

# Minerva Humanities Center

*Annual Academic Report  
2019-20*

## Contact Information

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### Minerva Humanities Center

Tel Aviv University, Rosenberg Building,  
Rooms 213 and 407

Website (English): <http://mhc.tau.ac.il/en>

Tel.: +972-3-6405764

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Research Department

# *Migrating Knowledge*

The "Migrating Knowledge" research department investigates practices of knowledge construction and communication that enable or inhibit the trajectories of knowledge diffusion in time and space. Our focus on the mobility of knowledge underlines the social, institutional and epistemic configurations within which knowledge is created and transformed. Challenging the depiction of linear progression and the ultimate triumph of Western science, the research department continues to question both previous dichotomies between East and West, center and periphery as well as the hierarchies between theoretical and practical knowledge. As such, we frequently reevaluate the dominant "rise and decline" narrative which has conditioned our understanding of Islamic scientific culture in modernity. We have also continued to explore the assimilation of specialized methods and practices into new cultural environments in ways that promoted various social visions. From these perspectives we do not only engage in investigating the construction and transformation of bodies of knowledge, but also attempt to uncover the socio-political ideologies that shape the contents and infrastructure of knowledge production.

As part of our interest in generating knowledge through conveyance, mediation processes, and the argument and tension they evoke, we examined this in myriad forms in the context of the end of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. One was an examination of the figure of the scholar in the Renaissance period with Pico della Mirandola as a symbol. This figure is not comprised merely of opposition between the medieval scholastic sphere of knowledge and the new humanist one, but rather of an encounter between two kinds of Renaissance, the Scholastic Renaissance and the humanist one, which are in turn embodied in specific Italian universities in that period (Edelheit). A different encounter process, or a bridging between fields of knowledge and cultures that we examined, is embodied in the languages in which scientific texts were written at the end of the Middle Ages. At times, the Spanish Jewish scholars of that period wrote the same text in four languages: Latin, Arabic, Hebrew and the vernacular language of the land, Catalan, or Aragonese. They

express a bridge between the more traditional scientific Islamic knowledge and the more contemporary scholastic knowledge, and were very much admired for that until their expulsion (Baum). In the face of the productive syntheses between fields of knowledge, we also examined the homogenization of knowledge in the Renaissance, through innovative research methods of collecting and manipulating big data on textbooks of the period. These tools allow a presentation of how knowledge on specific topics becomes more and more uniform (Valeriani). Beyond issues of knowledge generation, these matters have political implications, as we saw in the case of the Safed's place and the theme of exile in common modern Jewish history. In Zionist history, the generation of knowledge is commonly aimed at the elimination of exile. But inspection of the neglected history of Safed in the 16th century shows that the generation of knowledge by the many luminaries that lived there serves the continuous existence of exile in the progress towards redemption (Raz-Krakotzkin). Apart from this focus on the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, we had a discussion of a 19th century case which examines the place of affective relations between animals and humans in the generation of knowledge, and the sites constructed for the sake of this generation (Shmueli).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we cancelled one lecture and held the two sessions of the second semester via Zoom.

## *Department Meetings*

### **November 19th, 2019: Matteo Valleriani**

Prof. Valleriani's lecture explored how knowledge becomes homogeneous and uniform. Based on the analysis of a large number of textbooks used at European universities during the early modern period, he showed how to use this knowledge and the resulting dataset in order to recognize the mechanisms that made scientific knowledge uniform and homogenous over time. He further discussed how recognizing such mechanisms can help in understanding the contemporary developments of the "connected society."



### **December 24th, 2019: Amos Edelheit**

In this talk, Dr. Edelheit discussed the intellectual history of the Italian Renaissance, as part of the history of philosophy and science in the Early-Modern era. He focused on two important universities, Padua and Paris, and on one central figure, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), in an effort to understand better the two dominant discursive forms of the period: Renaissance Humanism and Renaissance Scholasticism. On this basis he suggested reforming a common distinction between canonical and non-canonical philosophy in the Early-Modern era.

### **January 7th, 2020: Shira Shmueli**

Dr. Shmueli spoke about the unique relations between humans, animals and science in a curious part of Alfred Russell Wallace's *The Malay Archipelago* (1869), a classic text in natural history and the theory of evolution. Wallace, a British naturalist and collector, cultivated an affectionate relationship with an orphaned orangutan, often referring to her as his "baby". The lecture examined how the orangutan was transformed from being a mobile object for display at a museum, to a beloved companion but also a scientific specimen. In this process, Wallace redesigned his colonial bungalow to a space that combined domestic settings with engineered nature-like environments, a familiar construction in later primate research. The account of Wallace's idiosyncratic relationship with the orangutan was augmented with additional documentation of the close relationships of scientists with research animals, staged as familial kinship. The emergence of the "laboratory pet" demonstrates how the generation of knowledge, the sharing of households, and human-animal emotional ties were interwoven in early biomedical research.

