up the world provide direct evidence of God. A perfect being, self-caused and wholly other, is not logically analogous to any contingent being. This will lead Goodman to purge God of all sensuousness and creature-likeness (like Maimonides) and characterize the concept of God as a value concept. Value is real but not physical, effectual but not material. That is the level of reality at which and for which we must seek an ultimate explanation. But let us hold the analysis of his view of God in abeyance for now.

Creation provides an explanation therefore rather different in kind from a physical or purely causal form of explanation. (Say, the universe emerging from the Big Bang perhaps after the death of a previous universe or black hole, for example.) For sheer physicality is not the entirety of what needs to be accounted for. What needs accounting for is a universe suffused with value. And value does not just supervene on facts, placed there by human subjectivity; value is instinct in the universe. Creation is a way of talking about that primordial and mind-independent state of affairs. Creation accounts for, as noted, the contingency of the universe—it might not have come into being—as well as its design and its novelty. What bearing does contingency have on value? Contingency underwrites freedom (a crucial value)—both God's freedom to create a world (rather than having necessarily to emanate one from his essence or, on the eternalist account, for a world to have always existed) and our freedom to cognize it. Goodman argues that the successful pursuit of science requires induction and falsification—science cannot be a purely deductive enterprise. Induction entails that we cannot know how things must be a priori; we must explore and investigate them insofar as they have their own dynamic being. This demonstrates contingency: "Things are not fixed eternally in the necessities of their natures but might have been—might yet be—otherwise." Finding some measure of necessity, such that explanations can invoke principles and laws, is finding intelligibility in nature, not simply in our own minds. The process of discovery assumes freedom. "I count the process of discovery itself as an argument of cumulatively mounting force in support of the realist account of the necessity of induction and, thus, in support of the reality of an open universe. This is to understand the gift of freedom in a particularly strong sense." Creation, as understood by medieval philosophers such as Maimonides and al-Ghazali, in their rejection of Aristotle's eternalism, lent support to scientific discovery through induction. Creation is allied with empiricism, with the trial and error process of exploration into nature's particularity and contingency. Nothing is determined in advance by some categorical deductive necessity. Creation, empiricism, and metaphysical and epistemological freedom are mutually implicated. These are some of the values and practices funded by creationism. Their salience shows "the kind of price one may

have to pay in apriorism if one abandons the creationist mode of discourse."

So there are powerful pressures within reason, on Goodman's view, to affirm divine creation. But what of the God who creates? Is God, who qua idea has already been classified as a value concept, more than an idea? Does an adequate, monotheistic idea refer to a perfect being? Goodman is not an idealist, like the great German Jewish rationalist, Hermann Cohen; he is a naturalist. So this isn't an inappropriate question. A naturalist holds that there is a fully mind-independent, judgment-independent world to which consciousness, cognition, and evaluation respond. We might not be able to say more than our ideas enable us to say, but there is more to reality than our ideas. How does God relate to that reality? Even if God must absolutely transcend the natural world, ontological questions about God are in order. (Unless one is a logical positivist, for whom such questions are nonsense. But Goodman shows why the sclerotic metaphysics of logical positivism and its descendants is inadequate.) Granted that a necessary, perfect being does not exist in the way that contingent and imperfect beings exist, does God exist as more than an idea, concept, or principle and, if so, how? Goodman himself asks the question: "Is there a being of infinite perfection? The question is natural."

Goodman, unlike some Christian philosophers who claim to know divinity in the person of Jesus—a man who walked among us—takes a consistently Maimonidean approach. We can conceive the idea of God, at least formally and heuristically, but we cannot perceive God. There are no experiences available to us of God in any unmediated sense. Any experience, such as those attested to by mystics, requires interpretation; no experience is self-interpreting or self-verifying. "Even if I directly sense something as God," Goodman writes, "that does not entail that it is God." Hermeneutics is ineluctable. But "how can a finite consciousness like mine experience God as God, if God is infinite Perfection?" The answer is: it cannot. There is no short cut to the reality of God unmediated by ideas.

So we must remain, in a sense, at the level of ideas. But ideas relate to the world. There is no cogent reason to dig an unbridgeable trench between ideas and the realities that we intend to represent by them. Goodman's strategy is to show that the rationality of the idea of God is per se no bar to the actual existence of God. In order to do this, he has to take on Hume, Kant, and many contemporary philosophers, and destabilize, in a series of detailed and technical essays in epistemology and metaphysics, the familiar distinctions between analytic and synthetic statements, a priori and a posteriori judgments, and universals and particulars. These distinctions fund the typical moves that seem to disallow knowledge of divine existence. The point of Goodman's philosophical arguments is to show that there is nothing illogical or self-contradictory in the claim that an infinite perfect being exists.

That cuts against much of modern philosophy, for which existence is a matter of fact, not a priori necessity. Everything that exists exists contingently. God, as a perfect being, theists claim, exists necessarily (as a consequence of his perfection). But no existence can claim necessity, that is, can be made on an a priori basis. Whether x exists or not is a matter of observation, of synthetic judgment, not of formal logical deduction. The idea of a necessary being hovers between category mistake and absurdity. On the typical modern view, a necessary being "is a spurious hybrid. Existence must be contingent. To call God a necessary being makes him both necessary and nonnecessary, a square circle." Against this, Goodman rejects the Humean (and, with qualifications, Kantian) dichotomy between matters of fact and relations of ideas. He rejects the idea that experience or understanding provides us with brute sensuous particulars, empiric givens, which reason then relates in modal ways, such as cause and effect, necessitation, etc. It is not the case that experience gives us evidence only of contingent beings and that reason imports a necessity that does not actually exist in the world. We cannot know that. Contingency should not be viewed as the ground-level condition of mind-independent reality such that necessity becomes a fictive overlay. "The presumption that contingency is the default position,

so that we must regard the universe as contingent except insofar as we have constructed or construed its relations, seems to ignore the fact that contingency and facticity are as much or as little constructs of judgment as are necessity and impossibility." It may be epistemically cautious to exclude necessity from the world, reserving it for mind, but caution is not knowledge. "We simply do not know that necessity is not found in things. So what grounds have we for modeling reality on our modes of construing it?" (Here again is Goodman's underlying realism. The world is not identical to our construal of it. We should not mistake our forms of judgment for the ontology they seek to discern.) We cannot know then, as philosophical atheists claim to know, that "the idea of a necessary being is incoherent." God, as a necessary, perfect, and infinite being can be thought and that thought can refer to reality.

But must it? Goodman is fascinated by the ontological argument, which, if it were to succeed would provide a positive answer to the question. He finds in God's self-expression in Exodus 3:14 a biblical insight akin to Anselm's formal argument. But just as the Bible's "I am that I am" addresses someone who already knows that God is, so does Anselm's argument address those with faith who seek understanding. It doesn't prove the existence of God; it refines and clarifies, for those who already believe, what the nature of God must be like. It draws out the implications of divine perfection. But it doesn't carry one over from word to world in as utterly compelling a way as its advocates hope. One must already accept the premise of God's existence for the argument to do its work. Is there any compelling reason to accept that premise? Goodman believes that there is—and not just on a kind of Kantian ground that requires the worlds of nature and morality to hold together so that morality can have force. For Goodman, as a scientifically minded naturalist, both axiological coherence and cosmic intelligibility point toward God. This is because the very practice of explanation, in the sciences, in ethics, in daily life, hangs on the possibility of ultimate explanation. Without the ultimate perfection and the goodness of God, local explanations falter and explanation per se is enfeebled.

It comes back to the postulate of sheer contingency. To accept that things simply are the way they are and that there is no further transcendental explanation for them is to give up on explanation altogether. To accept a world of basal brute facts is to arrest the process of reasoning; it is to abandon "the rationalist program of explanation." An explanation is more than just a simple answer:

> Explanation differs from other ways of answering questions in that it fills not just the gap a question opens but the area around and behind that gap, relieving a doubt but also illuminating related questions—even helping us to see what our questions should be. So an explanation is more satisfying than a simple answer. It meets a more general curiosity. For the same reason, it is costlier. Explanations are always metaphysical. They gain their powers of prediction and of satisfying the mind by making assumptions about the nature of the world and taking those assumptions beyond what is before us.

Explanations point beyond the particulars of what they explain. They traffic in a prioris and formal values. If successful, they make it possible to know such factors as cause, necessity, identity, permanence, elegance, comprehensiveness, likeness, or order. Explanations do not just fit the data of experience to a sphere of ideas. They draw back, as it were, and situate themselves amidst all the facts they can accommodate, making sense not just of the data but of themselves in the process—thus helping our finite intelligence situate itself in the world.

Explanation, for just this sort of reason, intends an ultimate, a "final term" of the explanatory program. "For every conditioned event there is always a prior cause, signaling the insufficiency of that which it conditions and urging us onward, beyond the merely conditioned toward what can be explained only by its self-sufficiency or absoluteness." To repudiate this drive toward ultimacy is to lose one's footing on the slope of explanation and fall into an unqualified positivism of brute facts. For all one's partial explanations (or justifications) lose what gains in understanding they seemed to promise without an anchor intending something that will make sense in its own right.

