

Minerva Humanities Center

*Annual Academic Report
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Research Summary

The work of the Academic Year 2020-2021 was devoted to summarizing more than a decade of intensive research and shared thought activity. During this period, hundreds of meetings and dozens of conferences and workshops were held at the Center, leading to hundreds of academic publications.

Summarizing the extensive activities of the Center, which has been an intellectual home for many of us, is a difficult mission. Thus, we asked the Center's fellows to offer lectures that reflect not only on what has been, but also on what should be; Not with the intention of bringing closure to the Center's work, but rather to point at the urgent needs of a humanities center today. The question leading us was what would future research in the humanities look like and what are the conversations it could lead within the university walls and beyond.

The Center is organized in the form of three departments: one dealing with migrating knowledge, the second with creating a political lexicon and the third with the question of living together. Each group also had several different and diverse subgroups. At the same time, however, there were several themes that recurred over the years across the various groups. Such themes addressed the question of the dynamic nature of bodies of knowledge being transformed while moving globally and locally in time and space.

Other prominent themes pertained to the connection between knowledge and power, science, culture and politics; Criticism and its meaning, its role and limits; Problems of secularization and the connection between tradition and innovation; Social change and revolution; Political imagination, theory and action; The role of academia, the role of the intellectual, and especially the role and future of the humanities. All of these themes have been dealt with in the past and still continue to preoccupy members of the different groups.

Following that, the seminar was devoted to a series of talks whose starting point was these recurring concepts in our work. Fellows were invited to offer a topic for a lecture on a specific research project conducted during the Center's years of operation, while expanding it to reflect on their broad research and thought process.

The twenty lectures given in the course of the year presented a wide and varied range of research interests, methodologies and historical and geographical contexts. These included questions about critique in a post-secular world and modernization of Jewish culture, historical-philosophical study of linguistics and critical research on the question of printing and knowledge dissemination (hence migration) among rabbis in the early 19th century.

Other prominent topics concerned visual activism in human rights organizations and the temporalization and political similarity of the ongoing war; Resilience and philosophical study of issues of violence and exile; Political economy and socialization at our time as well as local and global aspects of the Palestinian struggle for recognition in the 1960s, nationalism, citizenship, populism and political imagination in Israel/Palestine; Cultural appropriation of local names and the relationship between language, knowledge and "fake news"; Jewish archives and Muslim knowledge in situations of exile and imperial rule.

Exceptionally prominent were questions in the sociology of knowledge as reflected in the world of first-generation students of higher education and the promise of returning to the institution of a school for the humanities, concrete study of outbreaks of urban violence and the importance of striving for truth.

The lectures showcased the unimaginable richness of years of working together and revealed the imminent power of the humanities in creating a unique critical, exploratory, challenging and political space.



Critique in a Post Secular Age – The Potential of Tradition

Ori Rotlevy

My presentation approached the post secular age – the presence of religious traditions in the political spheres of societies that thought themselves secular – as an opportunity to rethink the relations between tradition, critique and freedom. Since Critical Theory continues, in various forms and through various transformations, the heritage of the Enlightenment, today it needs to cope with the antagonism of Enlightenment towards religious traditions and the very structure of authority in every cultural tradition. Part of this heritage was that freedom attained through the critical process is freedom from tradition, viewed as one of the forms of heteronomy. However, the presence of religious traditions in our own days brought thinkers, such as Saba Mahmud and Talal Asad, to think differently on freedom as being possible from within tradition and as transcending the Kantian thought of the freedom of autonomous subjects. I ask, to what extent can this concept of freedom be tied to Critical Theory, that nevertheless stems from Kantian critical thought.

In my presentation, I examined this question with respect to Jürgen Habermas and Walter Benjamin. While Habermas is very well aware of the post secular age and indeed was one of those that coined the term, I argue that he misses the renewed potential of rethinking critique and freedom in this context. For him, this age allows thinking on how one can take certain contents missing in modern societies (such as solidarity) from religious traditions. However, in this case critical thought continues to stand as an external position to any tradition, it allows no more than rationally filtering the traditional content, without thinking of the transformative potential of traditional experience in modernity. Benjamin, however, in his early work on Kant thinks on tradition as a medium of freedom of the subject who hands it down, and of tradition itself as a site for transformation. He takes this medium from its religious context to a wide philosophical and cultural context. And thus, the cultural critique he offers in his later work, such as the Arcades Project, depends on the commitment to the near past of his own period, namely, to the 19th century as tradition. It is this displacement of an originally religious medium, which reveals revolutionary possibilities that derive from this altered relation to the past.

Modernization in Jewish Culture

Roni Weinstein

The Jewish legal tradition [Halakhah, in Hebrew] is unique in its long historical time span, ever since late antiquity until present times, and the way it laid the common ground for Jewish life in various diasporas. Its particular mode of internal discourse established it a unique place in the history of law in monotheistic traditions.

It is no mere coincidence that modern academic research in this domain – both in Israeli and American universities – is conducted mainly by scholars with religious background of Yeshivah studies. It requires very specific and deep knowledge of the Talmudic lore. Most of the research products in the domain of *History of Halakhah* focus on the internal discourse among past rabbis and Talmudic scholars, and the genealogy of certain legal claims, or on the formation of Talmudic schools in various geographical-cultural areas, as an expression of its immanent evolvement.

In this manner R. Joseph Karo's codification project was discussed in both the rabbinic literature, and to a large extent in modern academic research of the last twenty years. The arguments' rough outlines relate its composition to circumstances of immigration or expulsions during the early modern period, political and communal crisis, necessitating a work of summation and encyclopedic collection work of all rabbinic precedents until the writer's time.