### **April 21st, 2020: Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin**

Prof. Raz Krokotzkin's lecture dealt with the city of Safed in the 16th century and its place in modern Jewish history. In that period the greatest Jewish thinkers gathered in the city, coming from Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Caro, Cordovero, Elkabetz, Najara, Ha'ari, Vital, all made canonical contributions from that site, in Halakha, in Kabbalah, in liturgy. Yet, while this history is studied in the framework of Jewish studies, it is utterly forgotten in the modern, Zionist version of Jewish history. The lecture suggested Safed as a locus of an alternative history

and political theology, an alternative origin of Jewish modernity: situated between Christianity and Islam; based on the cognition of the Mishna, rather than that of the Bible; seeking to progress towards redemption from within a state of exile, rather than replacing exile by redemption.

**June 6th, 2019: Ilil Baum**

Dr. Baum examined the scientific and medical languages of the Jews of Spain towards the end of the Middle Ages. More specifically, she asked whether the practice and study of medicine and alchemy were distinguished by the use of specific languages. By inspecting the multi-lingual manuscripts of the Jews of Aragon before 1492 she showed the use of Hebrew, Arabic, Latin, Catalan and Aragonese in different genres of scientific writing. The figures examined appear as highly knowledgeable both in Arabic science and in the more contemporary innovations of scholastic science and bridge between different worlds and fields of knowledge.

## ***Post-doctoral students***

**Dr. Ori Rotlevy**

Dr. Rotlevy specializes in continental philosophy. His research lies in the intersection of ethics, political thought and the philosophy of history. He received his PhD from the Philosophy Department at Tel Aviv University with a dissertation on Kant and Walter Benjamin, which he is currently developing to a book manuscript. During his postdoc fellowships in Berlin, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv he embarked on a new project, examining conceptions of freedom beyond the Kantian horizon, and more specifically, the relations between freedom, collective consciousness, tradition and practices of resistance in thinkers such as, Benjamin, Hadot and Foucault. Additionally, he wrote on the terminology of knowledge in migration in relation to the research of the transmission of academic knowledge from Islam to the West in the Middle Ages, and co-directs the "Tradition: Transmission, Canon, Critique" research group at MHC.



### **Dr. Ran Segev (until January 2020)**

Dr. Ran Segev is a historian of the early modern period, whose interests include religious culture, colonial encounters and the interplay of science and religion, especially as they pertain to the Spanish world. He graduated from the Department of History at the University of Texas, Austin in December 2015. His upcoming book explores the importance of the study of the earth in Spain and its colonies for confessional ends. In this monograph, he shows how in the post-Reformation world new empirical knowledge and natural disciplines – including geographies, cosmographies and natural histories – were assimilated into Catholic outlooks by providing new ways to conceptualize and convey religious ideologies. Dr. Segev's second book examines ethnographic practices in the pre-modern period in the Spanish, British, and French colonial realms.

### ***Tradition: Canon, Transmission, Critique***

This research group, led by Dr. Ori Rotlevy and Adi Sorek, which is part of the Migrating Knowledge project, has grown into a collaboration with the School for Cultural Studies, adding graduate students, postdocs and professors as participants. It explores the notion of tradition from a theoretical perspective and through its concrete implementation in the domains of religion, philosophy, psychoanalysis and art. Following the activities of the last academic year, the presentations this year focused on the relations between critique, tradition and freedom. Additionally, a smaller group including artists began examining this theme's myriad manifestations in art.

During the first semester, the group directors and one of its members presented their work in the MHC Research Seminar (detailed below), and over the course of the second semester, new group members led readings in various texts related to the topic at hand, examining it from various disciplinary perspectives. Two sessions were held at the university while the others were held via Zoom.

The first session (9/3), led by Ms. Orphee Senouf-Pilpool, was dedicated to Foucault's concept of critique, and how it attempts to transform the tradition of critical theory; The second session (6/4), led by Mr. Hosam Ziod, dealt with the Arabic concept of Tamadoon (urbanization, but also a cultural process), its usages in modern Egyptian history, and the ramifications of its ancient traditional roots; The

third session (27/4) dealt with the question of critique in exceptional states and times of crisis, following Giorgio Agamben's writings on the Covid-19 pandemic, and tied this to his conception of tradition as handing down and betrayal in his book *Pilate and Jesus*; The fourth session (18/5), led by Mr. Gilad Shenhav, focused on the possibility of renewing tradition through practices of forgetting and remembering in the works of S.Y. Agnon and Shalom Spiegel after the holocaust; The final session (12/6), led by Ms. Anat Danziger, examined the possibilities opened by Didier Anzier's concept of "Ego-skin" to criticize the psychoanalytic tradition from within. Apart from these sessions, the group held a workshop in cooperation with the Art MA program in Haifa University on tradition in art, focusing on Ms. Adi Sorek's art project "Ir Miklat" (City of Refuge).