Without that anchor, they've been living on unsecured credit. Even a partial positivism, Goodman argues, "rests on a paradox" because "it seeks to render reality at large intelligible through the general pronouncement that it is unintelligible." Explanation intends ultimate explanation. Eliminating the latter undermines the former. Only children, as it were, are satisfied with "Because I said so," and then only seldom or perhaps not at all.

Things do not explain themselves. Any residue of inexplicable positivity renders rationalism incomplete. An ultimate principle of explanation must be absolute, categorically other than the contingent, imperfect, timebound things and states it seeks to explain. The choice of such an explanation is the "theistic option." "Monotheism is the belief," Goodman avers, "well grounded in our grasp of nature, that the divine is absolute and so not finite or contingent or conditioned. It is this concept, that the ultimate explanatory principle must be absolute, infinite and perfect, irreducible to the world's categories but explicable solely in itself, that is expressed in the words 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth.'" The monotheist affirmation is not a necessity of logic. There is no logical need that anything be explained. In seeking an ultimate intelligibility for the world and for our own lives as persons, we are attending to matters of fact, setting out within the context of our own experience to make sense of the whole. What we need, if the explanatory project is not to end in bankruptcy, is "not some new law of gravity or some broader field theory, but a name for the Perfection toward which all things grope, the Source of the gifts—the strengths and energies—by which we strive." The best name that we can give this ultimate and perfect source of goodness, which funds the conatus of all things, is God.

And yet, "because God's reality is the apex of reasoning, the summit toward which all explorations point, the monotheist's affirmations of God's reality can bear no certainty." We cannot know for certain that our statements about God refer to an actually existing ultimate and perfect being; we can only clear the conceptual ground on which we erect the intellectual structure of our faith. An absolute being cannot be known as all lesser beings can; our very language about God must reflect a Maimonidean epistemic chastity. Goodman is blunt and deflationary: "The idea of God, like any idea, is necessarily a fiction, but it intends a reality no less than do our ideas of gravity or causality. Because God's reality is absolute, all the best we can say of him sounds like the children's stories that we dignify with the name of poetry."

This is the point where a theologian might introduce the doctrine of Revelation, a unique disclosure by God of His teaching, Law, and truth but that is rather alien to Goodman's project of philosophical and religious naturalism. His métier is natural, not revealed, theology. The canonical text of Judaism, the written Torah, is redolent with truths of great philosophical significance, but they don't come from the mouth of the Absolute, in any direct way. Truth is a kind of self-revelation of God, but that is true for all truths. The moral insight and power of prophetic teaching partake of the poetry that seeks to render the Source of goodness intelligible. The poetry which the tradition remembers as having come as close as possible to the truth of the Source gained the status of Scripture; God's speech, as it were, in a human tongue. But the insight and teaching are not per se controlling; they prove their bona fides by according with, while purifying and heightening, intuitions of the Good, of which we are already aware. Here we enter into Goodman's ethics, a major dimension of his oeuvre.

Moral Philosophy

The themes of ontic desert, creation, and God as the source of good limn the shape of Goodman's moral philosophy. The conatus of all created beings intends the perfection of each according to its mode of being. God's perfection is both source and goal; "God's goodness binds all to the good not by logic but by aspiration." Creation is an essay on the theme of originary and emergent goodness. Ethics is the aspiration and the practice of giving all beings their due. This aspiration, in human persons, is felt as imperatival; in the language of Scripture, as a command. "The broadest norm that the biblical commandments point to is the obligation to pursue perfection." The pursuit of perfection is both deontic and telic. "Perfection issues a command which no imperfect being ignores."

The profuse biblical use of the language of commandment should not conjure images of God as arbitrary or authoritarian. God's commands channel, integrate, and ennoble our deepest strivings and highest values. There is no gap between what sound moral sense recognizes as our highest values and our idea of God. The two rise together and refine one another. Our values purify our originally mythic, culturally freighted ideas of God. The idea of God stabilizes, deepens, universalizes, and enriches our highest values. What "commandment" makes thematic is not the provenance but the absoluteness of value, the Torah's uncompromising demand for justice and love. Commands are not imposed in a manner foreign to our nature; the authority of norms, such as those enshrined by the Torah, is immediately intelligible to persons in pursuit of perfection.

Goodman holds that the response to divine Perfection as the creaturely pursuit of perfection needs no deeper justification. None exists. "[J]ust as we should recognize truths just because they are true, we ought to love what is good and perfect just because it is such, and we ought to do justice, to pursue justice, as the Torah puts it, just because it is justice." Goodman's approach seeks to dissolve classic philosophical problems, such as posed by Plato (at least in the conventional reading) in the Euthyphro or Kant in the Groundwork. Goodman sees no tension between the good that God requires and a good that binds God. Nor does he see a tension between the Torah's commandments as an allegedly heteronomous source of normativity and an autonomous endorsement of norms. What is truly good is good intrinsically, not just because God has pronounced it so. We discern it in nature; our receptivity to and knowledge of value mediates our grasp of the good. But we also view God as nature's author and source, so in discerning

obedient deference. Rather, they earn their authority by the human and moral wisdom that they reflect. He works toward the divine, not from it (as if that were possible).

Lenn Goodman's thought continues the legacy of giants such as Saadia Gaon and Moses Maimonides, not just in form but in inspiration. Catholic moral philosophers have a more or less continuous tradition of Thomism in which to situate themselves. Jewish philosophers must reinvent their relationship with their forbears in every generation. This opens the Jewish philosopher to too great a dependence on the prevailing paradigm. For some moderns, it has been Kantianism; for others, existentialism. Today, it is likely to be postmodernism. Goodman falls prey to none of that. He is original and radical. His making the medieval Jewish and Islamic philosophers contemporaries liberates him from the narrowness and hubris of the present, without neglecting its urgent human problems. Nor does he take only the easy lessons from the past; he conveys more than the chapter headings. Like his ancestors, he does the hard work of ontology, axiology, epistemology, logic, political theory, philosophy of language and of mind and of science, and more—all at a very high level of technical expertise and scholarly precision—in a way that would make a Maimonides proud. To my knowledge, no contemporary Jewish philosopher achieves either his range or his depth. He seems to have avoided the fate described by the Talmudic aphorism: he who tries to grasp too much will grasp nothing. Goodman has grasped a very great deal and those who would be his students will grasp much as well. <>

Moshe Idel: Representing God edited by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Aaron W Hughes [Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers, Brill, 9789004280779]

Moshe Idel, the Max Cooper Professor Emeritus at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Senior Researcher at the Shalom Hartman Institute, is a world-renowned scholar of the Jewish mystical tradition. His historical and phenomenological studies of rabbinic, philosophic, kabbalistic, and Hasidic texts have transformed modern understanding of Jewish intellectual history and highlighted the close relationship between magic, mysticism, and liturgy. A recipient of two of the most prestigious awards in Israel, the Israel Prize for Jewish Thought (1999) and the Emmet Prize for Jewish Thought (2002), Idel's numerous studies uncovered persistent patterns of Jewish religious thought that challenge conventional interpretations of Jewish monotheism, while offering a pluralistic understanding of Judaism. His explorations of the mythical, theurgical, mystical, and messianic dimensions of Judaism have been attentive of history, sociology, and anthropology, while rejecting a naïve historicist approach to Judaism. Volume not examined. <>

Portraying the Land: Hebrew Maps of the Land of Israel from Rashi to the Early 20th Century by Rehav Rubin [De Gruyter Magnes, 9783110564532]

The book presents and discusses a large corpus of Jewish maps of the Holy Land that were drawn by Jewish scholars from the 11th to the 20th century, and thus fills a significant lacuna both in the history of cartography and in Jewish studies.

The maps depict the biblical borders of the Holy Land, the allotments of the tribes, and the forty years of wanderings in the desert. Most of these maps are in Hebrew although there are several in Yiddish, Ladino and in European languages.

The book focuses on four aspects: it presents an up-to-date corpus of known maps of various types and genres; it suggests a classification of these maps according to their source, shape and content; it presents and analyses the main topics that were depicted in the maps; and it puts the maps in their historical and cultural contexts, both within the Jewish world and the sphere of European cartography of their time.

The book is an innovative contribution to the fields of history of cartography and Jewish studies. It is written for both professional readers and the general public. The Hebrew edition (2014), won the Izhak Ben-Zvi Prize.

Contents
Preface

Excerpt: This book is devoted to "the Hebrew map." Along with a few works in Ladino, Yiddish, and European languages, this term refers to maps in Hebrew that were drafted and printed by Jews and cover Jewish topics, such as the Land of Israel and its borders, the exodus from Egypt and the Israelites' peregrinations through the wilderness, the tribal allotments, holy sites, and other Biblical and Talmudic topics. These maps were incorporated into unequivocally Jewish works: exegetical volumes of the Scriptures, Passover Haggadahs, ketubot (wedding contracts), descriptions of sacred places, responsa literature, rabbinic and Enlightenment works, inter alia. The majority of the maps indeed came out in Hebrew; a few were bi- and even multilingual, while several were in other languages. For this reason, the terms "Hebrew maps" and "Jewish maps" will appear side by side, without any sharp distinction between the two.

