

Jewish Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century

Personal Reflections

Edited by

Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Aaron W. Hughes



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Contents

| | |
|------------------|----|
| Acknowledgements | ix |
| Contributors | x |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Introduction: Jewish Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century | 1 |
| <i>Aaron W. Hughes and Hava Tirosh-Samuelson</i> | |
| 1 The Historian as Thinker: Reflections on (Jewish) Intellectual History | 11 |
| <i>Asher D. Biemann</i> | |
| 2 After Germany: An American Jewish Philosophical Manifesto | 42 |
| <i>Zachary J. Braiterman</i> | |
| 3 Constructing a <i>Jewish</i> Philosophy of Being toward Death | 61 |
| <i>James A. Diamond</i> | |
| 4 Jewish Philosophy: Living Language at Its Limits | 81 |
| <i>Cass Fisher</i> | |
| 5 Toward a Synthetic Philosophy | 101 |
| <i>Lenn Evan Goodman</i> | |
| 6 Jewish Philosophy Tomorrow: Post-Messianic and Post-Lachrymose | 119 |
| <i>Warren Zev Harvey</i> | |
| 7 Transgressing Boundaries: Jewish Philosophy and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict | 133 |
| <i>Aaron W. Hughes</i> | |
| 8 Philosophy, the Academy, and the Future of Jewish Learning | 152 |
| <i>Claire E. Katz</i> | |
| 9 Revisioning the Jewish Philosophical Encounter with Christianity | 172 |
| <i>Martin Kavka and Randi Rashkover</i> | |

- 10 **Doubt and Certainty in Contemporary Jewish Piety** 205
Shaul Magid
- 11 **Otherness and a Vital Jewish Religious Identity** 229
Ephraim Meir
- 12 **The Need for Jewish Philosophy** 248
Alan Mittleman
- 13 **Historicity, Dialogical Philosophy, and Moral Normativity: Discovering the Second Person** 266
Michael L. Morgan
- 14 **Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Jewish Philosophers of Encounter** 296
Michael D. Oppenheim
- 15 **A Shadowed Light: Continuity and New Directions in Jewish Philosophy** 319
Sarah Pessin
- 16 **Jewish Philosophy, Ethics, and the New Brain Sciences** 343
Heidi M. Ravven
- 17 **God Accused: Jewish Philosophy as Antitheodicy** 358
Bruce Rosenstock
- 18 **Overcoming the Epistemological Barrier** 372
Tamar Ross
- 19 **Toward a New Jewish Philosophy: From Metaphysics to Praxis** 391
Avi Sagi
- 20 **A Plea for Transcendence** 410
Kenneth Seeskin
- 21 **The Preciousness of Being Human: Jewish Philosophy and the Challenge of Technology** 428
Hava Tirosh-Samuelson

| | | |
|-----------|---|------------|
| 22 | In Search of Eternal Israel: Back to an Intellectual Journey | 458 |
| | <i>Shmuel Trigano</i> | |
| 23 | Skepticism and the Philosopher's Keeping Faith | 481 |
| | <i>Elliot R. Wolfson</i> | |
| | Index | 517 |

A Shadowed Light

Continuity and New Directions in Jewish Philosophy

Sarah Pessin

Occluded Memory as Starting Ground: Shadow First

I have always been unable to find Poland on a map—or Kentucky or Ireland or the Red Sea. With the exception of the visually mnemonic “geo-shapes” (for example, the boot of Italy and the panhandle of Florida), geography—and I might add, history—is mostly a black hole to me. In my own self-narrative, I have come to understand this as a manifestation of a Holocaust-rooted cultural/family trauma of displacement. All of my grandparents were Holocaust survivors, and none of them talked about the past. Growing up, I was able to glean only that part of my family was from Belarus and part was not, part of my family identified as *Litvish* and part as *Galitzyaner* (manifest in our day-to-day lives in Boro Park, Brooklyn, in the competing pronunciations of Yiddish [and Yiddishized Hebrew] words like *baruch* versus *barich* and *bucher* versus *bicher*), one grandmother survived World War II in a forced-labor camp in Siberia, one grandfather was ripped out of Mir yeshivah to have his back broken (literally) in a forced-labor camp, and another grandmother cried after watching part of a *Fiddler on the Roof* VHS in our living room. Over the years, I have tried to learn more details of my family’s history, but I always fail to grasp more than one or two details, as I also always fail even to remember the one or two details I had managed to grasp. I will often find small slips of paper tucked into my books and notebooks onto which I have frantically scribbled notes from conversations with my grandparents (later in their lives, my maternal grandmother and grandfather were more open to talking about their pasts); but these slips, and the details they attempt to capture, always slip away from me.

Religion and Philosophy between the Spaces

I was raised in the Orthodox tradition with an ideology best defined by two “nots”: not “ultra-Orthodox” (which we identified with Satmar and other Hasidic groups in Boro Park), and not “modern Orthodox” (which we identified

with Yeshiva of Flatbush and which was synonymous in our minds with “not religious”). In this respect, my early religious identity is defined in the space between two nots.

My early religious identity is also deeply rooted in the space between two worlds. I was “Susan” (my legal name born of post-Holocaust fears about putting a “Jewish name” on a birth certificate) to my non-Jewish friends on the non-Jewish block on which we lived, and I was “Soroh” to my Orthodox Jewish friends at Bais Yaakov of Brooklyn (an Orthodox girls’ school that is, by all counts, to the far Right of the Jewish spectrum but that we experienced as being to the far Left as compared with the many Hasidic schools in the neighborhood, such as Bais Yaakov of Boro Park, which we envisioned as our ideological foil).

While my high school experiences in Prospect Park, an Orthodox girls’ yeshiva (now Bnos Leah) led me forever to feel displaced from the Jewish community (my family’s modest financial status weighed against my strong academic profile to make me something of a misfit to the high school’s administration), my father’s strong love for God and for Judaism has always stuck with me. While I no longer identify with any branch of Judaism or with any Jewish community per se, I do identify as a God-loving Jew. In this spirit, I conduct not only my work in Jewish philosophy but (I hope) most of my efforts.

On the spectrum of Judaism, I jointly (and dialogically) identify myself in the space between Neoplatonic and Levinasian Jewish thought. In this regard, I realize that I am in the minority of self-identifying Jews: I neither identify as culturally Jewish nor as religiously Jewish (even to the extent that I engage in ritual practices); my strong tie to Judaism is almost entirely theological and philosophical.

I view my work in Jewish philosophy as part and parcel of my philosophical and theological identity as a Jew. In this respect, I view engaging in the field of Jewish philosophy—but also engaging in philosophy and humanities more generally—as a life decision to reflect on and attempt to embrace a form of life aimed at the good. In particular, I identify my own work in Jewish philosophy as part of a personal dedication to thinking about and acting on what I call the “Jewish philosophy of shadowed light,” which it is part of my aim to address in this chapter.