Next year, apart from the group meetings, we plan a Zoom conference on tradition between remembrance and forgetting with Prof. Moshe Halberthal (Hebrew University) and Prof. Henriette Dahan Kalev (Ben Gurion University); and two international workshops on critique in the post-secular age with Prof. Agatha Bielik-Robson (Nottingham and Polish Academy of Science) and her students.

## *The Aristotelian Corpus as an Architect of Knowledge Civilizations*

The research group's purpose is to analyze the vast Aristotelian field of knowledge from the point of view of Knowledge Civilizations, which takes into account the relationships between three cultural aspects: practices of coping with the material world and reflection upon them; the transcendental dimension of cultures; and the political structures that enable elite groups to interpret both the symbols of transcendence and of political power.

This year, six lectures were delivered within the framework of this research group on the following subjects: Alexander of Aphrodisias' interpretation of Aristotle's *On Generation and Corruption* (by Orna Harari from Tel Aviv University); The discourse on civilization and race among Zionist thinkers (by Hanan Harif from Ben Zvi Institute); Inter-cultural scientific exchanges in fourteenth-century astronomy (by Alberto Bardi, a Polonsky fellow from the Hebrew University); Diagrams in medieval commentaries of Aristotle's *Organon* (by Ayelet Even-Ezra from the Hebrew University); Experience-based knowledge in the history of medicine (by



Zvi Langerman from Bar-Ilan University); The contribution of Italian Jews to the development of Renaissance Aristotelianism (by Michael Engel from Hamburg University).

## ***Disciplinarization of the Sciences: Pre-classical Mechanics between the Sovereign State and the Reformed Catholic Religion, 1550-1650***

As noted in last year's report, our study focuses "on the emergence of an early modern political-religious constellation in the Catholic world in the years 1550-1650, and the place of pre-classical mechanics within this context". This year we paid special attention to the advantages and disadvantages of the concept "pre-classical mechanics" and how it differs from the branches of mechanics which preceded and followed it: Aristotelian mechanics and Classical – i.e. Newtonian – mechanics, respectively. Pre-classical mechanics is, on the one hand, an efficient concept, encompassing many aspects of mechanical theories and practices prevalent between 1550 and 1650, but, on the other hand, it is quite anachronistic (even more so than the term "classical mechanics" itself), and not easy to define in a coherent and significant way. A further complication, that we are also taking into account in our research (which is still ongoing), is the fact that the term "mechanics" itself changed significantly during this period and transformed from a mathematical concept pertaining to statics ("mechanics", a discipline originally dealing with simple machines, was traditionally considered a "mixed" mathematics discipline) to a physical term concerned with moving bodies (and thus encroaching on the traditional hegemony of philosophy of science). We closely examined a controversy well known at that time: the equilibrium controversy, in which it was debated what would happen when an ideal horizontal balance with equal arms and equal weights is deflected from its horizontal equilibrium: would it stay in its new deflected position, or strive to return to its horizontal state? This controversy is significant for understanding the transformation of mechanics during this period in general (and for better defining the concept of pre-classical mechanics, in particular), since the attempts to settle it involved assimilating important new ideas from two main corpuses of knowledge discovered (or re-discovered) in the West around 1550: Archimedes' complete writings and the Aristotelian text *Mechanical Problems*.

Furthermore, these attempts to solve the controversy also involved abandoning old key concepts (such as “positional gravity”) in favor of new formulations of other important concepts (such as the Archimedean term: center of gravity). Within this controversy, a possibly important aspect of pre-classical mechanics is quite prominent: the attempt (whether genuine or merely rhetorical) to assimilate newly retrieved Archimedean ideas within the Aristotelian background, thus forming a kind of an Aristotelian-Archimedean synthesis, which characterized many theories devised especially in the earlier phase of our period. We also examined a unique, almost unexplored text, written by the Jesuit Christoph Grienberger (1564-1636) and discussing (most unusually, at that time) a rod pendulum. We hope that these examinations will help us in understanding the vicissitudes of mechanics during these turbulent times, both scientifically and politically.

## *From Optic to Epic Science of Baroque and its Consequences – Brecht's Galileo*

### **Research Project by Ido Yavetz and Gal Hertz**

Brecht's play *Life of Galileo* ends with a warning: "If the scientists, brought to heel by self-interested rulers, limit themselves to piling up knowledge for knowledge's sake, then science can be crippled and your new machines will lead to nothing but new impositions". The threat to science is not, as one may expect, that if scientists lose their commitment to scientific truth and objectivity, they become tools in the hands of corrupt leaders, but on the contrary: it lies in the dangerous loyalty to "science for science's sake", a position which views truth as transcendent and science as freed from social and moral constraints.