The existing literature on Hebrew maps is so threadbare that The Hebrew Encyclopedia's entry on the maps of Eretz Yisrael (Land of Israel),1 which was subsequently translated into English and published without substantial changes in The Encyclopaedia Judaica, makes no reference whatsoever to Hebrew maps or those printed by Jews.' Isaac Schattner (the author of the above-cited entry) also made no mention of these works in his book on the maps of Eretz Yisrael.3 Similarly, when the Library of Congress published a book on its treasure trove of Judaica, not one Hebrew map was included in the chapter on the mapping of the Land of Israel.' While featuring chapters on Muslim, Chinese, and Indian cartography, Harley and Woodward's The History of Cartography, a central depository of knowledge in this field, lacks a chapter on Jewish Maps.' What is more, the only Hebrew map that was included (albeit as an illustration) in this thick, multi-volume work is a map penned in the Rashi script (see chapter 2), which is regrettably aligned upside down. There are two books on the Hebrew maps of Eretz Yisrael, but both suffice with a partial, album-like, and unsystematic presentation.' Moreover, these works do not provide a basis for understanding the Hebrew maps, as there is no discussion about the types of maps, their sources, the topics they tend to, or the path of their development.

The present study undertakes to fill this research void in several ways: first, it depicts the wide range of maps that I have come across in various collections; second, the maps will be sorted into groups on the basis of content and form, the background behind their creation, and their makers' approach; third, over the course of the discussion, I will analyze the principal topics that surface in these works; and lastly, the book will strive to explain different phenomena in the evolution of the Hebrew map and tie each one to its source. In parallel, a basic distinction will be drawn between maps that originated within the Jewish world and those copied from outside sources, namely from Christian European authors.

I do not profess to include every Hebrew map that was ever compiled in this book. Some of the works that were examined during the research phase have been left out for various reasons. In addition, there are bound to be maps that I failed to locate. There are also maps that were alluded to in different texts, but in all likelihood are no longer exist.' As is to be expected, most of the maps that reached my hands were printed, while relatively few have survived in manuscript form.

Chronologically speaking, the book opens with Rashi, an eleventh-century Jewish exegete (see chapter 1). It stands to reason that Rashi was the pioneer of the Hebrew map and was certainly the

first whose maps influenced generations of Jewish cartographers. His works became a foundation and the cornerstone of what I refer to as "traditional" Hebrew cartography. The outer limits of this work are the early twentieth century, when modern geographic and cartographic knowledge, along with the rise of Zionism, yielded a cornucopia of modem maps of Eretz Yisrael. During this period, the curtain fell on the traditional Hebrew map. The focus of my attention will be on the development of the Hebrew map from the traditional phase to modernity. In consequence, I will not expand on either the modem Hebrew map from the early 1900s onwards or the use that the Zionist movement made of this graphic device for the purposes of education, nation building, and propaganda. As important as this topic may be, it falls under the purview of another study—one that requires different tools than those that I have availed myself of in researching this book. That said, I will touch upon these issues in the final chapter.

Before diving into the heart of the matter, I would like to discuss the terminology that will serve us throughout the length of this book and the connection between religion, maps, and cartography.

What's in a Map? On Maps in General and Antique Maps in Particular

Cartography is a discipline that combines art, craftsmanship, and knowledge for the sake of formulating maps. As such, the discourse on this field often turns to the following subjects: the history of technology; the rise of geographic knowledge; the development of map projection and coordinates; and the process of discovering the world in the run-up to more precise maps. More recently, the discussion has embraced terms like satellite navigation systems and computerized measurement and map production. These scientific breakthroughs notwithstanding, maps have always served and continue to be used as platforms for expressing ideas and promoting ideologies and ideals. In other words, they have been used to explicate political and religious ideas as well as to advance the goals of individuals, organizations, and states.' This has been pursued with a wide variety of maps: old and contemporary, fictitious and precise, schematic and complex, rudimentary and artistic-cum-ornate and those designed with a scientific veneer.

Two different approaches to maps have arisen in the literature on cartography and its history. On the face of things, these approaches are contradictory, but in practice they complement one another: the first views the map in terms of geometry, geodesy, map projection, and accurate surveying; the second portrays the map as a tool for advancing ideas and outlooks. Toeing the line of the first camp, Naftali Kadmon defines the map as "a schematic, planar, miniaturized, oriented, and quantifiable account of the planet." Although this approach is considered among historians of cartography as outdated and even non-relevant anymore, it is commonly accepted among the non-professional users of maps which presumed that maps really represent the reality of the world.

In contrast, Robinson and Petchenik assert that a map is a graphic "representation of the milieu." In choosing the French term "milieu" over, say, "surrounding" or "environment," they not only emphasize the map's physical dimensions, but its cultural and moral freight as well. Tony Campbell toned down this rather sweeping definition by proposing that a document can be considered a map if it meets two basic criteria: the provision of graphic information about the real world; it refers, even if in a schematic, imprecise manner, to the relative position and distance between objects in an expanse. Similarly, Brian Harley and David Woodward describe maps as "graphic representations that facilitate a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes or events in the human world." Building on this definition in a series of articles, Harley claims that maps are tools with a propensity for conveying principled messages in ideological disputes. Dennis Wood even goes so far as to call maps "weapons" in debates of this sort. A more balanced approach is taken by Anne Godlewska. By their very nature, she writes, maps "attempt to be all things to all people. Maps may simultaneously—and more or less obviously and deliberately—seduce, confuse, and obfuscate [reality]." Delano-Smith and Kain illuminated this

discussion when they characterized maps as "the representation of features (places, people, phenomena, real or imagined) in their relative or actual spatial location", thus combining together the real and ideal elements of features that are depicted on maps.The ensuing discussion will indeed adopt the outlook whereby cartographers draft maps for the purposes of disseminating principles and ideas, no less than providing concrete and exacting geographic information. These objectives are achieved in a variety of ways: by choosing a style, graphic elements, and colors, the mapmaker stresses certain components, while downplaying or concealing others; by interspersing symbols and evocative images, the significance of places on a map are ratcheted up or down; and by incorporating meaningful images, the author imparts value to sites of his or her choosing. A drawing, for example, of imaginary islands opposite the shoreline of Eretz Yisrael represents the "nisin she-bayam" (islands in the sea), a concept from the literature of the Sages. Likewise, depicting Moses on Mount Sinai or Jonah opposite the Jaffa coast portrays the Biblical narrative. In addition, rendering the first Jewish colonies in the form of a modern house in a late nineteenth-century map places them in a positive light.

Mapmakers, past and present, are wont to choose names and concepts that favor their own views over other accepted terms. A case in point is European cities with both German and Polish names, such as Breslau/Wroclaw and Danzig/Gdansk. These discrepancies also turn up in modern-day atlases of Ireland, where the use of Irish or English names depends on the cartographer's allegiances. Similar differences inform Greek and Turkish maps of Cyprus as well as Israeli and Palestinian cartographic accounts of their shared, or rather contested, territories. The authors of the maps in question reinforced their own message by highlighting elements from the Biblical age and its glossary of toponyms. These cartographers, both Christians and Jews alike, tended to ignore the contemporaneous reality, while depicting settlements and events that are noted in the Bible, the tribal allotments, and the cities of refuge.

Most of the works in our corpus, and certainly the vast majority of maps that predate the nineteenth century, ignored the geographical reality at the time of their drafting that is the surveyable alignment, distances, and altitudinal disparities between the sites they cover. Put differently, eschewing measurement or map projection tools, the authors refrained from drawing their maps to scale. In fact, many of these cartographers never stepped foot in the Near East. On the other hand, though, they were well versed in the Bible and presented the Land of Israel according to their own interpretation of the canon. From the authors' perspective, the maps were intended to help them disseminate their ideas. In turn, the readers used these works as learning aids for comprehending the Bible and its commentaries.

With respect to the Hebrew maps, the main topics were the borders of the Promised Land, the exodus from Egypt, and later the tribal allotments. Additionally, there were maps that dealt with the boundaries of shalosh artzot le'shevi'it (literally three lands for the seventh, or zones for the sabbatical year), and Eretz Yisrael's borders in the vicinity of Acre, which were relevant to halachic questions concerning the fallow year and gittin (bills of divorce). Most of the traditional Hebrew maps are quite simple from a graphic standpoint, as they constitute schematic outlines without artistic drawings. Their purpose was to convey religious and exegetical ideas to an audience that was interested in the above-mentioned halachas (Jewish law). In contrast, those Jewish maps that were drafted in response to Christian works offered a more comprehensive picture of the Land of Israel, and the same can be said for those of the Enlightenment period. However, as we shall see, only the later maps were predicated on empirical knowledge and described the geographical structure of the land as it "actually" is.

The present study will examine the graphic conventions that emerged in this corpus as well as the content and objectives of its individual maps.

What are Hebrew or Jewish Maps?