From Philosophy to Cosmo-Ontology to Cosmo-Ontology as Philosophy

When I discovered philosophy in my second year as an undergraduate at Stern College at Yeshiva University, it finally became clear to me how I would

combine what had until that point been my completely disjointed passions for poetry and creative writing on the one hand and the sciences (in particular, biology) on the other. My enthusiasm for Jewish philosophy came hand in hand with my enthusiasm for philosophy: following my favorite professor, Dr. David Shatz, from a philosophy of law class to my first seminar on Maimonides, I entered into a philosophical dialogue that has defined my life ever since, moving me from Maimonides to medieval Neoplatonism, from medieval Neoplatonism to ancient philosophy, and from ancient and medieval philosophy to modern Jewish thought and post-Holocaust theology. Interested early on in continuing to study Maimonides and Jewish philosophy, I considered the fact that Maimonides himself studied “regular philosophy” (that is, not just “Jewish philosophy”), and I concluded on that basis that I would have to further my own knowledge of philosophy in general if I were ever to become a solid philosophical reader of Maimonides. In that spirit, I went on to pursue an MA in philosophy at Columbia University with an emphasis on metaphysics; my study during that time of the philosophy of science and quantum mechanics with Dr. David Albert has proven particularly foundational for me.

In the context of my first Maimonides class with Dr. Shatz as an undergraduate at Stern College, I developed an interest in Neoplatonism that would turn out to define a great deal of my future research. I found secondary texts claiming that Maimonides was “Neoplatonic” but without really explaining what that meant. In my attempt to understand this description of Maimonides, I set out on what would become a many-years’ journey into Greek, Jewish, Islamic, and Christian Neoplatonisms. Working with Dr. Tamar Rudavsky on medieval Jewish philosophy and Neoplatonism and studying her own important work on the topic (including her pivotal essay on conflicting motifs in Solomon Ibn Gabirol; see Rudavsky 1978), and working with Dr. Peter King on medieval Christian metaphysics, I went on to write my dissertation on Ibn Gabirol. As part of that period, I was also able to study Greek and Christian Neoplatonism with Dr. Stephen Gersh at the University of Notre Dame for what would turn out to be a life-changing semester. His Neoplatonic study *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (1978) continues to be an ongoing source of inspiration to me.

Over the years, I grew increasingly perplexed about the status of Neoplatonism in the history of Western philosophy: why was Neoplatonism so understudied (and often ignored entirely) in surveys of Western philosophy? My ongoing perplexity about Neoplatonism’s “otherness” within the academy has led me most recently to a twofold set of interrelated questions about method: on the one hand, I aim to make our methods—as scholars studying traditions within the history of philosophy—more overt to ourselves (and to our readers); on

the other hand, I aim to examine our assumptions about the methods of the authors we study. In particular, I have been led to a set of questions about our own methods for reading texts, including questions about how our understanding of the methods, aims, and goals of a given text relates to whether we agree to add that text to one or another canon and, if so, in what way. How, for example, do the perceived aims, goals, and motivations of Neoplatonic thought fit (or fail to fit) into our categories of “science,” “philosophy,” “poetry,” “mysticism,” and/or “theology,” and how do our (often tacit) answers to this question lead to our either including or excluding Neoplatonic texts from ongoing philosophical and theological conversation? I have become worried in particular that Neoplatonism has been excluded precisely because Neoplatonic method has been tacitly misunderstood (and, as such, oversimplified) in the history of philosophy, either as some kind of outdated cosmology or as a hyperreifying and overly metaphorical version of Platonic realism. Reflecting in particular on the relationship of medieval Jewish philosophy to modern Jewish philosophy in this regard, it is noteworthy that, while Maimonides is of immediate interest to a whole range of later Jewish thinkers and scholars of philosophy, Isaac Israeli and Solomon Ibn Gabirol are not. The implications of this seem to me to point to deep questions about modern and postmodern values, as well as to resulting modern and postmodern interpretations of ancient and medieval texts. In my book on Ibn Gabirol, I put the concern this way:

In considering ways we might fail to see the actual spirit of Neoplatonism, it is instructive to consider Rosenzweig’s critique of modernity’s critique of revelation: Rosenzweig faults his modern reader with having completely missed the vibrant notion of Revelation at play in the Bible by having herself uncharitably obscured the Biblical notion by reading into the Bible a cartoonish sense of God that she then summarily rejects as cartoonish. In similar methodological spirit, we must be wary of paving over Neoplatonic cosmo-ontology’s subtle theological and existential concerns by reading it as if it were something archaic and arcane with little philosophical or theological relevance, which we then summarily reject as archaic and arcane and as having little philosophical or theological relevance. When we approach Neoplatonic method through our own methodologically erroneous lenses, we ensure that we get the Neoplatonic method—and with it, all or most of its content—wrong. (Pessin 2013, 141)

My reflections on method have led me to rethink the nature of Neoplatonic method and, as such, the nature and meaning of Neoplatonic writing. These

reflections have also led me to worry about our own methods, namely, how we construct the history of philosophy in light of the many tacit prejudices and presumptions that we bring to texts—often smuggled into our starting translations and categorizations. In the spirit of both of these methodological reappraisals, I aim in my own work to show how Neoplatonic texts are living, vibrant, and relevant resources with ongoing existential, ethical, and theological import.

Isaac Israeli on “Specificity”: Entering the Jewish Philosophy of Shadowed Light

A perfect example of what I have in mind can be seen in turning to a seemingly narrow, technical, cosmo-ontological rumination from Isaac Israeli’s own Jewish Neoplatonism:

[T]he ray and shade of the intellect are the specificity of the rational soul, the ray and shade of the rational soul are the specificity of the . . . soul, the ray and shade of the . . . soul are the specificity of nature. This being so, the intellect is the specificity of all substances, and the form which establishes their essence, as its ray and light, which emanate from its shade, are the fountain of their substantiality and the root of their forms and specificity. (Israeli, *The Book of Substances*; see Altmann and Stern 1958, 83–84; for Judeo-Arabic, see Stern 1958, 143, lines 6–13)

Recounting the unfolding of being itself in terms of a series of lights and shadows, Israeli here engages an insight—rooted in a pseudo-Empedoclean form of Jewish Neoplatonism found even more emphatically in Solomon Ibn Gabirol—that takes the more standard emanationist image of light’s downpour and shadows it.¹

¹ As I discuss at greater length elsewhere (see Pessin 2011a and 2013), Greek Neoplatonism (rooted in Plotinus’s *Enneads*) is traditionally seen as emphasizing the emanation of the world from God in a process metaphorically described in terms of the illumination of a light downward (or outward). Within this Greek tradition (seen, too, in later Jewish, Islamic, and Christian contexts), the emanation from God moves first into Intellect, then into Soul, and then to the bodily realm of Nature. While, to be sure, Greek Neoplatonism also focuses heavily on the downward descent (from God to world) in terms of privation and, hence, in terms of a growing darkness as one moves further from God as the source of light, one does not find a metaphorical emphasis on emanation as a “shadowed light” (though one must consider Greek theories of the dyad and Plotinus’s own theory of “intelligible matter” in this regard—see

As part of my own methodological reappraisal, however, I see in this Neoplatonic move something more than an odd, outdated, and irrelevant debate about whether a cosmic light is shadowed. I find, rather, an early Jewish example of what I call a “philosophy of shadowed light,” which I explain more fully below through consideration of the ideas of Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Emmanuel Levinas. Beckoning always to the beautiful, sacred, fragile, and imperfectly present presence of rupture and occlusion within any possible field of perfection, the Jewish philosophy of shadowed light—like the above example from Israeli—highlights not only one of the most important teachings of Judaism but one of the most important contributions of Jewish philosophy into the twenty-first century and beyond.