My presentation offered an alternative reading of R. Karo's codes of law in two complementary aspects:

- [a] Presenting Jewish Halakhah and its change throughout the years as a response to contemporary changes of law and its role along the early modern period.
- [b] The global reading of this change, in the context of the Mediterranean and Middle East, where it was formed. It takes into consideration corresponding processes of change taking place in Europe with the rise of modern states, and especially in the Ottoman Empire.

This empire – the largest and most important in Islamic history – extended over wide geographical territories, and controlled the entire 'classical' Arabic world, including the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The Turkish groups heading this empire had their own particular traditions, distinct from Arabic-Islamicate



ones. The Ottoman authorities managed to integrate non-Muslim minorities in the political and military elite, and publicized an imperial polity based on justice for all subjects, including non-Muslims. Rulership based on law and common justices were presented as a precondition to the salvation era, headed by the Ottoman Sultans.

The empire's legal system was characterized by innovation and centralization. It was headed by an official jurisconsult – the head of the legal professional guild – who was responsible for training the legal personnel, shaping unified legal norms for the center and periphery, establishing state curriculum, and for various projects of codification along the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

All these parameters are clearly reflected in the life course and the legal activity of R. Karo. His aspirations, personal motivations, and professional work are reflected in a unique tract ('unique' in a rabbinical context), a mystical diary documenting four decades of his life almost on a daily basis. It sheds light on the process that led him to compose his double codes of law, and the deep dialogue with his Ottoman surroundings.

His work presents a bold attempt to shape a unified legal system for the entire Jewish ethnos, controlled by one centralistic person – himself, naturally. It was never intended to be realized, since he lacked any coercive measures, but to present a grand vision intended for future generations, and to define the common religious heritage on the basis of law and legality. Thus, R. Karo intentionally joined parallel projects in Europe, the Ottoman Empire, Safavid Iran, and Mughal India. Indeed, it offers a global vision of Jewish Halakhah.

What's Critical About It?

A Historical-Philosophical Investigation of Time-Space Relationships in the Language Sciences as Critical Theory

Lin Chalozin-Dovrat

As we gathered for the Center's last and closing Annual Seminar, I chose to reflect on the role that Minerva Humanities Center had in cultivating my critical perspective on my field of research, the history and philosophy of linguistic ideas. The encounter between critical theory and the history and philosophy of linguistic ideas is far from being obvious to researchers in both domains. Hence, I found it intriguing to ask in which ways my work on the relationships between time and space in linguistic theories is critical. How does it use what the intellectual arsenal critical theory has on offer?

My work revolves around a common claim in cognitive semantics according to which time in language is construed in spatial terms. What does it mean for temporal expressions to be "construed in spatial terms"? This is the starting point of my investigation into various theoretical efforts formulating this claim or relying on it. The stakes are high, I argue, as the time-is-space claim enables the generalization of disparate linguistic phenomena and the articulation of general laws tied to basic cognitive mechanisms regulating visual cognition, orientation, or learning. Thus, the time-is-space claim reflects a scientific consensus that has spread far beyond the confines of cognitive semantics and is now shared by different disciplines, from child psychology through neurology to economics.

Following some of the major thinkers in cognitive semantics and linguistic typology, such as George Lakoff (1993) or Martin Haspelmath (1997), I extract the characteristic features of the time-is-space claim, employing the toolbox proposed by critical theory to expose contradictions and trace the intellectual history that shaped them. Highlighting the specific histories of concepts used by linguistic theories (especially the history of the concept SPACE), I show the contingent nature of what is presented as natural necessity. To give only a few examples, these are central statements related to the time-is-space claim, followed by my critical comments:



1. Time and space are the most basic conceptual domains of human thought.
Many cognitive scientists emphasize the Kantian sources of their work. In fact, the Kantian doctrine of transcendental aesthetics consecrated space and time as analogical and exclusive conditions of human perception and understanding. However, for Kant these were not "concepts" with specific contents, but the conditions necessary for forming ones.
2. Time is a metaphor of space.
According to the widely accepted theory of metaphor and contrary to statement (1), time and space are not equal and analogical, but rather express the cognitive superiority of space over time.
3. This superiority, suggest cognitive scientists, follows a biological logic, as we don't have an organ devoted to time perception, but do have detectors for motion, objects and locations.
This common hypothesis implies that concepts necessarily rely on direct perceptual information.
4. Abstract domains of thought are based on concrete domains.
The abstract/concrete dichotomy is a traditional conceptual tool of epistemological inquiry since medieval thought, if not earlier. But in what way is the concept of space – one of the most exemplary cases in the history of science of successful abstraction – "concrete"?
5. Languages express temporal and spatial ideas in the same way.
While this claim is allegedly empirical, it postulates the existence of conceptual "linguistic universals", presumably shared by thousands of languages. Thus, the time-is-space claim appeals for universality: that it is supported by biological and evolutionary principles and manifests in a great number of languages, if not all of them.

While these and other arguments are inconsistent or ignore adverse evidence, my work shows that they are motivated by strong disciplinary interests.

On Making Many Books [in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction]

The Hatam Sofer on Print, Scholarship, and Knowledge

Vered Sakal

The presentation examined a responsum by Moses Schreiber (aka *Hatam Sofer* 1762–1839), in which he discusses the ramifications of print and mechanical reproduction of books. Reading Schreiber's text through two conceptual frameworks – 'migrating knowledge' and 'the history of the book' – we explored questions of creation, transfer, and transformation of knowledge; The different qualities attributed to hand-copied and press-printed texts; The fixity of the printed book and the effect it has on scholarship. On the face of it, these theoretical frameworks seem rather foreign to Schreiber's discourse and self-perception. Still, we claim that when applied to his text, they introduce deeper dimensions of inquiry and explanation into the text's main argument – Schreiber's adamant objection to the printing of his own work.