According to Brecht, the drama of Galileo is not about the failure of the scientist in publicly facing terrorizing powers of church or state (while in secret still claiming "and yet it moves"), but rather that he was willing to give up on the social emancipatory potential of the new knowledge. The play stresses conflicting desires of knowledge: scientific truth achieved through learning and doubt, that threaten social orders and norms on the one hand, and the public's will to believe, which depends on authority. Galileo's fault, according to Brecht, is not that he betrayed the scientific truth, but rather that he could not find a way to overcome these



conflicting desires, he succumbed to both. As the play emphasizes, although it ends with the forbidden book of Galileo's study being smuggled to Holland, the consequence of his recantation is that modern science is subscribed to a separation between knowledge and its use, truth and its social and moral implications, while the question of interests and desire is left unanswered.

From an epistemic point of view, the main aspect of this drama is not what Galileo actually discovers, but how he works as a scientist and the kind of truth that he produces as a result. It is not simply a scientific evidence-based research (what Galileo observes through his telescope) versus an authoritative-traditional one (the Church-Aristotelian world view), but the fact that his truth relates to the conditions of its production. It is historical, contingent and concrete. It is precisely at this point that the senses and not reason alone, where physical and material elements (landscapes, spots) and not purely ideals (of harmony or divinity), are in play. This is, if you will, the baroque moment, that Brecht not only emphasizes in his Galileo, but also uses and implements in his own epic theater.

Such reading is in line with Yehuda Elkana. He suggested that "in glaring contrast to Greek drama ... it can happen this way, but it could also happen quite a different way". Thus, the historical question is not "what were the sufficient conditions for the event that took place?" but rather "what were the necessary conditions for the way things happened although they could have happened otherwise?" (Elkana, Yehuda (1981): A programmatic attempt at an anthropology of knowledge, in: *Sociology of the Sciences Yearbook: SOOSC 5* (1981), S. 1–76: 66-68.).

Our project continues this line of thought in examining both Brechtian ideas in relation to Galileo's science as well as Brechtian theater within Galileo's dialogues. The project began last year with an MA seminar at the Cohn Institute and will be developed into a work group in the coming year.

## Publications

### **Ori Rotlevy**

"'The Enormous Freedom of the Breaking Wave': The Experience of Tradition in Benjamin between Kant and the Talmud", *New German Critique* 140, Vol. 47, no. 2, August 2020.

"Critique in a Post-Secular Age: Making room for Tradition as a Medium", *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory*, forthcoming 2020.

### **Ran Segev**

"Accountable Creatures: Primatt's Dissertation, The Religious Enlightenment and the Origins of Animals Rights", *The Journal of Early Modern History*, forthcoming.

"'For the Sciences Migrate, Just Like Peoples': Mobility of Natural Knowledge in the Spanish Atlantic", in Rivka Feldhay and Gal Hertz (eds.), *Migration of Knowledge: Collected Essays*, Tel Aviv: Resling, forthcoming (Hebrew).

### **Gal Hertz**

"Futurity in Bounds of Pragmatic Reason": Book Review, in: *Poetics Today*, submitted, July 2020.

"The Colors of the Rainbow and the Boundaries of Equality", *Tel Aviv Law Review*, submitted, June 2020 [In Hebrew].

"Narratives of Justice: Robert Cover's Moral Creativity", in: *Law and Humanities*, 14,2020, 1-23.

"Criminology's Two Faces? Hans Gross and the Method of Police Investigation", in: *Law, Society and Culture*, [in Hebrew] forthcoming.

"Semiotics Beyond Agency: Violence and Meaning in the Theater of War", in: *War and Semiotics*, Routledge, forthcoming.

"Schuld und Sexualität – Karl Heinrich Ulrichs und der Strafprozess Zastrows", in: *Austria: Forschung und Wissenschaft INTERDISZIPLINÄR*, forthcoming.



### **Zahiye Kundos**

“Nūr ‘Alā Nūr: Al-afghāni and ‘Abduh at Al’urwah Al-wuthqāh La Infiṣām Laḥā, Toward a Second Evolution of Muslim Civilization”. Under Review.

### **Adi Sorek**

"What I forgot, you recalled: transmission between father and daughter in S.Y. Agnon's 'Stool and Chair'", *Dapim*, July 2020 [Hebrew].

"The Pile – Knowledge converging from disparity: Reading S.Y. Agnon's 'Thus far'". [Hebrew] submitted.

### **Idit Chikurel**

Salomon Maimon's Theory of Invention: Scientific Genius, Analysis and Euclidean Geometry, De Gruyter 2020.

### **Michael Elazar**

Dr. Elazar has been working, with Shulamit Kapon and Maayan Schvartzter (from the Faculty of Education in Science and Technology, Technion – Israel Institute of Technology), on a paper that examines how an interesting piece of history of science (related to Galileo Galilei) can be transformed onto a concrete lesson plan in physics. The manuscript, entitled “Guiding physics teachers by following in Galileo’s footsteps”, has been submitted to the journal *Science & Education*, and on August 31st 2020 notice was received from the editors that the paper was accepted for publication (following some corrections).