Taking my start in Israeli’s reflection on shadows and rays, I turn in the remainder of this chapter to exploring two important ways that Jewish philosophy—precisely qua philosophy of shadowed light—helps pave a guiding path forward.

Jewish Philosophy as Curative to Unbearable Lightness

“Lighten Up”: Flight, Light and “Easy Freedom”

Recently, in a classroom when I was exploring the anxiety of the Levinasian encounter with other qua Other and the deep theme of exile in redemption in Jewish philosophy and theology more broadly, a student asked why Jewish philosophy could not “lighten up” and just envision Judaism as a fun religion. In like spirit, there are those in Jewish studies who speak disparagingly of “weighing things down” with Holocaust studies and post-Holocaust philosophy, instead of giving students a more “hip” sense of Jewish identity for

Pessin 2013, appendix A5). This theme of “shadowed light” emerges explicitly in a range of Jewish and Islamic Neoplatonic texts (as well as mystical texts) and can be associated with what has been called a “pseudo-Empedoclean” set of traditions that emphasize a first-material reality “between” God and Intellect as compared with more standard Neoplatonic hierarchies that tend to emphasize the reality of Intellect as the first reality outside God. If one imagines a material reality “above” Intellect, then the metaphor will be one of shadowed light with pure matter occluding the downward light of Intellect (with a shadow) from the very start. For an account of this idea in Ibn Gabirol, see Pessin 2011a and 2013; on naming this pure material reality the “Grounding Element,” see Pessin 2013, section 2.5; for differences between Jewish and Islamic pseudo-Empedoclean traditions, see Pessin 2013, appendix A12; for the link between this set of ideas and love in Ibn Gabirol’s theology, see chapter 4 in Pessin 2013 and Pessin 2004; and for the direct implications of a pure matter at the core of reality for Ibn Gabirol’s Neoplatonic metaphor of “Return,” see Pessin 2013, section 4.4.

the twenty-first century. Along these lines, one thirty-something community leader recently assured me that he “doesn’t do Holocaust” and that the thirty-somethings for whom he helps coordinate programming “don’t do Holocaust” either. Along similar lines, I have been assured by a range of rabbis, from a variety of denominations, that they are looking to “keep things light” for their congregants, as their success in retaining congregants depends on it.

For those who view “Jewish exile” only as a sociopolitical situation (either of the past and present or only of the past) with no deeper philosophical or theological significance for Judaism, it is simply something to overcome (or something that has already been overcome). In such a context, reflecting on Judaism in exilic terms becomes nothing more than a neurotic, harmful, and unnecessary approach to Jewish identity moving forward.

“Lighten up,” “don’t weigh things down,” “keep things light”: playing on two different senses of lightness (as the absence of darkness and as the absence of weightiness), we may say that these turns of phrase conceptually converge in the demand for “easy freedom.” There is a growing surge of voices—including students, scholars, community members, and community leaders—demanding an empowering and freeing Judaism that entails absolute and immediate redemption, which is to say, exuberant joy and the end to all exiles (personal, social, and political). And in the demand itself, they have already found victory: in calling for a Judaism that leaves all exile behind, they accept their self-issued invitation and move quickly and all at once into the light. Baggage-free and illuminated of all shadows, these new sojourners look with suspicion on any remaining “wandering Jews” weighed down by their theologies of exile. In this demand for light and home, we ought to identify nothing less than the absolute rejection of—and absolute lack of appreciation for—the beauty of the Jewish philosophy of shadowed light. It is as a much-needed curative to this frenzied call to “easy freedom” that Jewish philosophy—and, in particular, the philosophy of shadowed light found in different ways in the teachings of Israeli and, as we will see, in the teachings of Soloveitchik and Levinas—escorts us into the twenty-first century.

Turbulent Majesty: On Leaving Childish Wishes and Enchanted Streams Behind (or, Jewish Philosophy as Curative to Flight, Light, and “Easy Freedom”)

In a brilliant footnote to his classic text *Halakhic Man*, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik addresses the “light problem” in his own day. Addressing this problem in the context of religion’s encounter with modernity, Soloveitchik reflects on “the position that is prevalent nowadays in religious circles” that demands

that the religious experience is of a very simple nature—that is, devoid of the spiritual tortuousness present in the secular cultural consciousness, of psychic upheavals, and of the pangs and torments that are inextricably connected with the development and refinement of man's spiritual personality. This popular ideology contends that the religious experience is tranquil and neatly ordered, tender and delicate; it is an enchanted stream for embittered souls and still waters for troubled spirits. The person “who comes in from the field, weary” (Gen. 25:29), from the battle-field and campaigns of life, from the secular domain which is filled with doubts and fears, contradictions and refutations, clings to religion as does a baby to its mother . . . and there is comforted for his disappointments and tribulations. (Soloveitchik 1983, 139–40)

Religion, Soloveitchik notes, has been made into an “enchanted stream” and adults have reduced themselves to nursing babies. He goes on to describe this simplistic approach to living in terms of a

desire to escape from the turbulence of life to a magical, still, and quiet island and there to devote oneself to the ideal of naturalness and vitality. . . . [T]he representatives of religious communities are inclined to portray religion, in a wealth of colors that dazzle the eye, as a poetic Arcadia, a realm of simplicity, wholeness, and tranquility. (ibid., 140)

Magical, dazzling, vital, and whole, this enchanted form of life issues its alluring promise for burden-free lightness and shadow-free light:

If you wish to acquire tranquility without paying the price of spiritual agonies turn unto religion! If you wish to achieve a fine psychic equilibrium without having to first undergo a slow, gradual personal development, turn unto religion. And if you wish to achieve an instant spiritual wholeness and simplicity that need not be forged out of the struggles and torments of consciousness, turn unto religion! “Get thee out of thy country,” which is filled with anxiety, anguish, and tension, “and from thy birthplace,” which is so frenzied, raging, and stormy, “to the land” Arcadia wherein religion reigns supreme. (Ibid., 140–41)

After critiquing this form of life for scoffing knowledge, Soloveitchik goes on to criticize it for cultivating an inappropriately simplistic attitude that, in striving to avoid the darker depths of human being, shuns the reality of redemption:

It would appear to me that there is no need to explain the self-evident falsity of this ideology. . . . [T]his ideology is intrinsically false and deceptive. That religious consciousness in man's experience which is most profound and most elevated, which penetrates to the very depths and ascends to the very heights, is not that simple and comfortable. On the contrary, it is exceptionally complex, rigorous, and tortuous. Where you find its complexity, there you find its greatness. . . . The spiritual stature and countenance of the man of God are chiseled and formed by the pangs of redemption themselves. (Ibid., 141–43; in this selection, I skip over a large section from 141 to 143.)