Along with placing Schreiber's allegations towards the print ecosystem within the obvious context of his struggle against Haskala (<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/haskalah/>), Reform Judaism, and the academic approach towards Jewish scholarship – what is generally referred to as Jewish modernity— we saw how Schreiber's harsh evaluation of printing lends itself to a more general, normative discussion about the creation, transfer, and transformation of knowledge. Right and wrong means of creating and communicating knowledge; Useful vs. harmful patterns of dissemination; Healthy or damaging agents and social trajectories – Schreiber's concerns with the growth and spread of ideas demonstrate a keen awareness of the complexity of the movement of knowledge through time and space, and an uneasiness with the rise of a new knowledge regime in which commercial considerations and agents promote fast, mediocre, and sometimes even harmful, ideas.

In addition to Schreiber's discussion about the outer–public-social effects of print, the presentation weighed in on what can be described as the inner–private aspects of print – the effects it has on his own work. We saw how Schreiber recognizes two levels of inner constraints that may result from printing: embarrassment caused by



early writings that cannot be retrieved (to be corrected or destroyed); And, more prominently, print's fixity, or its rigid, irreversible, and one-directional nature, which disrupts the nonlinear, vibrant essence of knowledge and scholarship.

Our discussion of Schreiber's inner-personal objections to print also touched on the impact the transformation from manuscript to print has on the author's body of work – especially when she/he are not the ones supervising the process, as the final, printed product may deviate from the author's original intentions. The discrepancies between Schreiber's handwritten body of work and the printed books published by his successors show that while Schreiber's reluctance to print might have gained him maximum control over his work during his lifetime, it did, eventually, result in a certain loss of control over text and narrative in the 'final product' – posthumously published books of his responsa.

Emancipation and Collaboration

A Critical Examination of Human Rights Video Advocacy

Ruthie Ginsburg

The presentation explored the relationship between political freedom and collaboration in the work of human rights organizations. I focused on the ethical and political implications involved in the production of evidence once the documenting tool, the camera, is in the hands of an engaged civilian rather than a bystander, such as a photojournalist. By examining cases in the Occupied Palestinian Territories where the Palestinians are the photographers of human rights violations, I outlined the relations and tensions between emancipatory acts and collaboration via visual information production. Human rights organizations laud new technology and celebrate the participation of those afflicted by such violations in knowledge production as a form of empowerment, and those afflicted may experience the visual practice as a mode of self-representation. But inevitably such a practice is based on collaborative action. In the Israeli/Palestinian conflict case study below, such collaboration has negative effects, which impinge upon the emancipatory features of this mode of documenting.

The cases I presented are: 1) Bilal Tamimi's documentation at Nabi Saleh village. Tamimi used to film the weekly protests of Palestinians against the Israeli occupation. 2) Imad Abu Shamsiyeh's film where Elor Azaria is seen shooting Abd a-Sharif, an injured Palestinian. In the presentation I combined visual analysis, a close reading of the various events' representations documented in the media, and interviews. I decided to focus mainly on the aforementioned videos by Tamimi and Abu Shamsiyeh because these Palestinian photographers are not only part of B'Tselem's project but also act independently. Watching their videos and talking with them discloses the benefits, interests, faults, and contradictions in their collaboration with the Israeli organization.

The Political Work of Time

Organizing Protracted Wars, Organizing Corona Virus

Nitzan Rothem

My studies on POWs and on the IDF war-doctrine reveal the relations between temporality and morality – time frames of warfare and obligations towards soldiers. Building on these findings, my Minerva presentation discussed the time frames of corona-days and their moral implications.



The City of Refuge

Violence, Exile and the Question of Learning

Adi Sorek

The city of refuge is mentioned in the Bible as part of the commandment to offer shelter to those who have killed inadvertently and who are considered involuntary manslaughter. The city is built to prevent vendettas and stop cycles of revenge. Living in the city of refuge is considered a sort of exile, albeit of a special kind – a non-diasporic exile in the Land of Israel designed to strengthen the rule of law against the constant threat of blood feuds.

In the Biblical Talmud that interprets the Biblical commandment, the city of refuge is revealed as a complex linguistic structure, which is based on a displaced network of kinship and ownership relations. The question of involuntary manslaughter is also related to the teacher-student commitment, and the unique nature of the exile is clarified in a complex discussion of violence and the responsibility thereto. In this linguistic city, mythical religious figures (Levites, high priests and their mothers) meet. In a kind of hermeneutic theater, they teach how to deal with violent patterns, reveal the inherent nature of blood cycles in patriarchal legal systems and even discredit them using aggadic literary devices, thanks to the intervention of the “mother tongue”.

In my lecture, I will present the city of refuge with reference to the question of internal criticism addressed by the “Tradition – Canon, Transmission, Critique” group that I moderate together with Dr. Ori Rotlevy. I will ask how it is possible to engage with critical traditions hidden within the cannon, and alternatively, how critical knowledge wanders across time and historical circumstances, to find fertile ground for belated development.

Finally, I will examine the city of refuge in the Talmud as well as in its subsequent reiterations in modern Jewish literature and philosophy, as a source of inspiration for the research institute’s present-day role.