For the purposes of this book, a "Hebrew" or "Jewish" map is one that was compiled by a Jewish author, deals with topics pertaining to the Jewish

world of knowledge and content, and was printed in a Jewish context. While most of these maps are in Hebrew, several are in Yiddish and Ladino, others are bilingual (i. e., in Hebrew and European languages), and a few are exclusively in a European tongue. These works were included in Bibles, commentaries on the Jewish Bible and Halacha, tractates of the Mishna and Talmud, Passover Haggadahs, ketubot, and other Jewish works. On rare occasions, they were printed as stand-alone sheets.

Mappah, the Hebrew term for map, is relatively new. As we shall see, it was preceded by the following terms, all of which were commonplace in the exegetical literature: tzura (literally: form or shape), tzurat ha-aretz (the shape of the Land), plain tziyur (picture or drawing), tziyur tkhumai eretz yisrael (a drawing of the Land of Israel's boundaries), tmunat mas'ai bnai yisrael (a picture of the Israelites' voyages), and bai'ur al eretz yisrael le'gvuloteha (an explanation of the Land of Israel within its borders). Mappah only entered the mainstream lexicon at the start of the nineteenth century, though there is documented evidence of its usage from as early as the eighteenth century.19 In parallel, some Jewish mapmakers adopted the terms carta (or land-kart in Yiddish), under the influence of the European terminology; and the same can naturally be said for the maps that came out in European languages. Be that as it may, the general term that will be used throughout this work will be map.

Over the course of this book, I will introduce these works, analyze them, and track after their sources. The maps will be classified into groups according to their content, objectives, and sources. All these steps will bolster our effort to shed light on the Jewish map's development, from the earliest known versions, which were drafted by Rashi in the eleventh century, until the fin-de-siècle. By the early twentieth century, the Hebrew cartographers were influenced by the modern mapping of the Land and sought to promote the nascent Zionist ideology.

Above all, this study grapples with the constant tension and dialogue between the form and content of the Hebrew map. Maps convey their maker's ideas via textual and graphic elements, both of which can be either conservative or innovative. With this in mind, the following questions will be posed: How is the expanse presented in "Jewish maps?" What were their principal topics and graphic elements? How did the spatial outlooks that are represented in these works evolve? And how were they transmitted? What is the provenance of these views and what principles did they serve? These questions will lead us to the crux of this study: What were the root causes behind the development of the Hebrew map? And to what extent can those causes from within the Jewish world be distinguished from outside influences, that is the Christian world in general and European cartography in particular?

Before proceeding to the main discussion, I would like to raise one more question. The notion that the Land of Israel is sanctified prevails throughout the Jewish literature, from the Bible to the present. Among the most salient examples are God's promise to bequeath Eretz Yisrael to Abraham's progeny as well as the numerous commandments and halachas that are dependent on the Land. Furthermore, this view supports the halachic discussions on the borders of Eretz Yisrael. This discourse clearly shows that as early as the days of the Pentateuch and certainly from the Second Temple period onwards, there were well-conceived opinions on geographical issues within the Jewish tradition. Even the historiographical chapters of the Hebrew Bible that do not directly pertain to Eretz Yisrael's holiness broach geographical topics, like the tribal allotments, the boundaries of the kingdom, and the distribution of the cities of refuge. In addition, the literal descriptions of the Land of Israel can be viewed as quasi-maps, including the following passages: the account of Joshua dispatching scouts to survey the Land before apportioning it to the tribes (Joshua 18:4); and the verse from Ezekiel "Take a brick...and incise on it a city, Jerusalem" (Ezekiel 4:1). What is more, the Book of Jubilees perhaps alludes to a map of the world that was included therein. Be that as it may, there is no existing Hebrew map of the Land of Israel, any outline of its borders, or even a credible hint as to a lost work of this sort that predates those of Rashi.

This absence is all the more glaring when compared to the rich cartographic world that existed in the Ancient East. Maps were indeed used in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Moreover, they reached a high degree of sophistication under the Greeks and Romans, the early Christians, and Arabs as well. On the basis of Ptolemy's works, the maps deriving from the Roman world, the Madaba Map of the Land of Israel, those used by early medieval church representatives, and the output of Muslim geographers, it is quite evident that the map was well-known in these cultures. Therefore, it stands to reason that there was a full-fledged geographical outlook in the Jewish tradition as well, for Jewish communities could be found within or in proximity to most of these societies. On the other hand, though, there is barely a clue as to the existence of a Hebrew map before those of Rashi. In light of the above, the question that begs asking is thus: Why are pre-eleventh century Jewish works entirely devoid of maps? I am afraid that by the end of the present study, this riddle will remain unsolved.

Cartography, Maps and Religions

Maps depict the world, its continents and lands, mountains, rivers, coasts, settlements, and other sites, as well as the spatial relations between all these elements. At one and the same time, they pass on values and ideas. In consequence, religions embraced the map, along with literature, painting, and other art forms, as a means for communicating their take on and insights concerning the-Earth and the places therein. Cartographers in the service of religion presented the sacred sites that are mentioned in their holy texts and interpreted related geographical topics. On numerous occasions, ecclesiastics drew up maps that served as a scriptural-cum-exegetic learning aid or as a platform for discussing eschatological topics. In addition, there were maps that were devoted to holy places and pilgrimage routes.

While Christianity was still in its nascence, Eusebius of Caesarea wrote The Onomasticon. This book originally contained a map of the places that are mentioned in the Bible; however, the latter has been lost to posterity. Thanks to Jerome's translation of The Onomasticon from Greek to Latin, the work had a marked impact on the Christian world. The Madaba Map, which apparently depicted most of the Holy Land, was also strongly linked to Eusebius' book. In addition, maps were incorporated into several later manuscripts of Jerome's works. Muslims oriented their maps southward, according to the qibla (their direction of prayer), thereby demonstrating the importance with which they held their custom of praying towards Mecca.

During the early Middle Ages, maps were sprinkled into Christian manuscripts, and quite a few of them have indeed survived. One of these maps, a representation of the tribal allotments, was aptly affixed to a ninth-century exegesis on the Book of Joshua. Other maps placed the world in a round structure that is divided into three continents. With Jerusalem at the center and Paradise to the east, these maps espoused a religious outlook concerning the layout of the world. As in earlier centuries, some Renaissance and Modern Era maps were designed to help audiences understand Biblical commentaries. For instance, both the supporters and opponents of the Protestant Reformation formulated maps for this purpose. Beginning in the 1500s, maps were printed in Bibles. Protestants were the first to adopt this practice, especially in what is known as "the Geneva Bible." Towards the end of the century, Catholic exegetes, like Arias Montano and Christian van Adrichom (also known as Adrichem), also started to include maps in their commentaries. All told, this trend proliferated in the centuries to come. Fiorani suggests that the difference between the Catholic and Protestant maps is tied to the place of Rome in each of the denominations' religio-historical worldview. Over the years, these Christian Bibles developed a nigh permanent compendium of maps. The chapters in the Old Testament section featured maps of Paradise, the peregrinations of the Israelites, and the division of the Promised Land into tribes, whereas the New Testament section included maps of Jesus' travels in the Holy Land and those of the Apostles throughout the Mediterranean Basin. Some of these Bibles also contained maps of Jerusalem during the reign of Solomon along with a panoply of non-cartographic drawings.

One of the major functions of devotional maps was to encourage and facilitate virtual pilgrimages. Given the hardships that overseas travel entailed, many believers sufficed with a spiritual voyage to the holy places from the comfort and safety of their homes. Cartographic renderings of the sacred sites indeed played a central role in this sort of pilgrimage. What is more, Christian groups that were involved in cultivating Holy Land consciousness, such as the Franciscan Custodia Terra Santa and the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, produced and distributed works of this kind. In so doing, these organizations also bolstered their own power. Apart from maps, numerous illustrations of the holy sites were included in the writing of pilgrims and other works that promoted this kind of travel.

In the eyes of their makers, the Hebrew maps constituted an integral part of the Biblical or Talmudic text, as they helped the devotee read and interpret the Jewish canon. These works simultaneously conveyed ideological ideas, such as the Promised Land, and eschatological ideas (e. g., the future division of the Land as per Ezekiel's prophecy). These cartographic representations of sacred sites as well as the Israelites' wanderings through the wilderness and their life in the Holy Land certainly enabled Jewish readers to venture forth on an emotive virtual tour of the Sinai Desert and Eretz Yisrael. This function stands out in, say, the Mantua Map (chapter 3) that graces Solomon Ben Moses of Chelm's book (chapter 4) and the tables of the sacred places (chapter 6), but it informs all the maps under review.

Structure of the Book

With respect to both their graphic design and content, the maps that comprise our corpus were produced on two separate tracks. To begin with, there are the traditional maps. This category consists of Rashi's maps and countless replications and adaptations thereof. Featuring a schematic, usually square or rectangular structure, these maps focus on Jewish Scriptures and their commentaries, especially in all that concerns the borders of the Promised Land. The second group consists of those maps that were created for the purpose of contending with the Christian maps of the Holy Land. With respect to content and artistic design, this category is more elaborate than its traditional counterpart. For instance, these maps depict various sites and events from the Holy Scriptures with the help of miniature drawings. This subgenre includes maps that copied their layout from Christian works, while adjusting the content to the Jewish tradition. Other maps that fall under this heading merely respond to those of Christians; although these works took certain elements from the latter, they are not identical to them.