Looking at his own emphasis on competing modes of religious living, we may read Soloveitchik as pointing more broadly to two competing modes of human life. On the one hand, there is the entirely relaxed and comfortable, laid back and content “enchanted stream” form of human life. Soloveitchik describes this as wrongly directed childish living—a mix of “childish naïveté and superficial belief” (Soloveitchik 1983, 140). On the other hand, there is the redemptive form of human life in which deep joy is born of deep turmoil. Soloveitchik describes this as rightly directed mature living.

With Soloveitchik, Levinas also values mature religion and identifies mature human being with a form of engaged living that is more “austere” (Levinas 1990, 18) than it is “light.” With Soloveitchik, Levinas speaks too of what we may call a “life of shadowed light”—a joy born of uncomfortable encounter, a truth occasioned by a “difficult freedom” born of exacting living in and through responsibility. Invested through infinite responsibility for the Other, Levinas’ difficult freedom arises in a space of unease—a locus of trauma that, we might say, marks the difficult move from childish egotism to mature living. In fact, Levinas describes the move from egotistical “self-enchainment” to ethics and freedom in terms of the relinquishing of “games and sleep”—two activities clearly suggestive of the life of children:

[I]n the irreplaceable subject, unique and chosen as a responsibility and a substitution, a mode of freedom, ontologically impossible, breaks the unrendable essence. Substitution frees the subject from ennui, that is, from the enchainment to itself, where the ego suffocates in itself due to the games and sleep in a movement that never wears out. (Levinas 1998, 124)

Mirroring this theme in his revealingly entitled “A Religion for Adults,” Levinas emphasizes the importance of mature living over, to borrow Soloveitchik’s turn of phrase, the life of “enchanted streams” by reflecting on the rabbinic valorization of the human over the angelic form of life:

Human existence, in spite of the inferiority of its ontological level—because of this inferiority, *because of its torment, unease and self-criticism*—is the true place in which the divine word encounters the intellect and loses the rest of its supposedly mystical virtues. . . . [M]en accede to the divine word without ecstasy having to tear them away from their essence, their human nature. (Levinas 1990, 15; my italics)

It is precisely this mature opening to unease that marks the opening from “easy freedom” to “difficult freedom.” Unlike a childish freedom that stems from my power to do what I will, difficult freedom is a freedom that arises from my responsibilities, opening me to sustained, engaged, and anything but “light” living—both qua Jew and qua human being.

In spite of their important differences, Soloveitchik and Levinas both offer us stunning examples of the Jewish philosophy of shadowed light. Their insights about joy born of unease and the move from childish enchanted dreams and streams to real living capture what is perhaps the most important teaching (and, for me, the most *Jewish* teaching) of Jewish philosophy—in our classrooms and in our societies—now and into the future. In their delicate and pained reflections on the delicate and pained reality of complex revelation, Soloveitchik and Levinas issue a call to earnest openness to the “pangs of redemption”—a call, we may say, to a life of shadowed light. This call has either not been heard or perhaps only not heeded by a growing culture of people who prefer “keeping things light.” In such a context, Jewish philosophy plays an especially critical role, offering readers (including our students) an increasingly rare ground on which to embrace their own most vulnerable, fragile, human selfhood without fear of embarrassment and without the fear of having become irrelevant.

My Litvish Sensibilities

This Jewish philosophy of shadowed light allows me to engage the truth of my father’s dying reminder to me that Judaism is important and beautiful. Jewish philosophy is what allows me to identify—deeply and proudly identify—as a Jew. I hope in this respect that Jewish philosophy allows a growing number of students—Jewish and non-Jewish—a more refined and deep sense not only of what Judaism is about but of what human being is about as we move into

the twenty-first century. I hope that Jewish philosophy (as a discipline but also as a form of life)—in its deep insights about shadowed light—can help fix the “light problem” of modern and postmodern identity, Jewish and otherwise.

I might note in all of this that I am not against fun. I am not even against fun vis-à-vis Judaism—I am, for example, quite excited about having introduced the hamantasch-latke debate into Denver,² as I am even more excited about having helped lead Team Hamantasch to victory in 2012 with my Aristotelian defense of the essence of human beings in bipedalism, ergo, in pantedness and pocketedness. I am not against fun, fun vis-à-vis Judaism or fun within the development of one’s own human identity (in fact, I consider humor to be a core human virtue with deep theological significance and existential/ethical value). But I am decidedly against making of Judaism (to borrow again from Soloveitchik’s phrase) an “enchanted stream.” Perhaps my wariness of the “enchanted stream” is the result of my own study of Soloveitchik and Levinas, perhaps it is strengthened by some truly silly attempts at “light” Jewish identity formation I have witnessed first-hand, and perhaps it is also partly illustrative of my own *Litvish* upbringing. Jewish philosophy, for me, is an opportunity to help myself and my students (both Jewish and non-Jewish) find a “philosophy for adults” in which perfectly imperfect comfort can be found in displacement, perfectly imperfect joy can be found in exile, and each light is made more perfectly imperfect by the endless play of shadows that occludes it. Jewish philosophy helps forge a more mature, responsive, and engaged Jewish identity, as it also helps forge a more mature, responsive, and engaged human identity. This, at any rate, is one of the main reasons that I am so enthusiastic about research and teaching in Jewish philosophy.

In reflecting on the contrast between light and complex forms of life, I am reminded of a moment I experienced a few years back in the magazine aisle at a local bookstore. There I found *Heeb* magazine alongside its apparent Christian companion piece—a magazine for culturally engaged twenty-something Christians called *Relevant*. I cannot recall what exactly was on that

2 This debate originated at the Hillel at University of Chicago in 1946; each year, scholars following this tradition draw on their fields of study to offer mock-serious defenses of the excellence of the hamantasch (the traditional pastry associated with Purim) or the grandeur of the latke (the traditional deep-fried treat associated with Hanukkah). For an overview, see “Shticking to their Puns” in the *University of Chicago Magazine*, 98, no. 2 (2005) available online at <http://magazine.uchicago.edu/0512/features/puns.shtml> (accessed January 8, 2014), and see the Wikipedia entry for “Latke-Hamantash Debate”; for great content from some of these debates (including an enjoyable preface by philosopher-humorist Ted Cohen), see Fredman Cernea 2005.

particular *Heeb* cover, but it was, as it generally is, something aggressively cavalier: taboo-breaking per se becomes a form of life and philosophical insights about joys born of complexity are rendered passé. In contrast, the Christian magazine cover featured Radiohead's lead singer Thom Yorke drenched in melted chocolate and read, "What You're Really Buying this Christmas Might Surprise You," alongside the promise of "50 Conscientious Christmas Gifts" (*Relevant* 36, November–December 2008). In raising social consciousness right alongside cutting-edge trends in art, music, and culture, *Relevant* is about defining a young Christian culture that is soul-searching and ethical. Repairing the world per se becomes a form of life and philosophical insights about joys born of complexity are taken to heart.