The Right Lost its Breaks, and the Left Train has Derailed

Naveh Frumer & Gal Hertz

Building up on recent debates and publications which emerged from the Minerva Humanities Center and its past members, we propose a diagnosis of an impasse in political theory and praxis. We focus on three main points:

1. The impressive success of "the new right", which hitherto does not have an agreed-upon title: neo-conservatism, neo-fascism, or neo-authoritarianism. We adopt recent studies that propose the title of neo-feudalism, which integrates an analysis in terms of political economy. From this perspective, many contemporary political discussions are missing the changing mode of generation of capital in recent years. For example, debates over new forms of immigration often move between universal rights, on the one hand, and the protection of national prerogatives, on the other – thereby neglecting the political-economic transformations behind these developments.
2. The concept of rights is still overly emphasized in political debates. The problem, we argue, is that the right-wing (broadly conservative) regards rights as privileges, whereas the left-wing (broadly reformist) disregards the fact that the rights it advocates (mostly social and welfare) have undergone significant privatization. The result is that both sides are mired in a debate that regards rights as an individual matter rather than as a mechanism for the formation and transformation of social relations.
3. We propose an analysis of the "right turn", namely the recent losses of left-wing parties in various countries, in terms of how material changes have altered the conditions of possibility for who used to be the addressee of the social-democratic left.



Nationalism, Citizenship and the Populism in-between

Gal Levy

In this short lecture, I set out to examine the current spirit of populism haunting the world, asking whether right-populism is the re-appearance of the old and 'not so nice' nationalism, and if left-populism is the remedy to right-populism. More specifically I briefly addressed the rise of populism, asking why now and what makes this populism a particular phenomenon. The short answer to this question is that it touches upon the vulnerabilities of the liberal, national capitalistic order. I then go on to ask what nationalism is doing in the world nowadays, and explain in brief why I believe populism is not a reconfiguration of nationalism. I argue that they differ in one major criterion: while nationalism seeks to delineate a boundary that encircles the "popolo" across social class, populism creates antagonism within the "popolo" between "the people" and the (corrupt) elite. Finally, I explore the rise of the welfare state and its transition to a neoliberal state, in order to examine whether left-populism is the answer to the current crisis. I conclude by suggesting that if populism is the manifestation of the representation crisis, the question is: how could the left return and who should it represent? A return to the (good?) old welfare state, I contend, will not suffice, and we should view the struggle for freedom as a constant radical challenge to the economic idea of liberty that haunts us since the rise of neoliberalism.

Political Imagination Between the River and the Sea

Livnat Konopny Declève

The talk is based on my doctoral research which focuses on the perception of political action and of sovereignty of Israeli-Jews, who, following their dissent over the Israeli control over Palestine, have exiled themselves from Israel and either moved abroad or moved to Palestinian localities in the West-Bank. The research demonstrates the importance of activists' ability to envision an alternative political future or to envision change. Many of the interlocutors in my research left Israel and moved abroad because they could not envision a possible solution to the ongoing conflict. They felt their efforts to bring about change were in vain and could no longer live in Israel while participating and contributing, though passively, to a political system to which they oppose. Some of these dissidents, however, try to find ways to create spaces for encounters and dialogue with other left-wing activists and with Palestinians, and to envisage alternative political structures and solutions together.

Political imagination was the theme of the 'Political Lexicon' research group last year. Hannah Arendt's work, whose important contribution to the topic was examined in the group's meetings, was also the main locus of the 'Living Together' group in which I also took part. This paper questions two assertions made by Arendt regarding political imagination: One, is that political imagination is better expressed and manifested in collectivities and in the public sphere. The other, is that political imagination creates a synthesis between intuitions and concepts. For Arendt, it is language and concepts that render the imagination debatable and hence, collective. My research's findings, however, suggest that it is not language and conceptualization, but rather intuitions and emotions, which instigate an alternative political imagination.

Based on fieldwork and interviews conducted with over 40 dissidents, living in Palestinian localities in the West-Bank and abroad, I demonstrate that the existing language and the political concepts at hand are politically charged and therefore constrain the possibility to think beyond the existing political imagination. Interlocutors find that certain concepts such as 'Democracy', 'Peace' or even 'Anti-Semitism' were degraded to the point of losing their meaning. At the same time, activists lack words and concepts to describe the future they would like to envision.



Instead of language and concepts, the paper reveals the potentiality of emotions. I show how emotions make better grounds for communicating political stances to family members who do not share the same worldview as that of the dissidents. Moreover, the dissonance between the dissidents' political beliefs and emotions, such as fear of the 'Palestinian Other', reveals the societal origins of these emotions, and this understanding instigates emotions of resistance. I further demonstrate how the emotional relief that life away from Israel allows, and the possibility to meet with people from 'enemy countries' abroad, create possibilities for unlearning the Zionist upbringing and for developing new horizons of thought. These emotions of resistance and curiosity can encourage, in turn, alternative political imagination.

Language Without Land

Sakhne and its Sisters – A Multi-Functional Use by Israelis of Palestinian Names

Amer Dahamshe

The Jewish-Hebrew naming of settlements and natural landscapes was initially a national means of establishing Jewish property rights over the land. It also served as a tool for connecting Jewish immigrants to the environment by designating ancient names from the Bible, the Mishnah and the Talmud and by designating names linked to Israeli history and to the Hebrew language. Still, some of the names set by the Israeli names committees in lieu of the Palestinian names have not taken root, and Israelis turn their backs on the committees' dictates and use Palestinian (Arabic) names, when the pronunciation of the forms in Arabic and their content are clear to the public and are completely different from the Israeli naming. In other words, the naming of places in Hebrew, while erasing the names in Arabic, was a planned process, but inevitably it encountered exceptions in the field, the survival of dozens of names and perhaps hundreds of names in Arabic, i.e., the preservation of a few singular names compared to the Palestinian toponymic wealth estimated at tens of thousands of names.