There are complex mutual relations between the two defined tracks. Of course, not all the maps in either group were produced within the same timeframe, and some authors created maps in each of the styles. Lastly, some of the works in our corpus belong to neither group, whereas others integrate elements from both.

The book's chapters revolve around these two central axles. The first and second chapters are dedicated to traditional maps—the unadorned format that Rashi inaugurated. Chapter 3 hones in on a map that belongs to neither the traditional nor simulative stream. In my estimation, this work was a reaction to the maps that appeared in printed Christian Bibles. The fourth chapter explores maps that were influenced by the European Christian mapping of the Holy Land. These works contend with this rival Christian corpus, while adopting its graphical conventions. More specifically, they follow in the footsteps of the Christian maps by using artistic means, namely miniature illustrations, for presenting the events that are mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. In the fifth chapter, the two main tracks cross paths. More specifically, ideas that derive from the Christian world, especially the depiction of the tribal allotments, penetrate the maps that took form within the internal, more conservative Jewish framework. The category that is examined in the sixth chapter does not imbibe directly from either of the two aforementioned traditions, but emulates the earlier, nineteenth-century tables of holy places. In the final chapter, I touch upon the synergy between tradition and modernity that informs the maps from the Enlightenment era and the dawn of Zionism. At this phase, scientific techniques came to dominate the crafting of Hebrew maps of Eretz Yisrael, thereby

development subjecting the tension between reality and its idyllic representation to quantitative measurements and standards of accuracy. At this juncture, the book reaches the end of its line. <>

Animals and Animality in the Babylonian Talmud by Beth A. Berkowitz [Cambridge University Press, 9781108423663]

Animals and Animality in the Babylonian Talmud selects key themes in animal studies - animal intelligence, morality, sexuality, suffering, danger, personhood - and explores their development in the Babylonian Talmud. Beth A. Berkowitz demonstrates that distinctive features of the Talmud - the new literary genre, the convergence of Jewish, Christian, and Zoroastrian cultures, the Talmud's remove from Temple-centered biblical Israel - led to unprecedented possibilities within Jewish culture for conceptualizing animals and animality. She explores their development in the Babylonian Talmud, showing how it is ripe for reading with a critical animal studies perspective. When we do, we find waiting for us a multi-layered, surprisingly self-aware discourse about animals as well as about the anthropocentrism that infuses human relationships with them. For readers of religion, Judaism, and animal studies, her book offers new perspectives on animals from the vantage point of the ancient rabbis.

Excerpt: Balaam's Ass, the Babylonian Talmud, and Critical Animal Studies

Rembrandt's Ass

In Rembrandt's "The Prophet Balaam and the Ass," Balaam is at the center of the painting, his turbaned white hair streaming, his red cloak billowing around him.' With one hand Balaam pulls his donkey with a rope. In his other hand he holds a club that he is about to bring down on the recalcitrant donkey. An angel stands above Balaam in a pose that mirrors Balaam's. The angel is about to strike Balaam with a sword, but Balaam does not see him. Balaam looks at the donkey, the angel looks at Balaam, each in consternation. The two figures are a physics lesson in potential energy. Rembrandt has captured them at a moment of great dramatic tension.

In between the two human figures is the donkey. She has been brought to her knees, her saddlebag almost level with the ground, her head turned back toward Balaam as she, with terrified eyes and mouth agape, awaits the strike.' Is she looking at the angel or at Balaam? Whom does she fear more? In the painting of Balaam by Rembrandt's teacher Pieter Lastman the angel stands to the side of the donkey rather than above her, so it is clear that the object of the donkey's gaze is Balaam. The ambiguity in Rembrandt's version is only one of the ways in which the painting surpasses his teacher's.

In the lower right foreground of Remrandt's portrait are dark furrowed leaves that suggest the vineyard described in the biblical narrative (Numbers 22:24), while in the far shadows stand the two servants who accompany Balaam (Numbers 22:22.), and lit up and on higher ground wait the Moabite dignitaries who have invited Balaam at the Moabite king Balak's behest (Numbers 22:21). But it is the donkey who is meant to occupy the viewer's interest. The angel's illuminated white robe forms the background to the donkey's head and draws the eye to it. The white both of the donkey's teeth and of the documents protruding from her saddlebag match the white of the angel's robe behind them. The donkey's agitated expression contrasts with the impassive, partially obscured face of the Moabites' horse shown in the

background. Our compassion is stirred for the donkey so unjustly treated.

Balaam's readers are divided between those who admire him as a rare gentile prophet and those who revile him for his mission to curse Israel and his obstinacy in this scene. Rembrandt's portrait clearly falls into the second camp. For Rembrandt and his seventeenth-century Dutch audiences, Balaam would have represented the faithless persecutors of Christ, in line with conventional Christian understandings of the story, and perhaps also the contemporaneous Counter-Remonstrants in their persecution of the Remonstrants. The donkey is the figure with whom one is meant to identify. She is the Christian in opposition to the Jew, the Remonstrant imprisoned and exiled by the Counter-Remonstrants.

Balaam's Ride

I begin this book with Balaam's donkey as Rembrandt portrays her because she captures the complexity of anthropocentrism in canonical religious texts, the subject of this book. The texts are anthropocentric, yet animal perspectives percolate up. In this introductory chapter I will stay with Balaam's donkey a little longer in order to illustrate the major currents within contemporary critical animal studies, the field on which this book draws. I will then make my way to the Babylonian Talmud, the late ancient literary work prized by Jewish law and culture, which is the primary text for this book. I will lay out the book's purpose, which is to explore the anthropocentrism that structures talmudic discourse and to tease out the animal subjectivities that have gone unseen there. The book's broader goal is to offer some new perspectives on animals and animality from the vantage point of the rabbis.

In the Balaam tale, the donkey is the literal vehicle on whom Balaam rides toward Balak and the metaphorical vehicle through which God teaches Balaam obedience. She will also be my vehicle for introducing the central concerns of critical animal studies. As the story begins, Balaam is traveling to King Balak, who is pressuring him to curse the people of Israel (Numbers 22:21). God is angry with Balaam for his compliance with Balak's request (Numbers 22:22). The action proceeds by patterns of three. The donkey tries three times to avoid the angel (Numbers 22:23, 25, 27). Each time Balaam does not see the angel and is angry at the donkey for her seemingly unwarranted stop. Over the course of the repetitions, the drama intensifies. The angel keeps advancing, the donkey finds herself with less and less room to move, trapped between the angel and Balaam, and Balaam grows increasingly aggressive. The drama culminates in a tête à tête between Balaam and the donkey, whose mouth God miraculously opens. God finally permits Balaam to see the angel, Balaam realizes his error and offers to turn back, but the angel urges him on to his prophetic task now that he has been prepared to speak only God's word. The story is filled with irony': a seer who cannot see, a man more stubborn than his mule, an ass who is anything but asinine. At the very moment that the angel's sword is under his nose, Balaam says in exasperation that, if he had a sword, he would slay the donkey with it — an irony made visual in Rembrandt's painting. By the end of the story, the irony is resolved. The seer has learned to see; Balaam has gone from stubborn to subservient. The ass presumably goes back to being asinine, since we never hear from her again.

Talking Animals

Animals such as Balaam's donkey who speak in human language have a long history in western culture. From the "contest literatures" of the ancient Sumerians and Babylonians in which two animals spar over who is better, to the talking dogs of Lucian's Dialogues of the Dead in ancient Rome, right up to Tony the Tiger selling Frosted Flakes, speaking animals would seem to be the ultimate in what primatologist Frans de Waal calls anthropocentric anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism — the attribution of human characteristics to the nonhuman — is not all bad, says de Waal. The continuity between human beings and other species, however minimal it may be in some cases, means that human beings can use their own experience to understand other species. Yet one must also take into account the many differences between a human being and a chimpanzee, or dog, or bat.' De Waal suggests that an anthropomorphism that considers both continuity and difference be called "animal-

centric." An example would be recognizing that a dog's "smile" may be expressing fear or submission. Anthropocentric anthropomorphism, by contrast, would presume that the dog is happy. Anthropocentric anthropomorphism imposes human systems of meaning on other species and effaces the systems that other species make for themselves. It is the difference, de Waal observes, between giving someone a gift that they would want and giving someone a gift that you would want. Animals such as Balaam's donkey who speak in human language are giving us a gift that we would want.

Their anthropocentrism notwithstanding, animals who speak in human language do reflect a genuine desire to see the world from an animal's perspective, Karla Armbruster argues. Balaam's donkey, in my reading of her, is such a case. In her dialogue with Balaam, the donkey reproaches him not only for his physical blows but also for his betrayal of their trust:

> Then the Lord opened the ass's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times?"
> Balaam said to the ass, "You have made a mockery of me! If I had a sword with me, I'd kill you!"
> The ass said to Balaam, "Look, I am the ass that you have been riding all along until this day! Have I been in the habit of doing thus to you?"
> And he answered, "No."
> Then the Lord uncovered Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord ...