It would appear that the magazine rack of contemporary twenty-something cutting-edge culture identifies me as Christian. The Jewish philosophy of shadowed light, however, keeps me firmly and proudly rooted in my Judaism.

Jewish Philosophy as Ground for Interreligious Bridges

The Jewish philosophy of shadowed light is also important for the opportunities it affords interfaith bridge building—true interfaith bridge building, which, to me, means appropriately uncomfortable interfaith bridge building and which, to me, carries with it direct methodological implications for the way we study and interpret texts from different religious and cultural traditions.

My own relation to Judaism and to Jewish philosophy has almost always involved efforts on my part at interfaith and intercultural bridge building. Most recently, this has included my role in helping develop at the University of Denver (DU) a new Holocaust Memorial Social Action Site, a space dedicated to a wide range of diversity, social justice, and intercultural (including interfaith) learning and action initiatives. From its very inception—and even well before construction was completed—the site became home to a number of gatherings, including a "Digital Storytelling for Social Justice" project, a socially conscious student art installation, and an interfaith program bringing Denver Jewish and German Christian high school students together for dialogue about memory, history, and *tikkun olam*.³ (In 2012, the Holocaust Awareness Institute

3 On our vision of this site as a Levinasian Holocaust memorial, see Pessin 2011b. I also have spoken of the importance of ethics over art in any memorial project; in this regard, I presented "Otherwise Than Memorial, Otherwise Than Counter-Memorial: From Art to Ethics at the University of Denver's Holocaust Memorial Social Action Site (or: Ethics, Aesthetics and the Space of Memory)" at Arizona State University's "Memory and Countermemory:

at DU's Center for Judaic Studies featured Dr. James Young as our annual Fred Marcus Memorial Holocaust Lecture speaker; we were encouraged and energized by his positive response to our unique memorial project.) The memorial has also given rise to a community-wide interfaith bridge-building program; in 2011, the site brought together leaders from local Islamic, Native American, Jewish, and Christian communities for an afternoon of dialogue with about one hundred local community members and students.

Interfaith relationship building is important to me. Working in a wide range of interfaith contexts has led me, though, to reflect on the nature and goals of interfaith work, which, in turn, has led me to uncomfortable questions about the possibility of tacit (or overt) conceptual mutings of Judaism—and of Jewish philosophy—within a Christian Western context. Moving into the twenty-first century, one of Jewish philosophy's goals must be to diagnose this problem further and to help amplify Jewish (including Jewish philosophical) voices, with strong implications both for the future of civic discourse and for the future of the academic study of philosophy.

Making Interfaith Work Appropriately Uncomfortable

Recently, I decided that I would try to move beyond the niceties that often accompany most well-intentioned interfaith programs. Invited to speak at a church group, I decided to scrap my original workshop-style investigation of shared virtues in Judaism and Christianity (I think I was going to focus on charity and compassion). Instead, I started the hour-long seminar with the following reflection:

Thank you all for kindly inviting me to speak with you today as part of our important interfaith work to build stronger and more diverse communities of respect and inclusion. As a scholar of Jewish philosophy, and also as a Jew, I hope it is okay for me to share that I think it important to learn how to face our differences—a much harder interfaith task than the enjoyable and far easier work of highlighting our similarities. In that spirit, but in a spirit most broadly of friendship and respect, I would like to start our interfaith discussion today with the following reminder: Jews do not believe in Christ; they do not one day hope to believe in Christ,

Memorialization of an Open Future" conference (November 6–8, 2011), organized by Martin Beck Matušík and Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, with the support of the Center for Jewish Studies (ASU-Tempe), the Center for Critical Inquiry and Cultural Studies (ASU-West), and the Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Literature Cluster (ASU).

and, in fact, not believing in Christ is kind of a key defining aspect of Judaism in most philosophical and theological contexts.

One person immediately got up and left. A number of other people got upset as evidenced by their sudden arm crossings and displeased faces. By the end of the one hour (during which time I drew on Soloveitchik's *Halakhic Man* to help a group of Christians understand the deep spirituality of Jewish law and begin to question the history of Christianity's own questionable narrative of "spirit versus law"), I had recovered most people's sense of trust. Most arms got uncrossed, and most people came up to thank me personally after the seminar. One woman in particular approached me in tears, thanking me profusely for having forced her to rethink everything she had ever come to think about Judaism (and, as she added, about Christianity as well). There is a deep and complex "uncomfortable comfort" (linked precisely to the Jewish philosophy of shadowed light) that comes from feeling uncomfortable about ever having felt comfortable, or ever having even set out to feel comfortable, in an interfaith context.

That said, one gentleman remained frustrated: Why did I have to be so negative, emphasizing—in an interfaith context no less—that Jews do not plan on *ever* believing in Christ?

It is very hard for me face this kind of disappointment. Many of my own closest personal friends and professional mentors and colleagues are Christian. That, combined with my own love of Christian Neoplatonisms, as well as my own continued working through of Rosenzweig's sense of the "dual truths" of Christianity and Judaism (notwithstanding my concerns about his less friendly readings of other religious traditions), has led me to a deep personal respect for—and connection to—Christianity and Christians. But as much as it pains me to evoke Christian disappointment with my more "renegade" approach to Jewish-Christian interfaith dialogue, it pains me even more not to evoke that response if the alternative is a friendly and childish (and ultimately destructive) avoidance of the elephant in the room. Consider Levinas's insight on this particular elephant:

Lest the union between men of goodwill which I desire to see be brought about only in a vague and abstract mode, I wish to insist here precisely on the *particular* routes open to Jewish monotheism. . . . The *manner* which this tradition [namely, oral tradition] instituted constitutes Rabbinic Judaism. . . . The paths that lead to God in this Judaism do not cross the same landscapes as the Christian paths. If you had been shocked or amazed by that, you would have been shocked or amazed that we remain Jews before you. (Levinas 1990, 13–14)