I call the phenomenon of use by the hegemonic culture of names of the Palestinian minority "Names Nonetheless", as the Palestinian names were accepted by Israelis even though the Zionist institutions took upon themselves to design a monolingual and monocultural space, free of the Palestinianness of the place.

The study on names in Israel did not examine the Israelis' attitude towards names in Arabic. In contrast, my study examines the use of governmental power in the names of the subordinates and shows in which cases Israelis use Palestinian names and in which cases these names did not survive in the Israelis' speech. The presence of Palestinian names is largely a cultural imitation that reflects popular behavior "from below", and in some cases even Israeli officials "from above" use Palestinian names. In view of this behavior, a local subculture is created, disrupting the Hebrew or Arabic binary and creating an ambivalent reality in which Hebrew and Arabic live together. In Homi Bhabha's terms, the presence of the Arab forms ostensibly creates a hybrid reality of a binomial designation system for space (Bhabha 1994). But unlike the situation described by Bhabha, in the cases that came up in my research, the hybrid identity is created by the subject who is identified with the majority and with the ruling power and not by the subordinates.

However, the use of Palestinian names by Israelis is not intended to make the voices of the defeated heard and is not a recognition of the Palestinian narrative. The motivations behind this use are linked to cultural, historical, geographical, psychological, linguistic, economic and touristic motives.

The Israeli naming of places in Arabic forms is reminiscent of two seemingly contradictory processes: on the one hand, this naming refers to the Arab forms in a negative context, and on the other hand it refers to them in a positive nostalgic or neutral context. This subculture is characterized by contradiction; It contains conflicting and violent elements such as nostalgia and distance, camouflage and presence, inheritance and appropriation. This means that Israelis prefer to remain in the position of settler and governmental power, but in rare cases they tend to take the native's position and imitate him.



On Partial and Fake Reports

Thoughts on Unreliable Knowledge from New Worlds

Ran Segev

Early modern colonial expansion transformed the manner in which Europeans studied foreign peoples and cultures. Increasingly, travelers and keen observers turned to innovative scientific methods in order to gather ethnographic information. Facing what seemed to be a ‘flood of information’ from the New World, premodern writers gradually recognized that European knowledge about human societies across the globe was, at best, partial and fragmented, if not completely false. This understanding bred skepticism on humans’ very ability to ascertain social truths and ultimately shattered long-established social concepts and classifications that were based upon classic Greco-Roman philosophy and sacred literature. Reflecting upon these historical developments, I have argued that this historical context is illuminating in understanding contemporary cultural transitions, as we nowadays also face an overwhelming feeling of “Too Much to Know” (to use Ann Blair’s words). In my talk, I compared the early modern discourse concerning the limitation of knowledge to the uncertainty and experience of partial knowledge that is rooted in our own time, an era in which social facts are increasingly recognized and validated through media exposure and virtual “likes”. I asked what can we gain from analyzing the epistemic transformation of writers at the dawn of modernity, stressing that the discernment between partial knowledge and fake reports (or “fake news”) was no less a concern during a time of geographic and cultural discovery than in postmodern times, an era of so-called ‘post-truth’.

Focusing on the ideas of Michel de Montaigne, José de Acosta, and Bernardino de Sahagún, among others, I demonstrated how late sixteenth-century authors conceived their ability to differentiate between true and false anthropological reports (based upon their subjective perceptions). My talk highlighted skeptical attitudes in colonial literature and further examined how the aforementioned writers proposed to overcome the inherent limitations in the circulation of anthropological data. For example, I explored how the Franciscan friar, Bernardino de Sahagún addressed the difficulty of studying foreign people in New Spain (Mexico), openly raising the problem of authenticating facts about their culture without the possibility of relying on canonical texts. In the last part of my talk, I shifted the historical analysis to

cultural reflection on the role of social critics in an age of massive exposure to information. Building on the sixteenth century discourse on partial knowledge and taking cues from Robert Proctor and Londa Schiebinger's *Agnology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance*, I discussed the advantages of including all types of reports, including erroneous ones. After all, even inaccurate texts preserved voices that were and have been disregarded and have the potential to unveil the beliefs, perceptions and expectations of large segments of society.

Archive and Exile

Dispersal, Transmission and Anticipation

Lina Barouch

Key questions discussed in the “Migration of Knowledge” research group pertained to practices of knowledge transmission in various fields and contexts. The archive is, by definition, a case study for the fashioning and institutionalization of knowledge transmission, while in the contexts of migration and exile standard transmission practices are severed and the transmitted knowledge is defined by its dispersal, re-collecting and its fragmentary nature.

In my presentation I dealt with the challenges and opportunities of the archival process (collecting, transmitting, anticipating) on the basis of my work as academic coordinator of the international project “Traces and Treasures of German-Jewish History in Israel” (The Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Center, the Deutsches Literatur Archiv Marbach) in the framework of which personal archives of immigrant and exiled German-Jewish intellectuals, of scientists and artists of the first half of the twentieth century, were preserved and catalogued.