The donkey's opening line challenges Balaam's repeated beatings. All the donkey has done is stop walking. The punishment, if merited at all, is out of proportion to the crime. Balaam retorts that the harm done by the donkey is to Balaam's dignity ("You have made a mockery of me!") and that, in fact, the donkey deserves a worse punishment than Balaam has so far inflicted ("If I had a sword with me, I'd kill you!"). The donkey in response reminds Balaam of her loyalty to him ("Look, I am the ass that you have been riding all along until this day! Have I been in the habit of doing thus to you?"). The response seems to put Balaam in his place. His one-word answer "No" is the turning point in the tale. At that moment God opens Balaam's eyes so that he can see the angel. The dialogue between Balaam and the donkey begins with God's opening the donkey's mouth and closes with God's opening Balaam's eyes.

The impact of the donkey's speech on Balaam is due to her (and, obviously, the storyteller's) prodigious rhetorical talents. Most of us in the donkey's place would have responded to Balaam with some version of "Can't you see that there's an angel standing in my way?" (Most of us in Balaam's place, for that matter, would have reacted to the donkey with some version of "I must be crazy if my donkey is talking to me," but Balaam takes it in stride.) The donkey never mentions the elephant in the room (i.e., the angel in the vineyard) and instead calls attention to their own relationship. This choice on the donkey's part — and it is a choice, since while God opens the donkey's mouth, God is not said to be putting words into it — is critical to the donkey's lesson to Balaam. Just as the donkey is subservient to his master, so too should Balaam be subservient to his master — God.

While the moral of the story is human obedience to God, the story does not skirt the subjectivity of the donkey. What does it feel like to be a donkey, the story implicitly wonders, saddled and weighed down with cargo, beaten for not going fast enough? When the donkey teaches God's lesson to Balaam, she is also teaching him, and the story's readers, about her experience as a donkey. She may be speaking God's words, but she is also speaking her own. A person can never really understand what it feels like to be a donkey, and the story evinces interest neither in how donkeys normally express themselves nor in liberating them from human servitude. When the story describes the donkey's mouth being opened, it presumes that prior to that moment the donkey's mouth was "closed," even though braying constitutes speech, albeit not a speech in which human beings are fluent. Moreover, the story holds up the subordination of animals to people as a model for the subordination of people to God.

The only challenge that the donkey poses to Balaam is why he does not act more responsibly as a master. Nevertheless, the story's choice to have the donkey speak from her own position as a

donkey, even if not in her own language, suggests that at the heart of the story is curiosity about the animal's experience, even if that experience serves human purposes and is wrapped up in human perspectives. It is no surprise that Rembrandt chose to portray the donkey with mouth open, at the moment that she speaks, since this is the moment in the story filled with greatest pathos. In Rembrandt's portrait and in the biblical story itself, the donkey is a vehicle, but she is also more.

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The following chapters draw upon animal studies from other areas too, such as philosophy, law, and literature, but before turning to a brief description of the chapters and then to the chapters themselves, I would like to mention another influence upon this book, and that is my personal investment in "the animal." I became a vegetarian at age twelve, after my sister became vegetarian; my parents soon followed. For me it began with the tiny hairs on the skin of the chicken that my sleepaway camp served at Sabbath evening dinner, causing in me a feeling of such revulsion that I could not take another bite and have not since. In the intervening years I have augmented my story with nobler justifications for my vegetarianism — factory farming, environmental sustainability — but were those other explanations to vanish, I would still be left with that feeling described by philosopher Cora Diamond that animals are "fellow creatures" and not food. Those tiny hairs would still bother me. That sense of animals as fellow-creatures was made more real for me when my then-boyfriend-now-husband and I got a dog right after I turned in my dissertation. That dog, Dulcie, has since died, and we recently welcomed a new dog into our home, and it is they whom I have in mind when I speak of dogs as having "animalities" along the lines of people's personalities. They are individuals as much as I am. I do not pretend to be an animal saint. Dulcie and our puppy Burt were purebreds bought from breeders, I am a vegetarian and not a vegan, and now and then I get tired of the vegan shoe options and buy a pair of leather shoes. I agreed when my neighbors asked us to have the exterminator set rat traps in our backyard, and I will kill a mosquito if it looks like it is about to sting me. My relationship with other species is, in sum, as complex as anyone else's. I only mean to say that for this study of animals, I have "skin in the game" and it is not a neutral subject of research. With the mass-scale slaughter of animals and the accelerating shrinkage of animal habitats - with animal experimentation going on in the rooms upstairs from my college office — neutrality hardly seems possible or desirable.

The Chapters

This chapter's aim was to introduce the contours and contributions of critical animal studies, to argue for their relevance to the Babylonian Talmud, and to describe the current state of scholarship at the point where animal studies, Jewish studies, religious studies, and the study of antiquity converge. Following this introductory chapter is a brief orientation to the Talmud for those readers unfamiliar with that ancient Jewish literary corpus.

Chapter 2, "Animal Intelligence," takes up a passage in Bava Qamma 34b-35a that probes the scope of animal cognition. The passage begins with a mishnah that compares the liability of a person for his own actions to the liability of a person for his ox's actions. One case that the Mishnah mentions is setting fire to a stack of grain on the Sabbath. The talmudic commentary considers whether that case represents a purely destructive act — this does not constitute a violation of the Sabbath, according to the Mishnah — or whether the act may have some productive purpose, such as generating ashes to be used for medicinal purposes, in which case the act would constitute a Sabbath violation. The commentary goes on to claim, then to challenge, and finally to prove that an animal is capable of the step-by-step, intention-driven plan that setting a fire to produce ashes would require. In making these generous claims about animal cognition, the talmudic authors speak of a "clever ox" (shor piqe'ah), and they tell a story of a particular ox who was known to assuage the pain of his toothaches by lifting the lid of a beer vat and helping himself to a swig. The talmudic editors pose rhetorical questions that project onto the reader resistance to the notion of a clever animal with human-like needs and human-like abilities to fulfill them. The redactors also set clear limits on animal cognition when they deny to

animals the capacity to intend to cause shame. This chapter contextualizes the talmudic passage within ancient and modern debates about animal intelligence.

Chapter 3, "Animal Morality," looks at the laws of bestiality in Sanhedrin 55a—b. Leviticus 20:15-16 dictates the death penalty for an animal and person who have sex with each other. The Mishnah calls for a full-scale criminal trial for the suspected couple — the person and the animal — and judicial execution for the couple if they are found guilty. The Mishnah's procedure would seem to imply that the animal has moral culpability akin to that of his or her human sexual partner. Yet the Mishnah elsewhere explicitly denies that an animal has the capacity to sin, claiming instead that the animal's punishment is "collateral damage" for the human partner's sin. The Talmud is left, then, with an ambiguity: Is the animal morally culpable or not? The Mishnah's procedure suggests yes, but its explicit statement suggests no. To address the ambiguity, the talmudic commentary poses a borderline case. What if the person in question is not Jewish? Does the animal still deserve to be executed? Chapter 3 argues that the question is itself ambiguous. The chapter discusses not only how various rabbis ruled on the question of the animal's culpability in this case but also how they understood the question to begin with. The chapter argues that the talmudic editors then reframed the earlier rabbinic rulings to produce an account of sin, pleasure, moral accountability, and God's judgment and mercy. This chapter considers the talmudic discussion in light of medieval and early modern animal trials in Europe and the scholarship that has struggled to make sense of the phenomenon.

Chapter 4, "Animal Suffering," revisits the classic discussion of animal suffering from Bava Metzia 22a—23a. In this chapter, I consider the complexity of human responses to animal suffering, drawing on Peter Singer's treatment of animal suffering from the perspective of his feminist critics. The basis for the talmudic discussion is a section of Bible and Mishnah describing a burdened donkey stopped on the side of the road. The biblical and Mishnaic passages seem almost completely uninterested in the suffering of the animal; their concern is the interpersonal dynamics between the animal owner and the passersby. That lack of interest does not stop the Babylonian rabbi Rava from issuing a grand statement, based on those very passages, that animal suffering is a concern of scriptural origin. The talmudic commentary goes on to show, over and over again, that the early rabbinic texts simply do not support Rava's claim. The early rabbinic traditions instead feature a series of cases in which animal suffering slides to the bottom of the list of priorities, even when at first glance the suffering of the animal appears to be the most pressing concern. The talmudic passage in my reading of it shows, contrary to conventional apologetics, that animal suffering is not a concern present in inherited canonical sources, and that the Talmud's aim is for its readers to recognize this. The Talmud invites readers to see that their own sensitivity to animal suffering is spotty, and that Rava's claim about it, though bold, is not all that convincing.

Chapter 5, "Animal Danger," takes up several legal motifs in the Mishnah — the goring ox, a list of "dangerous" animals, and restrictions on household animals — to show that a new discourse of animal nature is being produced there. Drawing on moral panic and risk theory, I read a narrative on Bava Qamma 80a—b in which three rabbis attend a celebration for a baby. They become so preoccupied with the question of which rabbi should enter the room first that no one notices when a cat attacks the baby. After the cat bites off the baby's hand, one of the rabbis issues a set of harsh legislations about cats. The danger to the baby seems to have come less from the cat, however, than from the rabbis who drew attention away from the baby and left him vulnerable. This chapter argues that the cat attack story intends to raise provocative questions about discourses of animal danger.