Judaism is deeply and essentially not Christianity. And, yes, many Christians (and probably even more Jews) are shocked *and* amazed (some tacitly, some overtly) that “we remain Jews before you” (notwithstanding the cohort of evangelical Christian students in my Judaism lecture in Fresno, California, who were all quite confident that Judaism was an ancient extinct religion—though one student did raise his hand to ask me whether Moses lived *before or after* Jesus converted all the Jews). Pointing to the “we remain Jews before you” elephant (of the particular species “because we do not believe or plan on believing in the divinity of Jesus”) is important to me not simply because *it is true* that Jews are not and do not care to become Christians; I think often of Søren Kierkegaard’s brilliant reminder that simply saying true things is a fine sign of insanity (see Kierkegaard in Hannay 2009, 163–64).⁴ Pointing to the elephant in question is important to me not simply because the pointing reveals a truth but for three separate (though ultimately interrelated) reasons:

1 Defending Judaism

As you will see in points 2 and 3 below, my dedication to emphasizing Judaism’s difference from Christianity mostly comes from a constructive space. But I will admit also to a defensive reactive impulse in the mix: growing up as a Jew, it was frustrating to me to have on numerous occasions felt the accusatory gaze—or, more frequently, the unintentional insensitivities—of my Christian neighbors and colleagues. It is frustrating to have to explain to students and to colleagues why “New Testament” is not an innocuous turn of phrase and “Old Testament” even less so. It is frustrating to have to ask university administrators to please look into the campus carillonners playing denominationally specific tunes about Christ each December, as it is frustrating to have to remind a university annually that Yom Kippur continues not to be a great date for campus-wide programming (I would note that DU is exceptionally good about accommodating these religious requests, but it is still frustrating to have to ask [and often to have to ask for the same set of changes each year], as it is frustrating to worry that if I—or one of the other Jewish faculty—do not ask, there is a good chance that no one will even know there is a problem). It is frustrating to encounter Christianity’s sense that Jews have missed the boat, as it is frustrating to have on three occasions been the object of an attempted conversion (including [a] my neighbor asking me to consider a path to Jesus when I was eight years old, [b] a divinity student hounding me over beers during my summer at the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies in Oxford to explain what possible reason I could have for not converting to Christianity, and—perhaps most surreally—[c] my city bus driver one morning in Columbus, Ohio,

4 My thanks to Rick Furtak for bringing this passage to my attention.

literally getting up out of his seat, walking down the center aisle of the bus, and witnessing Christ to the four of us on the bus, but—as my memory likes to remember it—mostly to me [in this regard, my memory has creatively also pulled visuals from the scene in *Annie Hall* where “Grammy Hall” sees Woody Allen as a Hasidic rabbi]).

As much as I resonate with the notion of “the Other” as a philosophical concept and as much as I am personally and theologically proud to be the “Jewish Other,” I suppose that I often do not much like the feeling of being “othered” by Christians or by Christianity or seeing Judaism being “othered” by Christians or by Christianity. At the very least, I want people who use the term “Old Testament” (even innocently) to know that they have “othered” Judaism and to come to terms with what that means to me (and I hope what that means to them). If you are othering me, I want you to know that you are, and I want you to reflect on it.

I might also add that I am sensitive to the “othering of Judaism by omission,” an unintentional (and in that sense innocuous but perhaps not at all innocuous) variety of the “othering of Judaism” in which Jewish ideas are simply left out. I remember once being thrilled—and secretly relieved—after learning that a group of medieval philosophy scholars were going to be organizing a conference session on Judah Halevi. “Wow,” I thought, “they normally focus only on Christian thinkers. What a relief that things are moving forward—and with Halevi no less!” I expressed my enthusiasm to one of the scholars involved with the upcoming event. “I am so excited to hear that your group is devoting a whole session to Halevi!” He replied that they too were excited finally to be moving beyond the usual Aquinas and Augustine panels and devoting a whole session to Peter *Olivi*.

Cases like the ones above—ranging from the “othering of Judaism” by design, by oversight, by omission, or otherwise—often make me feel called upon to defend Judaism. This is one of the contexts—a somewhat more reactive context—in which I work to contrast Judaism from Christianity and to emphasize the beauty of Judaism through my work in Jewish philosophy, through my interreligious textual work, and through my work in interfaith bridge building.

2 A Rosenzweigian Approach to Christian-Jewish Partnership

(or Reflecting on Judaism’s “No” as Essential to Christianity’s “Yes”)

But there is often also an entirely different impetus behind my focus on the distance between Jewish and Christian identity. While I remain conflicted (for a number of competing reasons) about Franz Rosenzweig’s sense of the “dual truths” of Christianity and Judaism, I have always been intrigued by his sense of Judaism as the “no” that saves Christianity from totality. In the context of

part 3, book 3 of the *Star of Redemption*, Rosenzweig speaks of “the eternal protest of the Jew” (1970, 413) and notes that “the existence of the Jew constantly subjects Christianity to the idea that it is not attaining the goal, the truth, that it ever remains—on the way” (ibid.).

Following on this passage and related ideas in Rosenzweig, Leora Batnitzky expands as follows:

In the *Star of Redemption*'s discussion of Christianity, Rosenzweig elaborates on what Christians may learn from Jewish judgment. . . . As against Judaism, Christianity defines itself in terms of its universal mission, in terms of its potential for universal salvation. Judaism reminds Christianity, however, that it has not yet achieved its goal. Judaism's prideful particularity saves Christianity from its own totalitarian tendency to believe that it has achieved its goal, and can teach the Christian about the ways in which she must learn to live with the discomfort of her own incompleteness. (Batnitzky 2000, 158)

Here the Jewish philosophy of shadowed light reenters—as a philosophy of Judaism as a shadow(ed light) that shadows the light. For, in the context of Rosenzweig's view, we may precisely envision Judaism as the shadow (itself a shadowed light) that prevents the light of Christianity from completely illuminating/engulfing all. In a Levinasian key (though not necessarily based on Levinas's own sense of Judaism's relationship to Christianity), we may say that Judaism, in its “no,” is precisely what allows Christianity to avoid totality—or, as Batnitzky emphasizes, is precisely what allows Christianity to avoid the idolatry of perfection, self-completion, and totalitarianism. Returning to Soloveitchik's and Levinas's philosophy of shadowed light, we might also note that, in leading the Christian “to learn to live with the discomfort of her own incompleteness,” Judaism may be said to help Christianity embrace the complexity of “unease,” ultimately helping keep it from the “enchanted stream” and any hopes of full light and completion.

While I expect most Christians would disagree with this overall Rosenzweigian assessment (and while I am myself unsure about whether I agree with Rosenzweig), I do find myself often reflecting on the Rosenzweigian sense of the Christian-Jewish relation and on Judaism's role as the shadow (or shadowed light) that prevents totalizing light. The historical and (even more importantly) theological “Other,” Judaism resonates for me as a constant “no” to Christianity (including to the Christian sense of love in Western tradition about which I will say more below). In like spirit, Judaism resonates for me as the “no” to a whole range of totalizing impulses.