### **Rivka Feldhay**

“Transformations of Tradition: Herzl, Nordau, Zeitlin and Brenner” in: E. Erdle and Annegret Pelz (eds.), *Yearbook for European Jewish Literature Studies*, De Gruyter 2019

“On Literary Knowledge: The Conceptual, the Figurative and the Performative”, in M. Epple, A. Imhausen, F. Mueller (eds.), *Weak Knowledge: Forms, Functions, and Dynamics*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York 2020

“Disciplining the Sciences in Conflict Zones: Pre-Classical Mechanics between the Sovereign State and the Reformed Catholic Religion”, in A. Badea, B. Boute, M. Cavarzere, S. Vanden Broecke (ed.): *Making Truth, Administering Truth. Practices of Establishing Credibility in Early Modern Catholicism* (Scientiae Studies), AUP 2020



Research Department

## *Political Lexicon*

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The Political Lexicon department, led by Dr. Ariel Handel, is both a research group studying foundational concepts in political theory, and the primary venue for initiating, writing, editing, and assembling original essays in the framework of a Lexicon for Political Concepts (published in the peer-reviewed academic journal *Mafté'akh*).

Our work systematically cuts across institutional and disciplinary boundaries and does not shy away from interacting with extra-academic sources of knowledge, such as the arts and social activism. It is guided and integrated by a return to the most ancient philosophical question, “What is X?”, posed here for the purpose of testing the common usage of concepts as well as their accepted theoretical frameworks. The critical examination of each concept is an opportunity for refreshing the arsenal and broadening the horizons of theory in the humanities, awakening theory’s political consciousness, and shedding new light on some aspects of political reality which the revisited concept seeks to capture.

The reading group strives to cultivate a community of scholars – including faculty, graduate and postgraduate students – committed to a critical approach to political theory and a political approach to theory in the humanities

## *Annual theme and lexical workshop:* *'Political Imagination'*

The focus of this year's research group was political imagination and the question that accompanied us throughout the meetings was what is the relevance of the concept "political imagination" to our times; or in other words: how can it help us rethink this historical moment, our practices and research?

Political imagination is a concept that can be traced to a 200-year tradition of political thought linked to civil disobedience and it has returned to the public discourse in recent years in the context of theoretical and activist conversations. Theories of decolonization, environmental justice discourses and activists' groups around the world as Extinction Rebellion, Standing Rock, Undocumented and Unafraid, the Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter and Me Too, use a political imagination rhetoric not only to criticize, challenge and oppose political realities but also to offer alternatives for them.

In the current political discourse in Israel it seems that "there is no other way" to live and the leading political episteme – "either them or us" – shapes our relations with others in different spheres of life. Being immersed in this political discourse, it is almost impossible to imagine a different scenario. Moreover, it seems, judging by popular culture films and TV shows, it is easier to imagine a reality in which women are raped into sexual and child-bearing servitude, a catastrophic end of the world, or even an alien attack from outer space, than it is to imagine gender equality in the public realm, the end of capitalism, or an alternative to the neoliberal nation-state. We can easily visualize dystopian scenarios of cruelty, fear, and terror but struggle to imagine better equal alternatives for sharing the world with others.

During this last year we engaged with different aspects of political imagination in order to develop a layered and interdisciplinary approach to the concept and its different uses in theory, art and activism. In the first semester we read from Ciara Botticci's book *Imaginal Politics* in order to understand the relationship between imagination, the imaginary and the imaginal. Followed by Cornelius Castoriadis' *The Discovery of the Imagination*, Yaron Ezrahi's *Imagined Democracies and The Radical Imagination: Social Movement Research in the Age of Austerity* by Max Haiven. Towards the end of the first semester we dedicated one session to a conversation with art curator Udi Edelman who shared with us art projects that



engage political imagination to think about potential pasts and possible futures. The second semester started with Hanna Arendt's *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. We introduced the text in conversation with active interventions, and asked how can we train our imaginations to "go visiting" in Israel-Palestine. In order to think about political imagination in the context of gender studies and feminist theory we read Sara Ahmad's groundbreaking paper "Killing Joy: Feminism and the History of Happiness". We continued with Ariella Azoulay's new book *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* and asked how can we imagine a political present without imperialism and what is at stake when we speak about unlearning a past that is already part of the present. We concluded the semester with Fredric Jameson's essay *Progress versus Utopia*, which led us to a discussion about literature in general and science fiction in particular as sites where political imagination takes place.

## *Maft'e'akh: A Lexical Review of Political Thought*

The journal *Maft'e'akh: A Lexical Review of Political Thought*, is an open-access online publication co-edited by Dr. Merav Amir, Dr. Ruthie Ginsburg and Dr. Itay Snir.