Alongside archival findings the presentation attempted to critically reflect on the preservation and cataloguing processes of the archive. I discussed the multifocal and integral approach which calls for plural viewpoints among the novice participating researchers: they participated as students in the humanities, as apprentice archivists, as archivologists (cultural historians) who observed the making, form and context of the archival document and the archive as whole. This multiple approach is in part a result of new approaches in archival studies that demand “participatory archives” with decentralized curation, radical user



orientation and a wide contextualization of record management. The archive is therefore understood less as a product and more as a process, and the forms of collecting and cataloguing, not as linear or complete processes, but rather as open and fragmentary. These traits characterize in particular the archive in the contexts of exile and migration.

A full-fledged development of these insights and arguments was published as an introductory article: Lina Barouch, “The Return to the Archive: Dispersal, Transmission and Anticipation in Personal Archives between Germany and Israel”, in: *Dubnow Institute Yearbook XVII* (2018), pp. 299-312.

The Loss of the Mufti

Muḥammad 'Abduh in Taha Hussein's Days

Zahiye Kundos

This is an invitation to revisit one of the most famous Arabic classics, the autobiographical trilogy *al-Ayyām* (The Days), written by Taha Hussein (1889-1973). Slow, patient reading into Hussein's trilogy as a literal unit enables remembering and linking together three influential events in his life: the tragic effects of the 1902 Cholera pandemic on his family, the deep sense of loss from the death of al-Ustādh al-Imam Muḥammad 'Abduh in 1905 (born 1849), and the new hopes connected to the establishment of the Egyptian University in 1908. In Egyptian Historiography and the modern collective memory that it produced, 'Abduh is considered more than a religious reformer. His stature is seen as one of the fathers, or rather, one of the grandfathers of modern Egypt, who led its awakening. 'Abduh's life had faced multiple shifts due to the rapid changes of the socio-political conditions he experienced. In his last years, he also held the position of Egypt's Grand Mufti. These two fathers or grandfathers of modern Arabic thought affected and shaped the political imaginaries and cultural directions of reform. Hussein was sixteen years old when 'Abduh passed away and did not have the chance to be his first-hand student. Yet, and despite emotional shifts in his religious affiliations, his memoirs reveal that he nonetheless saw himself as the Mufti's faithful student and true successor.

Reworking *al-Ayyām* in this vein, referring to it as a literal, personal and historical document, could tell the story of that dramatic moment when *ʿUlūm al-Dīn* (religious sciences) separated from *Adāb* (humanities) through rapid disciplinary and institutional reorganizations in a context of personal rivalries, political interests and colonial conditions and practices.

'First Generation'

Intersections of Margins

Efrat Ben-Shoshan Gazit

The talk presented findings from research on 'First Generation' of Higher Education as a gendered socio-political category.

First-generation students (FGS) refer to the first people in their families to acquire higher education. The term does not indicate a particular identity, but in practice, it functions as a category that combines people from geographic and social periphery from marginalized groups. Their chances of getting a degree are seven times lower than those whose parents have an academic education, and their chances of becoming academics are lower (OECD, 2018).

The term 'first generation' carries a historical semantic burden in academy established by the Ashkenazi elite in the service of the national project. Furthermore, although higher education is defined as a public good, as an engine for social mobility, almost 100 years after its founding it has a minority of women, Mizrahis, especially of Mizrahi women and Palestinians, as university faculty members. An academy that excludes social groups from knowledge production in a higher education system that does not use 'first-generation' as a diversity policy outline.

Relying on intersectional analysis, I suggest three intersect forms of margins: economic marginality, academic marginality, and intergenerational marginality. All forms arose from FG doctoral student resources navigating through their academic path.



These forms go beyond the intergenerational transcription mechanism of Pierre Bourdieu and reveal how all acts of positioning in a neo-liberal academy rely on certain assumptions of growth, material transfers and the nature of the prevailing figure one strives to be at the end of the academic path.

Under these assumptions that define terms as 'excellence' based on competitive, individualistic criteria, the positioning processes for FGS became an ongoing estrangement experience despite academic achievements.

My main argument is that the intersection in an institution that does not recognize the FG category, creates an intersection of marginality position, a fragile academic subjectivity, and a fragile academic path regardless of parameters of academic excellence.

Schooling the Humanities

Yoad Eliaz

In the past one hundred fifty years, "the Humanities crisis" has come up repeatedly for discussion. It is a well-known fact that the Humanities' prestige is not high, and that humanities departments do not attract many students. At the same time, the prestige of schools is not high, either, and they too are perceived as undergoing a crisis. The Humanities and the schools share a common history. "Humanities" is the contemporary name of the ancient pedagogy known in classical Greek as "Techni grammatic" (Τέχνη γραμματικ). In the ancient East, in the classical civilizations of Europe, and in those of the Middle Ages, grammar (which included rhetorical practice) was taught. That is, the major occupation in classrooms was oral language and writing, and the manifestation of that occupation was acquiring practical knowledge in eloquent reading and eloquent writing. Nowadays, too, school classrooms and humanities departments engage in language and writing; students read, write, interpret texts, and are required to remember what is said in class.

The fact that both schools and the Humanities engage in "Techni grammatic" practice, and are both in crisis, invites us to think of some mutual ontic substance for them both. Since the substance, the so-called material of grammar, of rhetoric, and of pedagogical technologies is language, I argue that language is that

ontic substance, or rather the "Tongue" is the hyperobject of schools and the Humanities. Tongue (לשון) differs from Language (שפה). Language manifests itself in communication, and its words are loaded with meanings and always carry a message of some kind. Tongue's words are words in themselves. While Tongue manifests itself always in a reflective context – someone is aware of its words, is under control and an object of knowledge; Language is spontaneous and semi unconsciousness. I call Tongue a hyperobject, borrowing the notion from Ecological discourse. Like other hyperobjects, Tongue is an immense ancient thing which one cannot grasp as a whole. And like all hyperobjects, Tongue affects human lives. I chose to call Tongue a hyperobject for another reason: like global warming, and the oceans' plastic pollution, Tongue involves coercion, anxiety and dread.