In Rosenzweig's reflections on Judaism and Christianity, we find further resonances of the Jewish philosophy of shadowed light. And it is precisely the grounding sense of complexity and unease emerging from this philosophy that can serve not only as a potentially transformational lens for Christian-Jewish interfaith relations and bridge building into the future, but also as a transformational lens through which to reconsider all intra- and interhuman encounter.

As a potentially transformational lens in this regard, the Jewish philosophy of shadowed light helps reveal the possibility of Judaism as a shadowed light that conceptually and historically helps prevent totalizing illuminations. In this way, the Jewish philosophy of shadowed light also reveals a complex and uneasy love with distance (itself as a "shadowed light" of sorts) as a foundational element for all interfaith engagement and more broadly for all face-to-face encounter. About this complex "love with distance," we will have more to say below.

3 Creating a More Charitable Space for Conducting Jewish (and Other Religious but Non-Christian Varieties of) Philosophy

There is a third and most important reason for my interest in Jewish-Christian difference, and it has direct implications for academic integrity and the way we train ourselves and our students to read and interpret texts. If our goal is to be fair (to at least some reasonable extent) in the way we write and codify the history of philosophy, then we as scholars need to exercise greater charity in the way we approach texts. In this spirit, I often speak of Christianity's tacit grip on the "Western thought-space," including the conceptual space in which Jewish philosophy is read and interpreted.

In this very regard, in my work on Ibn Gabirol, I have argued that an Augustinian notion of "Divine Will" has tacitly (and sometimes overtly) been read onto a Jewish pseudo-Empedoclean Neoplatonic notion of Divine Desire, thereby obscuring Ibn Gabirol's theology from clear view (Pessin 2013). I have also argued in my work on Jewish Neoplatonism more broadly that various Christian-rooted (Pauline, Augustinian, and Thomistic) religious sensibilities about God, will, being, emanation, and creation have also tacitly influenced the way the history of philosophy has been canonized, with limiting implications for the way we read texts, including texts of Jewish philosophy (Pessin 2012). I have in this regard also commented more generally still on how a particularly Christian context to the Western academic study of religion has overdetermined the basic sense of many important theological concepts, rendering it difficult for a whole range of students and scholars to hear as conceptually basic Jewish immanent senses of transcendence and holiness, to hear as

conceptually basic the sense (operative in a range of religious philosophical texts—including Jewish, Islamic, *and* Christian ones) that “creation” can be another term for “emanation,” or to hear as conceptually basic a Jewish sense of love that is not an unconditional force of forgiveness (on this particular example, see more below).

In working on this set of insights, I worry that my Christian friends and colleagues will become frustrated with me. Nothing could be further from my intentions, and nothing would upset me more. I hope that anyone who reads my work will ultimately come to find that my emphasis on the “Christian lens” is done in a spirit of kinship and honesty. It is also done in a spirit of urgency, as I can think of no greater stumbling block to interfaith bridge building or to academic integrity than failing to conduct open, real, and uncomfortable conversations about the particular prejudices and histories we each bring to the table—in conversations with our neighbors and in interpretations of our texts. (I hope in the current chapter, at any rate, to have given readers some sense of some of the many prejudices and histories that accompany my own work).

Justice in Love: On a Jewish Grace with Responsibility

Evil is not a mystical principle that can be effaced by a ritual, it is an offence perpetrated on man by man. No one, not even God, can substitute himself for the victim. The world in which pardon is all-powerful becomes inhuman. (Levinas 1990, 20)

“Love” is an especially important example of a philosophical and theological concept that many people tacitly hear in a Christian key—including interlocutors in the public square, as well as students and scholars working to interpret texts within the history of philosophy, theology, and religions. Here are some of the tacitly Christian teachings that inform many of our conceptually basic ideas about love in the West: (1) that love is unconditional, (2) that God’s loving grace serves as a paradigm for undeserved and absolute forgiveness, with the resulting tacit sense (3) that forgiving is always religiously (and humanly) “better” and “more pious” and “more loving” than not forgiving, and (4) that love is neatly discrete from desire. The latter point quickly emerges from Christian theologies of *eros* versus *agape*, as the other three ideas can also be easily shown to stem from a range of Christian origins. This is not to say that there is no value to be found in these ideas about love; nor is it to say that one cannot find Jewish rabbis, theologians, and philosophers who agree with one or more of these ideas about love. It is, however, to note that there are just as many “basic” and “pious” alternative ideas about love to be found within Judaism

(and within other non-Christian traditions) that—because of the tacitly Christian context of Western thought—cannot help but come across as sounding odd (or, at least, “less basic”) as compared with the Christian sense of love, grace, and absolute forgiveness as absolute redemption.

Following from my thoughts in the previous section, I think it is part of the task of Jewish philosophy into the twenty-first century to help broaden the “basic” range of meanings of “love.” In this spirit, I also think it is part of the task of Jewish philosophy into the twenty-first century to help problematize the tacit sense that absolute forgiveness is always “better,” “kinder,” and even “more pious” than a “love in justice” that does not grant pardon quite as liberally (if at all). And while this point is philosophically important to explore *a priori*, Auschwitz would seem to help render it necessary from even an *a posteriori* historical, practical, and political perspective.

I recently attended a philosophy presentation arguing that Hannah Arendt’s love for Martin Heidegger offers a template for “true love.” The talk was erudite—the speaker was a well-known expert in Continental philosophy, and the paper exhibited a command of critical theoretical reflections on desire and subjectivity, historicity and love, Arendt and Heidegger. I was taken aback, however, at the audience’s almost unanimous sense that the speaker’s thesis held water. People were not just in agreement; they were in desperate agreement, physically nodding their heads and smiling from ear to ear at each development in the paper: love conquers all; love is greater than justice; love is boundless; love’s boundlessness opens to infinite forgiveness; and so forth (I am not doing justice to the details of the presentation as they do not impact my current point). What struck me as unmistakable was the Christian undertone of the thesis, as well as the Christian undertone of the audience reaction. What struck me as worrisome was the *tacit* nature of said Christian undertone in both cases. A tacitly Christian sense of grace was tacitly rooting an entire room of philosophers’ relieved sense that even the Nazi Heidegger is lovable—and even to a Jewish woman in the immediate context of Auschwitz. What could be more beautiful and unconditional than the pure love of a Jewish woman for her Nazi beloved?