The 14th issue, guest-edited by Dr. Assaf Tamari, was published on December 2019. The issue titled "These are the Names': Political Thought in Hebrew", addresses questions touching on the unique significance of Hebrew for our political thought. What is the meaning of the work of political conceptualization in Hebrew particularly? The issue asks how the past and the sanctity of Hebrew operate in our political life and what may be their contribution to a contemporary thought that is trying to find a way out of the political dead ends of the current situation in Israel/Palestine. The seven articles in this issue address these questions by studying some of the "names" that populate Hebrew, each of which constitutes an opening for a different kind of thought about Hebrew's possibilities: Ba'al Hayyim (animal), ha-Shem ha-Mishtatef (Homonym), Yad Yisra'el Takifa (Israel's strong hand), Eruv, Aliyah, Ribonut (sovereignty), and Torah u-Mitsvot.

The 15th issue of *Maft'e'akh* was completed and published in early August 2020 (<https://mafteakh.org/>). This is a special issue focusing on the family and the private sphere. It includes six original academic papers on topics including "Queer

Kinship", "Incest", "Invisible Work", "Matricide", "Patricide", "Queer Parenting" and "Women Mining". A short essay presenting the work of the artist Vered Nisim on "Heredity" is also included. As the finalization of the issue coincided with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, a call was made for short responses to this crisis. This call has yielded five essays covering topics which are similarly related to the family, including "Intimate Violence", "Private Sphere", "Post-Work", "Paternalism" and "The Nuclear Family". This special issue was guest-edited by Dr. Efrat Even-Tzur.

## *Academic Professionalization from Critical Perspective*

### **Workshops for first-generation students / 2019-2020**

In the academic year 2019-2020, the Minerva Humanities Center initiated two workshops. Both workshops reached out to Master's and Ph.D. students in the humanities, arts, law and social sciences, who consider becoming scholars at the academy.

In the academic year of 2015-2016, the first workshop was established, and was led by Dr. Roy Wagner and Ms. Revital Madar. From that year on, the workshops are led by Ms. Efrat Ben-Shoshan Gazit, a Ph.D. candidate at the Women and Gender Studies Program.

Both 'first generation' academics workshops are for students whose parents do not hold academic degrees. One of the workshops was in cooperation with TAU's "Sawa" (سوا) project, and the Dean of Students' Office, and reached out to Arab students.

The workshops aim to respond to the systematic educational exclusion and to other structural factors, that prevent first-generation students from becoming full scholars in the Israeli academia.

The workshops offer professional and academic skills, while exposing the students to the political structure of contemporary academia.



In addition, the workshops provide a six-hour mentoring program. All mentors and tutors are volunteers and researchers at the Minerva Humanities Center and the 'Academia for Equality', some of them are first-generation academics themselves.

This current year, only women enrolled in the workshops, which added further layers of needs, regarding the challenges of navigation at the academic establishment.

The higher education system in Israel is unfamiliar with the term 'first-generation students' both as a policy issue and as a category. Therefore, it ignores the experience and the obstacles that challenge first-generation students, foremost first-generation women, who often carry additional marginal identities that intersect with being a 'first-generation student'.

The workshops provide a safe space for women, with diverse identities, in which they, as 'first-generation students', define 'another' academy, that gives voice to the periphery, and diverse points of view. The workshops serve as a mutual support group for the participants, allowing them to discuss their respective concerns, experiences, and challenges.

The students emphatically confirmed the contribution of both workshops. They reported that they have a better understanding of what is expected of them as scholars, and that they have more tools to meet those expectations.

## ***Publications***

Monterescu, Daniel and Handel, Ariel (2019), Liquid Indigeneity: Wine, Science, and Colonial Politics in Israel Palestine, *American Ethnologist*.

Handel Ariel and Ginsburg Ruthie (2018) (eds.), special collection Israelis Study the Occupation: Critical Reflections, *Critical Inquiry* 44

Handel, Ariel (2019), What's in a home? Towards a critical theory of housing/dwelling, *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654418819104>

Handel Ariel (2018), Distance matters: mobilities and the politics of distance, *Mobilities* 13, 473-487.

Handel Ariel and Ginsburg Ruthie (2018), Israelis study the occupation: an introduction, *Critical Inquiry* 44, 331-342.

Handel Ariel (2018), Book review: Living Emergency (Yael Berda, Stanford UP, 2017), *Society and Space*, <http://societyandspace.org/2018/06/19/living-emergency-by-yael-berda>

Chalozin-Dovrat, Lin (2019), Grammar as science: Beauzée's theory of tense and the metaphysics of time, *History of Humanities* 4(1), 79–102, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/701987>

Chalozin-Dovrat, Lin (2019), The history of SPACE between science and ordinary language: What can words tell us about conceptual change?, *Perspectives on Science* 27(2), 244–277, [http://doi.org/10.1162/posc\\_a\\_00307](http://doi.org/10.1162/posc_a_00307).