Chapter 6, "Animals as Livestock," reads a talmudic passage on Sukkah 22b-23a in light of contemporary conversations about animal personhood. Early rabbinic teachings describe the use of a live animal to constitute the floor or wall of a sukkah (fall festival booth) and to serve other purposes normally fulfilled by inanimate objects. When two later rabbis disagree over why an

animal-walled sukkah should be prohibited, the talmudic commentary launches into an investigation of what makes an animal a bad "thing." Is it the animal's will? Their mortality? The animal's body? In an epilogue, the Talmud imagines immobilizing an animal such that he could never escape, and so that his dying body would not jeopardize the stability of the sukkah. It is a grim ending to the Talmud's reflections on animal objectification.

Chapter 7, the Conclusion, considers the contribution of this book to understanding the selves and Others that populate rabbinic literature. What impact might the animalities featured in this book have on contemporary views of the Talmud's anthropologies? The conclusion reviews recent scholarship on the rabbinic self and Other along with Jewish pet-related practices to reflect on the challenges that animals pose to Jewish self/Other binaries.

The chapters together show that talmudic texts are deeply engaged in the problems and possibilities of animality. Colleen Glenney Boggs writes that "animals are animals in American literature and ... we have not adequately accounted for them as such." This book makes a comparable claim for the Babylonian Talmud. Boggs continues: "accounting for them as such will change how we read that literature." So too will accounting for animals change how we read Talmud and, beyond that, the classic texts of western religion. For Boggs, accounting for animals means deconstructing the biopolitics of modernity; here it means returning to late antiquity and to the roots of contemporary religion, to find that it is a time neither of irredeemable speciesism nor of romanticized harmony between man and nature. Ancient texts like the Talmud allow us to take biopolitics back to its formative years, to reveal how animals came to occupy the margins of personhood and how their only partially suppressed subjectivities formed the backdrop for the emergence of the human self.
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Time in the Babylonian Talmud: Natural and Imagined Times in Jewish Law and Narrative by Lynn Kaye [Cambridge University Press, 9781108423236]

In this book, Lynn Kaye examines how rabbis of late antiquity thought about time through their legal reasoning and storytelling, and what these insights mean for thinking about time today. Providing close readings of legal and narrative texts in the Babylonian Talmud, she compares temporal ideas with related concepts in ancient and modern philosophical texts and in religious traditions from late antique Mesopotamia. Kaye demonstrates that temporal flexibility in the Babylonian Talmud is a means of exploring and resolving legal uncertainties, as well as a tool to tell stories that convey ideas effectively and dramatically. Her book, the first on time in the Talmud, makes accessible complex legal texts and philosophical ideas. It also connects the literature of late antique Judaism with broader theological and philosophical debates about time.

Excerpt: Time in the Babylonian Talmud explores how rabbinic jurists' language, reasoning, and storytelling reveal their assumptions about what we call time. By "time," I do not mean measurements of duration such as hours, minutes, or days. There are more elastic and capacious approaches to time in the Babylonian Talmud (Bavli). As Virginia Woolf wrote, "An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the timepiece of the mind by one second."' Considering imaginative writing by modernist writers like Woolf, as well as modern philosophical writings, allows us to break away from familiar presuppositions about time and to see temporal phenomena anew even in ancient cultural artifacts. This book turns to an ancient text, the Bavli, which remains a foundational text of Jewish law and culture, and uses it to think carefully about ancient and contemporary concepts of time. As we will see, temporality permeates the most intriguing legal concepts in the Bavli and it is equally central to the Bavli's storytelling. With this book, then, I hope to move a common debate about time in classical Judaism beyond the question of whether there was or was not a concept of time in rabbinic sources. Instead, I argue for examining in detail "time-like" phenomena in rabbinic texts. This approach sheds light on rabbinic thought in its late antique intellectual contexts and reveals what Bavli temporal thinking can contribute to contemporary theories of time.

This book argues that the Bavli produces sophisticated and innovative portrayals of temporality, and that its legal and narrative reasoning is based on its authors' temporal premises. This approach contrasts with the view that the Jews of late antiquity had no concept of what we currently understand as "time," and instead used only physical and social processes to coordinate their activities. The key is not to try to define "time" but, with a phenomenological approach, to "identify something timelike," i.e. temporal or related to time. There are at least two temporal modes reflected in Bavli thinking: the irreversible temporal processes reflected in the material world, which can be called natural time, and flexible temporal modes of the imagination, which are products of storytelling and legal reasoning.

An example of how the Talmud constructs flexible modes of time to suit legal needs is the "retrospective determination" of events (legal retroactivity). An illustrative case, which will be examined in more detail later in this book, involves a Jew who wishes to establish a legal residence at a distance from his or her home in order to travel further than ordinarily permitted on the Sabbath. By way of background, rabbinic law allows a Sabbath observer to travel only 2,000 cubits from his or her home in any direction. Such restrictions, together with obligatory practices, shape the character of the rabbinic day of rest as home-based. However, not everyone wishes to stay that close to their home on a Sabbath. Thus rabbinic law also creates a way to reassign one's home to a location closer to where the person wants to be during the day of rest, say to hear a visiting teacher who is staying beyond the bounds for Sabbath travel.

The Mishnah (a rabbinic legal text from third-century CE Palestine), mandates that a change of legal residence for the Sabbath must be complete as the sun sets on Friday evening — the beginning of the day of rest. The Mishnah allows one to stipulate, however, that if by the deadline on Friday one does not know in which direction he would like to travel the extra distance, his decision on Saturday morning will retrospectively "reveal" his intention on Friday, rendering his change of residence complete on Friday. The trouble is that his actions on Friday made explicit that he had no idea which location would be his chosen Sabbath residence on Friday. How, then, can one assert that a later action erases and replaces an earlier legally significant behavior? Despite the logical challenges, the Talmud develops a construction of time that allows a later action to actually have taken place earlier, replacing the ambivalence with certainty. This case illustrates the book's methodological contribution by showing how the analysis of legal texts can reveal their underlying temporal concepts and demonstrating how these concepts illuminate what was possible in the rabbinic legal imagination.

This introduction will provide historical context for the book's explorations of time in the Bavli. It surveys pre-rabbinic Jewish ideas of time from the second-temple period as well as the state of scholarship of late antique Christian and Zoroastrian depictions of time from the period of the Bavli. This chapter also addresses the methodological challenges involved in constructing theories of time based on the Talmud. For instance, a Talmudic legal discussion does not aim to develop a theory of time, but rather to examine legal problems and conflicts of values through debate, storytelling, and the application of relevant cases and principles. Nonetheless, a thorough literary and theoretical analysis of relevant legal debates and narrative texts makes it possible to recognize what is "time-like" in these texts and to tease out the implications of how these phenomena are portrayed. Descriptions of temporal phenomena like fixity, simultaneity, and retroactivity reveal the conceptual tools that helped rabbis from different periods to grapple with temporal matters.

Articulating the Timelike

In the legal, narrative, or exegetical contexts of the Bavli, time describes what sits between and binds conceptual or legal items together. The important items are the events, actions, or intentions. Time is neither a substance nor a concept, nor, in general, the focus of discussion. The notion of time as that which connects events is a hard idea to conceive. It may also be difficult to understand how it differs from other proposed structures of time. Wassily Kandinsky's painting Several Circles provides a way to visualize this function of Talmudic temporality as an integrated whole. This has some affinity with the conclusions of Sergey Dolgopolski and Zvi Septimus. Each, in different ways, argued for studying the Bavli's thinking and the impression it makes as an integrated work. Dolgopolski presented the Bavli's processes of reading, thinking, and remembering traditions as central to the definition of the Talmud, while Septimus considered the Bavli as a performance, studying how it prompts readers to engage with it. Much as they reworked inherited legal traditions, Babylonian Talmudic editors revised and expanded narrative traditions that they inherited in order to address ideological, theological, or ethical conflicts. Narratives are a crucial part of rabbinic reasoning and intellectual culture, and alongside legal reasoning and metaphors are all source material for the theoretical arguments of the book.