After sitting through three or four dotting comments during the Q&A, I recall being mortified to think that, in the whole room, it would have to be the Jewish scholar of Jewish philosophy and granddaughter of Holocaust survivors who was going to have to introduce the “no.” While this upset me, it also structurally resonated deeply enough for me with Rosenzweig’s own sense of Judaism’s necessary relationship to Christianity as to inspire me to forge onward. Here is what I hope to have managed to convey to the speaker and to the audience in some form or another: Christian theology is important. But please let us

not allow ourselves, within the context of a scholarly nondenominational philosophy conference no less, to act as if love as understood within a Christian theology of grace is the only valid, compelling, pious, or moral sense of love to speak of. It is possible that Arendt's own life and/or her own philosophy might perhaps reveal her own turn to Augustinian love as true love (and the ability, as such, to embrace without hesitation a Nazi beloved). I am not interested here one way or another in the nature and implications of Arendt's personal or scholarly profile. What does concern me is that there is a competing sense of "responsibility with love" or "love in justice" within Jewish textual traditions that held no sway—did not even come up once until I brought it up—during the entire session (just as it seems to hold no sway in the way we have tended to write histories of religions and philosophy). Even if known to scholars of Levinas and other Jewish texts, this sense of "love in justice" is arguably less known (and certainly less known as a "basic" sense of love) to whole ranges of philosophical readers and audiences because of the tacitly Christian context of much of Western thinking. It is also, perhaps, less initially appealing not only to Christians (who might need to denounce some or all of it on theological grounds) but even to others who have lived within a tacitly Christian moral context long enough to feel deeply uncomfortable about even *suggesting* that forgiveness might in some cases be downright *immoral*. While I hope in future work more fully to explore the idea of Christian love alongside the idea (equally "basic") of Jewish "love in justice," we may here summarize two of the key aspects of "Jewish love" (as perhaps two of the key reasons that it has failed to gain traction as a "basic" sense of love within Western discourse):

1. It does not give a room full of scholars at a Continental philosophy conference the relieved sense that even Heidegger is loveable, and
2. It replaces the comfort and light of "unconditional love" with the complexity and shadowed light of "love under the weight of responsibility."

This second point, of course, reenters us into the folds of the Jewish philosophy of shadowed light. As an uneasy blend of grace with responsibility and forgiveness with justice, the Jewish concept of love points yet again to shadowed light. It is in this sense importantly different from any notion of love, divine or otherwise, as a pure overflow of cleansing light. The ideal of Jewish love, uneasily balanced side by side with Christian love in a necessary compresence of alterities⁵ and in conversation with other basic senses of love from across a

5 While I continue to wrestle with whether I agree with Rosenzweig, in this turn of phrase, I am drawing on a Rosenzweigian sense that there is, theologically speaking, a deep and necessary

wide range of religious traditions, is a critical tool in the world's continued negotiation of political, social, and interpersonal conflicts. It is also a critical tool in our continued reading and interpreting of Jewish (and other non-Christian) textual traditions and in our continued canonizing of themes and concepts within the history of philosophy, theology, and religions. For all these reasons, I consider it an essential role of Jewish philosophy into the twenty-first century to help the concept of "Jewish love" as love with justice make its way into the "basic lexicon" of religious and philosophical thinking, in interfaith public contexts and in textual scholarship.

Conclusion

In offering sustained insights into the beauty of "shadowed light," Jewish philosophy is a vibrant and essential resource for the twenty-first century, providing critical content to processes of human identity formation in and out of our classrooms and providing important checks and balances to academic methodologies for reading, translating, and interpreting texts. Jewish philosophy is key both for the content of its reflections and for the (related) fact that it frequently stands as a conceptual foil to a wide range of Christian ideas tacitly viewed as "basic concepts" within the Western thought-space. In this way, Jewish philosophy helps push the boundaries of textual interpretation and of interhuman communication; in reminding us, for example, that there are different (which is, in this context, to say, non-Christian) senses of love (and of other concepts), Jewish philosophy not only provides important content (for example, the idea of "justice with love") but can also help keep us alert to the radical alterity of—and, hence, the need for extreme charity in approaching—concepts at play in texts written by authors from all different backgrounds, and ideas at play in the hearts of people from all different backgrounds. In this way, Jewish philosophy—both in its content but also in its structural role as a strong "other" within the Western thought-space—offers critical insights for methodologies in interpreting texts in the academy and for intercultural civic relationship building in the world at large.

We might also note that, in drawing our attention variously to the shadows in light, the turbulences of mature living, the difficulties of freedom, and the

relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Additionally, to emphasize the necessary duality of two realities that can never be unified or absorbed one into the other, I am drawing on the Levinasian language of alterity. I hope to pursue this idea in more detail in future work.

justice in love, the Jewish philosophy of shadowed light, seen in various forms in the works of Israeli, Soloveitchik, Levinas, and with them many others, points to exile, weightiness, rupture, and darkness as integral to redemption and, in so doing, invites us to challenging ideas about how we, as students, as scholars, and as human beings, might better strive after the good.

References

- Altmann, Alexander, and S. M. Stern. 1958. *Isaac Israeli*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Reprint. 2009. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, with introduction by Alfred Ivry.
- Batnitzky, Leora. 2000. *Idolatry and Representation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig Reconsidered*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Fredman Cernea, Ruth, ed. 2005. *The Great Latke-Hamantash Debate*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gersh, Stephen. 1978. *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Hannay, Alistair, trans. 2009. *Kierkegaard: Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. 1969. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
- . 1987. "Freedom and Command." In *Collected Philosophical Papers: Emmanuel Levinas*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, 15–23. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
- . 1990. "A Religion for Adults." In *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, translated by Seán Hand, 11–23. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- . 1998. *Otherwise Than Being, or Beyond Essence*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
- Pessin, Sarah. 2004. "Loss, Presence, and Gabirol's Desire: Medieval Jewish Philosophy and the Possibility of a Feminist Ground." In *Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy*, edited by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, 27–50. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- . 2011a. "Solomon Ibn Gabirol [Avicebron]." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (spring 2011 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/ibn-gabirol/>>.
- . 2011b. "Cronos Swallows a Stone: From Calcified History to *Hineni*, 'Enlivening Memory' and the Call to Justice (On Creating a Levinasian Holocaust Memorial)." *University of Toronto's Journal for Jewish Thought* 2 (online); for a pdf, see <http://portfolio.utoronto.ca/spessin>.

- . 2012. "On the Possibility of a Hidden Christian Will: Methodological Pitfalls in the Study of Medieval Jewish Philosophy." In *Encountering the Medieval in Modern Jewish Thought*, edited by Aaron W. Hughes and James Diamond, 52–94. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- . 2013. *Ibn Gabirol's Theology of Desire: Matter and Method in Jewish Medieval Neoplatonism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosenzweig, Franz. 1970. *Star of Redemption*. Translated by William W. Hallo. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Rudavsky, T. M. 1978. "Conflicting Motifs: Ibn Gabirol on Matter and Evil." *The New Scholasticism* 52, no. 1: 54–71.
- Soloveitchik, Joseph B. 1983. *Halakhic Man*. Translated by Lawrence Kaplan. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society.
- Stern, S. M. 1958. "The Fragments of Isaac Israeli's 'Book of Substances.'" In *S. M. Stern, Medieval Arabic and Hebrew Thought*, edited by F. W. Zimmerman, 135–45. London: Variorum Reprints.