Chalozin-Dovrat, Lin. (Forthcoming –2020), Spatialization of time as a scientification strategy: Beauzée, Guillaume and the Conceptual School of Cognitive Linguistics, *Selected Papers from the Fourteenth International Conference on the History of the Language Sciences (ICHoLS XIV), 28 August – 1 September 2017*, Paris. [pp. 20]

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Research Department

## *Living Together*

This year, we focused on one thinker and explored her work in-depth, instead of focusing on a topic or a theme like the group usually did. The subject of the *Living Together* research department's investigation this year was the writings of the philosopher and intellectual **Hannah Arendt**.

Focusing on one thinker and exploring her work in-depth, instead of having its advantages (and its disadvantages, of course); one of those is the intimacy one develops with the thinker, his terminology, sensibility, worries, and even his or her fears and anxieties. This intimacy suggests a different way to read texts, a way in which the personal biography is being woven into the text itself so that life events and words constitute one whole. The life of the author becomes a text by itself that needs to be deciphered.

This year we chose Hannah Arendt's text *The Human Condition*. Arendt is a fascinating figure to grapple with: a woman, Jewish, under Nazi regime, and a refugee for a great part of her life, has managed to capture significant aspects of the last century and its undercurrents.

Arendt, sometimes unclear, other times inconsistent, but always inspiring and challenging as well as always original. Neither socialist nor capitalist, neither nationalist nor cosmopolitan, neither modern nor anti-modern, in part Zionist but in many other aspects anti-Zionist. All those multifaceted aspects of her writing and thinking make her a great candidate for our group investigation.

Our interest over the years was to engage in a debate or critical thinking in a refreshing manner. This need and interest became even more crucial to the group in recent years with the rise of populism around the world, the rise of identity politics together with neoliberal economics. Arendt's thought offers us a critique of neoliberalism without adopting socialism, and a critique of identity politics without losing sight of community and solidarity. The fact that she is not a systematic



thinker, but rather someone reacting to vexing problems and issues facing humanity, makes much of her writing relevant and engaging and open-ended at the same time.

### **First semester:**

We dedicated the first semester's sessions to preparation for the close reading of the *Human Condition* (1958) in the second semester. To that end, the group read Arendt's short text *We the refugees* (1943) and several parts from *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951).

For our first session we invited Dr. Itamar Mann, who wrote an article following Arendt's text *We the refugees*. Dr. Mann specializes in international law and political theory and practice as a human rights lawyer. *We the refugees* is an early text by Arendt, written before the Second World War has ended. Her own experience as a refugee has a significant presence in it and is a key for understanding not only this text but later texts like *The Origins of Totalitarianism* as well. The refugees' crises of our times invite a re-reading of Arendt's texts. To that end we also read Giorgio Agamben's text with the same title, "*We Refugee*" (1995), that responds to Arendt's work and interprets it through Agamben's concept of bare life.

In the second and third sessions we read chapters from *The Origins of Totalitarianism* focusing on the last part: Totalitarianism, within it we read the chapters dealing with the totalitarianism movement, totalitarianism in power and ideology and terror.

On our fourth and last session of the first semester, we invited professor Adi Ophir to share with us his thoughts as an expert on Arendt's work. Ophir focused on Arendt's concept of evil, specifically on the banality of evil, which she developed in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. In this meeting Ophir shared with us his own work and thoughts on the concept of evil and gave us a taste of his new project, dealing with the climate crisis. This session took place in early January, we did not know back then that in two months we will be in the middle of another crisis – The COVID-19 pandemic.

## Second Semester:

Weekly Zoom meetings

A close reading of *The Human Condition*

Following the restrictions imposed on gatherings due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic during the second semester, the group met weekly on the virtual platform – Zoom. We read together chapters from Arendt's book *The Human Condition* and discussed her theoretical paradigm through the main concepts she presents in the book: vita active, public and private realm, and the distinction between work, labor, and action.

## Publications

### Raef Zreik

Zreik, R. (2020). "Historical Justice: On First-Order and Second-Order Arguments for Justice". *Theoretical Inquiries in Law*, vol 21.2, 490-529

Zreik, R and Azar Dakwar. (2020). "What is in the Apartheid analogy? Palestine/Israel refracted". *Theory & event*, Vol.23(3), pp.664-705

Zreik, R. (2020). "The ethics of the intellectual: Rereading Edward Said". *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 1–19

Zreik, R. (2019). "On Silence on Writing, Memory and Forgetfulness: A Study of *My Name is Adam: Children of the Ghetto* by Elias Khuri". *Alpa'im and more*, 2, 98-116 (Hebrew)

### Avital Barak

Barak, A. (TBP). "Resilient movement". *Mafte'akh – Lexical Review of Political Thought* (Hebrew-).

Barak, A. (TBP). "Gestures of Settler Colonialism in Denial – plasticities and perversions of de-colonization in Palestine/Israel", in: *On Uses and Misuses of Identity Politics*, Akademie Der Kunste Der Welt, Cologne.