Ontologically speaking, underlying the crisis of the Humanities and schools alike is a more profound crisis related to Tongue. The Tongue crisis derives from the loss of the value which humans used to attribute to it. The Tongue, the words in themselves, and the work (Τέχνη) with words in themselves, the preoccupation with foreign languages, ancient languages, and dead languages are all perceived as superfluous. We live in the era of Language. Only a word that carries meaning is perceived as valuable. In other words, only a message is deemed a value, and only communication matters. In the digital age, the age of knowledge, the age of language machines, the danger of extinction hovers over Tongue, which has existed alongside humans at least since the advent of writing.

Special institutions have been established for Tongue, such as lexicons, dictionaries, grammar, rhetoric, schools, Humanities, and universities. Nevertheless, it faces a danger like that which threatens other hyperobjects – oceans or towns and cities built on oceans' and rivers' shores. Now the question that must be asked is: what is the true value of Tongue? Perhaps this is the question that schools and the Humanities should strive to answer. Is the arduous work done on Tongue justified? Is there any value in the suffering and humiliation involved in obeying the laws of grammar and syntax? Perhaps the era of Tongue has passed?



Pre-Classical Mechanics 1550-1650

Rivka Feldhay, Ido Yavetz, Michael Elazar

Our project deals with three major scientific controversies relevant for the emergence of the new science of Galileo Galilei and Rene` Descartes.

The first of these controversies is the Renaissance *Equilibrium Controversy* (following the title of Damerow and Renn's book) in the late sixteenth century. Taking our point of departure from recent literature, we have already reconstructed the positions of the main participants in this controversy concerning the equilibrium of balances, especially those of Giovanni Battista Benedetti (1530-1590) and Guidobaldo del Monte (1545-1609). Our main original contribution, however lies in an analysis of the position of Christopher Grienberger (1561-1636), a Jesuit Professor of mathematics at the Jesuit *Collegio Romano* in Rome.

In 1591, Grienberger presented a problem concerning the different attempts to measure the effects of weights on a balance, either through the concept of "positional gravity" or through that of "center of gravity".

As is often the case with Grienberger, his discussion takes the form of a quick comment rather than an orderly argument for standard publication. The discussion consists of a diagram accompanied by brief text, referring to the problem of locating the point of equilibrium for an ideal balance, namely, a rigid, weightless bar, with two point-weights at its ends. The diagram contains elements that the text does not refer to, which leaves questions with regard to Grienberger's final intent. However, combining the textual explanation with the additional diagrammatic elements, it appears to us that Grienberger may have been on course to pinpoint the source of the difficulty better than any other contributor to the "equilibrium controversy". That is to say, considering that neither the law of the lever, nor the Archimedean center of gravity, can be derived as consequences of the principles of Aristotelian dynamics while neither contradicts the Aristotelian principles, and discovering that they yield conflicting positioning for the balance's point of equilibrium, which one is correct?

The reconstruction of the clear voice of a Jesuit mathematician taking part in a major scientific controversy leads to the conclusion that the Jesuits were full partners in the transformation of the "mechanical arts" into a "physico-mathematical" science.

MHC Research Colloquium (Detailed Program)

סמסטר ב'

מפגש 1 9.3.2021

גל לוי לאומיות, אזרחות והפופולזם שביניהם
לבנת קונופני דקלב דמיון פוליטי בין הנהר והים
מגיב אריאל הנדל

מפגש 2 6.4.2021

עאמר דהמשה סחינה ואחיותיה - שימוש רב-תפקודי של
יהודים בשמות ערביים
דן שגב בין ידיעות חלקיות לכוזבות: מחשבות על מידע
לא מהימן ו"עולמות חדשים"
מגיבה רבקה פלדחי

מפגש 3 27.4.2021

לינה ברוך ארכיון וגלות: פיזור, מסירה והטרמה
(anticipation)
זהייה קונדוס אובדן המופתי: מקומו של מחמד עבדה
ב"אל-איאם" מאת טאהא חוסיין
מגיב ראיף זרייק

מפגש 4 4.5.2021

אפרת בן שושן גזית דור ראשון להשכלה גבוהה
יועד אליעז בית ספר למדעי הרוח
מגיב אריאל הנדל

מפגש 5 8.6.2021

רבקה פלדחי ומיכאל אלעזר מדע המכניקה בין המדינה
הריבונית והכנסייה הקתולית : 1650-1550
איילת אבן עזרא קולקטיבים של כתיבה וחקירה במאה
ה-13 ובאקדמיה היום: מרחב, מחויבות, סולידריות
והתמדה
מגיב עדו יעבץ

סמסטר א'

מפגש 1 11.11.2020

פתיחה רבקה פלדחי
אורי רוטלוי ביקורת בעידן פוסט-חילוני: הפוטנציאל של
מסורת
רוני ויינשטיין מודרניזציה בתרבות היהודית: המערב
הנוצרי או המזרח האסלאמי? נקודת המבט התרבותית
מגיבה רבקה פלדחי

מפגש 2 9.12.2020

לין חלוזין דברת מה ביקורתי בזה? עיון היסטורי-פילוסופי
ביחסי זמן-מרחב במדעי הלשון כתיאוריה ביקורתית
ורד סקל עשות ספרים הרבה - החת"ם סופר על דפוס,
ספרים וידע
מגיבה רבקה פלדחי