Bavli Temporal Thinking in Late Antique Mesopotamia

Babylonian Talmudic temporal ideas emerged within the diverse intellectual landscape of the Sasanian empire (224-651 CE). It is not necessary to prove that particular ideas from pagan, Christian, Zoroastrian, and other thinkers influenced Bavli sages in order to see rabbinic thinking as part of diverse intellectual contexts in the Sasanian empire, and the temporal ideas that arise from these texts as expressions of that milieu. There is an ongoing debate in rabbinic studies about which non-Jewish political, religious, or geographically related contexts are most relevant to the understanding of the Babylonian Talmud. It is unwarranted to reject the relevance of any of these corpora. As A. D. H. Bivar wrote about a different cross-cultural question, "to acknowledge the

presence of any of these factors ... need not involve the denial of others." While eschatological schemes of history, concerns about predestination and fate, and the timing of rituals can be found in the Babylonian Talmud, East Syrian Christian, and Zoroastrian texts, this book's approach, which is an investigation of temporality in texts that do not consciously reflect on time, has not yet been undertaken in Syriac or Middle Persian studies. East Syriac texts do present a variety of possible sources for a study like this one, including legal texts, commentaries on creation in the Bible, philosophical reflections," and martyr legends. The hymns and biblical commentaries of St. Ephrem of Nisibis (d. 373) in particular may offer productive comparisons to temporal themes in the Bavli because unlike some of the other late antique Christian materials, Ephrem does not address time from an explicitly philosophical perspective. Instead, temporal concepts appear in figurative language or as a product of biblical exegesis. An example of Ephrem's close reading, which suggests the potential productive comparisons with Bavli and midrashic temporalities, is Ephrem's comment on Genesis 1:6, "Let there be two great lights in the heavens to distinguish between the day and the night, one to rule in daytime and one at night." Unlike Christian Neoplatonist thinkers like Augustine, Ephrem does not address the relationship between time and movement of celestial bodies. Rather, he has an exegetical problem, which is that the lights are both called "great" and the phrase "let there be" apparently produced both of these lights at once, implying that they were both visible at the same time. However, when the sun is shining, night would become day and the moon would not be visible. His solution is to posit a particular time of day and cycle of the moon's phase that would produce an impression of two great lights. Ephrem portrays the creation process as simultaneous with the words spoken by God, while also taking seriously the physical realities of the observable world. Ephrem's constructions of time present a productive direction for comparative study with Babylonian rabbinic midrashim and temporal thinking.

Zoroastrian Middle Persian texts are another comparative context for the Bavli. Zoroastrian texts from late antiquity describe how existence came to be and the important role time plays in the meaning of the current period and the responsibilities of Zoroastrians in their daily lives. Nonetheless, there has yet to be a study of temporality in the many Middle Persian legal and exegetical texts which, like texts in this book, do not reflect explicitly on time. Instead, the rich descriptions of cosmological time and fate have commanded attention. There were multiple accounts of creation among Zoroastrians in Sasanian Mesopotamia. By the fourth century CE, one version, apparently from Persia (the territory of contemporary southwestern Iran), portrayed Zurvan, a minor deity in Avestan texts whose name means "time," as the father of the good and bad powers, Ohrmazd and Ahriman. In Iranian studies, the past century saw the end of a scholarly effort to delineate Zoroastrian "Zurvanite" texts from supposedly orthodox "Zoroastrian" texts. Current scholarship recognizes this origin myth as one variation among many and not as evidence of different schools of Zoroastrianism.

On the other hand, the categories of limited time (zamān i dagrand — xwadāy or zamān i kanāragomand) and unlimited time (zamān i akanārag, akanārag zamān and akanārag zamānih) are found widely in Zoroastrian cosmology. Ohrmazd, the good deity, fashioned bounded (limited) time, from boundless (unlimited) time. The Zoroastrian mandate to struggle against Ahriman, the wicked force, takes place against the backdrop of limited time that will necessarily end, taking with it Ahriman's power. Zamān and zurvān both mean a point in time, span of duration, as well as appearing in phrases for boundless and bounded time.94 Despite the fact that the word zamān has a cognate in rabbinic Aramaic and Hebrew (from Persian contact in an earlier period), which also refers to a specific time or times, and sometimes also has more broad resonances, I have not found proof that the Bavli uses this word because of influence from Middle Persian. In sum, Eastern Syriac Christianity and Sasanian-period Zoroastrianism produced texts that engaged time through their own theological, polemical, and exegetical concerns. Neither tradition has a monolithic concept of time and both Syriac and

Middle Persian texts merit further study of temporal creativity in law, exegesis, and storytelling.

Plan of the Book

Describing temporality in Bavli laws, exegesis, and narratives requires the methodology described in this chapter, which incorporates literary analysis and phenomenology in order to identify time-related intuitions without flattening internal differences. Imagining time as what is in-between, connecting events together in multiple configurations, implies a spatial image of temporality. Chapter 1 will argue that kinesthetic, spatial, and temporal imagery link movement and space with temporality. With clarification from Talmudic texts that describe how events coincide by using imagery of bodies closing in on one another in space, the chapter focuses on the legal principle "it is im/possible to reduce" (il' epsar lësamsèm)." This principle addresses whether it is possible to ascertain if events are simultaneous, and suggests that temporal "boundaries" were part of imagining how simultaneous events relate to one another. The most conceptually advanced discussion of "it is im/possible to reduce" (in b.Bekhorot 17b-18a) concludes with a suggestion that simultaneity is different when initiated by "Heaven" or by human actors. This lays the groundwork for a discussion of divine and human temporal perception.

Talmudic texts recognize a difference between human perceptions of the temporal position of one event relative to another and God's perspective. In the first chapter, the suggestion that "it is possible to reduce [events] in the hands of Heaven" portrays God as hyper-precise and able to recognize whether events overlap temporally or are temporally consecutive. Distinctions in the time of natural events are ultimately knowable, even if only by God. Chapter z examines legal discussions about the inaccuracy that attends human beings knowing the hours. Human beings are fundamentally imprecise in their distinguishing of hours of the day. Examples from Zoroastrian law that prescribe the timing of rituals indicate that the assumption of fundamental inaccuracy with regards time of day was shared in other legal cultures. What seems different in the Bavli, even from the Palestinian Talmud (also known as the "Yerushalmi," a collection of rabbinic discussions organized around the Mishnah, from Roman Palestine in roughly 200-400 CE) and from the Zoroastrian texts, is the interest in digging down into the possible degrees of inaccuracy. The Bavli's legal engagement with what is undetermined and fuzzy produces unusual expressions of time. In Bavli narratives, by contrast, God is given a precise perception of the distinctions between hours and days. He is portrayed giving punishments simultaneously with the sin that prompts them, and answering prayers before they are articulated. God's ability to act at precisely the "right" time reflects a proximate presence in the material world, which contrasts, toward the end of the chapter, with concepts of divine timelessness in other traditions.

The following three chapters present temporal configurations of events that rely on natural time and create another legal or narrative ordering of the same events. Chapter 3 explains the temporal construct of fixity (from the root q. b. `), which associates temporal endurance with immobility. The metaphoric language for "fixity" is a reference to the word for being nailed to the ground, suggesting a concept of time that relates change and movement, and also provides an alternative of stability and immobility in legal contexts. The term "fixed" describes both continuously present phenomena like a chronic weepy eye, and events that recur regularly, like a habit in daily life. Regularly recurring events legally resemble something continuously present. This suggests that the legal concept of being "fixed" is a legal temporal construct that coexists alongside natural processes, but links together non-successive events, erasing the "distance" that separates them in natural time. I argue that being "fixed" becomes a legal designation. It conveys that an abstract item, like a tradition or legal status, can endure despite the processes of change that characterize natural time.

Chapter 4 presents a startling example of legal temporality that upholds natural time and creates another temporal ordering of the same events. Bérêrã (retroactive determination) is one of the most tantalizing and conceptually difficult Talmudic

concepts. With this principle, the Talmud addresses legal indeterminacy and contradiction by introducing flexibility in the ordering of events. I argue that previous analyses of this concept encountered logical problems because they assumed there was only asymmetrical process-related time proceeding from one moment to the next, such as in cycles of night and day. Bërêrã can be understood, then, as an expression of legal temporality that is not limited by logic. It joins moments out of order and constructs new configurations of events for legal purposes. Comparisons with Middle Persian legal texts that include retroactivity highlight the complexity the Talmudic editors introduce in their temporal and legal vocabulary. The Bavli introduces a different temporal ordering of events resulting in the later intention taking place at an earlier time.

Chapter 5 describes the temporality of collective memory that undergirds Passover practices. This form of time is a further example of Talmudic texts linking distant moments in a new pattern, erasing the temporal space that separated them. In this case, telling stories and experiencing sensory acts on Passover eve links the participants' present time and felt materiality to events from a distant past of collective memory: the Israelites leaving Egypt. Sages are described as experiencing both the distant and the current moment together. Marcel Proust's fiction provides helpful comparisons for temporality in which distant events are brought together but natural time is upheld. The Exodus remains part of the past while simultaneously being present through an imaginative temporal order. I compare and contrast descriptions of Passover with experiential aspects of other rabbinic holiday texts, to argue that Passover is distinct for its powerful joining of past and present.

This book concludes that Bavli temporality is not limited to visible and irreversible physical and social processes of change or "natural time." Talmudic sages and editors also arrange events in new temporal configurations. These can be imagined spatially, as bodies connected in space, moving in relation to one another. Such temporal configurations have no particular shape, and neither does time. Temporality allows events that are not adjacent in natural time to make contact. This temporal contact has legal effects in the Bavli. The Bavli animatedly engages with rases involving undetermined facts and human beings' limitations of perception and knowledge. In the examples analyzed here, time is reconstructed in the process of legal debate. Talmudic sages and editors push the limits of their own conceptual structures to produce new ways of seeing the world in the realms of law and storytelling. I describe how the concepts of time derived from Bavli texts can contribute to contemporary theoretical examinations of time and suggest future directions of research, particularly the application of similar methods of analysis to case law and narrative texts in the Mishnah and to late antique Syriac and Middle Persian literature. <>

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