**Orit Dudai:**

Dudai, O. (2019). The Impossible Possible Narrative: The Quest for Truth in *Bir Zamanlar Anadolu'da/Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2011). *Studies in European Cinema*, DOI: 10.1080/17411548.2019.1686894.

Dudai, O. (2020), Spacing it: Expanding perception of spatial relationships through art therapy. *ATOL: Art Therapy OnLine*, 11:1, <http://doi.org/10.25602/GOLD.atol.v11i1.1395>.

**Gal Levi:**

Levy, G & R. Kohan-Benlul. (2019).” Being Civil is not Enough: On Practices of Citizenship of Women Living in Poverty in Israel”. *Radical Housing Journal* 1(2), 119-135

Levy, G. (2020). “And these are also the history of the status quo: religion, status and ethnicity in Israel”. *Megamot*, 55(1), 275-302 (Hebrew)

**Daniel Rosenberg:**

Rosenberg, O. (TBP). “Paul Valéry’s Vitalism: Entropy and Life”, *French Studies*

Rosenberg, O. (TBP). Tactility in Valéry’s Aesthetics: Fragment and Duration”, *French Forum*.

Rosenberg, O. (2020). “The Poetics of Tactility in Jean Genet’s *Notre-Dame-Des-Fleurs*”, *Journal of Romance Studies*, vol. 20.1: 119-137.

Rosenberg, O. (2020). “Joseph de Maistre on War and Peace: Ritual and Realism”. *Philosophical Journal of Conflict and Violence*, issue 1, volume 4: 35-51.

# *MHC Research Seminar*

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Two themes were at the focus of the MHC research seminar this year: “Tradition, Freedom and Critique” in the first semester, and “Demos, Democracy and Populism” in the second semester.

For the detailed description of the “Tradition, Freedom and Critique” theme, please see the “Migrating Knowledge” department report (p.6). The sessions that took place:

- 19.11.19      **Dr. Ori Rotlevy**, Tradition, Critique, Freedom: Benjamin between Kant and the Talmud
- 24.12.19      **Ms. Adi Sorek**, Tradition between Fixation and Breakthrough: Nancy and the problem of Corpus in Christianity and Modernism.
- 7.01.20        **Dr. Omer Michaelis**, Tradition and Conspiracy: Karaites, Rabbinical authorities and Muslims on the tradition of the Jews.

The idea behind the “Democracy, Demos and Populism” theme was to discuss the recent rise in populist politics around the world in general and the rise of populism and the crisis of democracy in Israel in particular.

The basic idea and the organizing principle behind the seminar were to investigate whether the new turn toward populism is a digression from the main path of democracy, or whether democracy in itself – mainly understood as equal participation of each citizen in the political realm – holds the seeds of populism in its very nature. Viewed from this perspective, populism could be – under certain circumstances – rather a good thing and a positive phenomenon, if by populism we mean the massive participation of the demos in politics and in decision making.

Thus the seminar’s aim was to investigate the meaning of populism, how can we explain its recent rise, and under what circumstances it could be deployed in order for people to have mastery over their life, and in what sense and under what circumstances it poses a threat to democratic politics in the deep sense, when it can become authoritarian, and what makes it inimical to liberal values, as well to foreigners, immigrants, and minorities. The workshop dedicated parts of



its discussions to discussing the case of Israel, and whether the rise in populist politics in Israel is part of the recent wave around the world, or whether it has its unique history and trajectory, influenced by the continuation of occupation over the Palestinians in the occupied territories and the ethno-religious nature of Zionism.

We had three speakers within this theme discussion, including Prof. Ruth Gavison (who very sadly passed away a few weeks thereafter), Prof. Mordechai Kremnitzer, and Prof. Dani Filc. We met three times (once every month) via Zoom (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) and in each session one of the speakers presented her or his views on the topic. Roughly speaking, the speakers presented three different points of views, a national/institutional, liberal and leftist take on the issues presented. Dozens of participants attended each meeting and took parts in its discussions

# *Book Review Project*

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The Book Review Project, directed by Mr. Uri Landesberg, is a series of public events held on the TAU campus dedicated to discussions of important, recently published books in the humanities and the social sciences. The events focus on innovative research books, written by authors mainly from Israeli academia, as well as on selective Hebrew translations of key books in philosophy, history, literature, political science, cultural studies and more. The events, which usually attract a wide and diverse audience, comprise of interdisciplinary panels of researches, combining leading scholars and young researchers. By providing a stage for these encounters, MHC aims to establish a fertile and critical discussion on issues and themes at the heart of contemporary academic life, touching upon current social and political questions.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only three public events took place this year (during the first semester):

## **Not in Our Brain: Consciousness, Body, World**

By Yochai Ataria

## **No Moral Ground: On the Poverty of Ethics**

By Anat Matar

## **Myth, Language, Revelation**

Edited by Yosef Schwartz