מפגש 3 23.12.2020

רותי גינזבורג אקטיביזם חזותי: ייצור ידע בארגוני זכויות
אדם
ניצן רותם זמן והדמיון הפוליטי: על אופני הארגון של
המלחמה המתמשכת
מגיב אריאל הנדל

מפגש 4 13.01.2021

מיכל גבעוני איך לחשוב קדימה? לקראת תפישה רדיקלית
של חוסן
עדי שורק עיר המקלט: אלימות, גלות ושאלת הלימוד
מגיב ראיף זרייק

מפגש 5 27.01.2021

גל הרץ ונווה פרומר הימין איבד את הברקסים, השמאל
ירד מהפסים
מנאר מחויל על הגלובאלי והלוקאלי בשנות ה-1960
הארוכות: המקרה הפלסטיני
מגיב ראיף זרייק

המפגשים יתקיימו בזום
ימי שלישי | 18:00-16:00

המפגשים יתקיימו בזום
ימי רביעי | 18:00-16:00



First Generation in Higher Education Conference

April 18-19 2021, Tel Aviv University

9:00-9:15 | התכנסות

9:15-10:00 | מושב פתיחה

יו"ר: ד"ר סראב אבו רביע קווידר, אוניברסיטת בן גוריון
חסמים מוסדיים ואי-שוויון בהכלה והשתלבות: המקרה של הדור הראשון להשכלה הגבוהה, ד"ר עודד מקדוסי, אוניברסיטת אוהיו
"אל תקרא לי גזען": המאבק למגוון בהשכלה הגבוהה בישראל ובהולנד, ד"ר הילה דיין, אמסטרדם יוניברסיטי קולג'
מאבקי טרנספורמציה: בעיות בהתמודדות אוניברסיטת יוהנסבורג עם סטודנטים דרום אפריקאיים שחורים - דור ראשון באי אוניברסיטה, 2006-2013, ד"ר סוניה נרונסקי-ליידן, האוניברסיטה העברית

יו"ר: פרופ' אורלי בנימין, אוניברסיטת בר אילן, אקדמיה לשוויון

פרופ' רחל גלי צינמון, דקאנית הפקולטה למדעי הרוח, אוניברסיטת תל אביב
אפרת בן שושן גזית, אוניברסיטת תל אביב, אקדמיה לשוויון אריס בשארה, אוניברסיטת תל אביב, תוכנית 'סאווה' سوا
דקנאט הסטודנטים
רויטל מדר, האוניברסיטה העברית, אקדמיה לשוויון

15:45-16:00 | הפסקה

10:00-10:15 | הפסקה

16:00-16:45 | מבט שני

10:15-11:45 | מבט ראשון

יו"ר: אריס בשארה, אוניברסיטת תל אביב
על תקרות זכויות וקירות בטון באקדמיה: על המאבק המזרחי בעולם ההשכלה הגבוהה, ד"ר הילה דיין משוחחת עם פרופ' יוסי דהאן, המרכז האקדמי למשפט ולעסקים, רמת גן

יו"ר: חיה גרשוני, אוניברסיטת תל אביב
על מה אנחנו מדברות כשאנחנו מדברות על "דור ראשון להשכלה גבוהה" (ועל מה לא), אפרת בן שושן גזית, אוניברסיטת תל אביב
בעקבות הקטגוריה שנעלמה: גניאולוגיה של אי-שוויון פנים-יהודי בהשכלה בישראל, ד"ר סיגל נגר רון, המכללה האקדמית ספיר

16:45-17:00 | הפסקה

11:45-12:00 | הפסקה

17:00-18:45 | אחריות מוסדית וציבורית: תוכניות לדור ראשון להשכלה גבוהה

12:00-13:30 | במרחבים של אי שייכות

יו"ר: פרופ' הנרייט דהאן קלב, אוניברסיטת בן גוריון
מתיאוריה למציאות: מודל התמיכה של אייסף בסטודנטים מדור-ראשון להשכלה הגבוהה, רותם כהן כחלון, קרן אייסף
"האומנם עוגן (מרסא-مرساة) להצלחה בלימודים הגבוהים? הקשר בין שימוש במערך הסיוע לסטודנטים מהחברה הערבית והצלחה בלימודים במרכז האקדמי רופין, ד"ר רג'דה אלנאבולסי, המרכז האקדמי רופין
למידה מהצלחות ומטעויות בסיוע לדור ראשון להשכלה גבוהה: נקודת מבטו של דיקן הסטודנטים, פרופ' גיא הרפז, האוניברסיטה העברית
"העדפה מתקנת על בסיס סוציו-אקונומי בישראל", ד"ר עפרה בלוך, אוניברסיטת תל אביב

יו"ר: ד"ר ענבל וילמובסקי, האוניברסיטה העברית
לסיים את התואר יחד: החוויה של קבוצת סטודנטיות ערביות שהן דור ראשון להשכלה גבוהה
ד"ר אפרת הדר, המכללה האקדמית עמק יזרעאל
אקולטורציה של דור ראשון להשכלה גבוהה: מבט אוטו-אתנוגרפי על חווית הלימודים האקדמית
ד"ר זהורית אסולין, המכללה האקדמית אשקלון
הארון של דור ראשון, ד"ר אלעזר בן לולו, אוניברסיטת פנסיילבניה
צעירים אקדמיים בדואים: חוויות, חסמים, מחירים, והצלחות פרופ' סמדר בן אשר, מכללת אחווה

13:30-14:30 | הפסקת צהריים