For Bert Cohn
On His 90th Birthday
Photography: Miki Kratsman

Note: The photos from the “Archive” project are photos of mine that were published in newspapers between 1985 - 2013. These are reproductions I took from the printed versions. The quality of the printing process and the aging of the paper represent the chronological order of the photos as they appeared in press. The project contains 3,800 photos.

Design: Lahav Halevy
Dear Bert,

When you endowed the Institute in 1989, you did so out of friendship to Yehuda Elkana. Yehuda’s leadership qualities allowed him to make the best of the means you put at his disposal so generously. Others followed in his footsteps; they could always count on you to be at their side in a time of need. For almost thirty years, your support has enabled the Institute to develop activities and projects that would have been inconceivable otherwise. It has allowed the Institute to become the largest and most active institution of its kind in Israel and to rank among the most prominent institutes for the history and philosophy of science in the world. And you and we can look on with pride at the impact the Institute’s distinct integrative approach to the sciences is having now on the humanities at large by means of the good work done at the Minerva Center, and more recently at CRIS.

An academic institution owes its reputation primarily to the publications of its members and the graduate students it trained. The very many MA and PhD students that graduated from the Cohn Institute over the years, and the very many articles and books authored by its faculty are the rich harvest of fruit that grew on the tree that you planted together with Yehuda in the late 1980s. With this small present, a tribute to your lasting friendship and support, we wish to send you a taste of this fruit at the occasion of your 90th birthday, in order to express our respect and gratitude.

We wish you many more years of health and happiness.

In the name of all the members of the Cohn Institute,

José Brunner
Dear Bert,

After thirty years of sharing the concerns of the Cohn Institute and Minerva Humanities Center, helping us to realize our dreams, may I say to you and Barbara that you have been our ideal partners?

The flow of articles you regularly sent us from Manhattan to Tel Aviv University - still relevant for our scientific enterprise today - are proofs of your intellectual curiosity, interest and involvement. Yet, the letters accompanying them never missed an opportunity to express your dry sense of humor, putting into perspective your generous donations. Your exceptional gift of knowing how to support has made our collaboration steady, fruitful and pleasant. You have been our friends, as well as being our patrons respecting our autonomy but knowing how to give advice that encompassed your experience in public as well as private affairs.

The impact of your involvements has now ripened in the form of an intellectual community of young scholars devoted to a vision you share with us - a mission to create new types of knowledge for the sake of society both locally and globally; in Israel/Palestine and in the world at large. We are aware of our debt to you and the family. This community can and should be a source of satisfaction and pride to you.

May all of you enjoy the memories of good old times and celebrate life and health in the future.

With warm regards,

Rivka Feldhay Kremnitzer
somewhere between the sixteenth and eighteenth century, a revolution occurred that was no less radical than the concurrent scientific revolution. It brought about a new contextual understanding of history, in which historical fact became “understood” or meaningful only through the context in which it is embedded. This applies both to historical texts and any other monument of the past. The historian must reconstruct the context, and the reconstruction is always linked to his or her “point of view” in the present. **

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**Introduction to Perceptions of Jewish History**

ÁMOS FUNKENSTEIN

University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1993, pp. 14-15
Every problem has a realist and a relativist dimension, and the two views can be, and are actually being, held simultaneously. Once a frame of reference has been selected, in it realism prevails. With respect to selection of an appropriate framework the approach has to be relativist since there is no absolute, external-to-all framework which would fit absolute realism.
Today we are often told that the humanities no longer have a central place: academic education should offer students practical knowledge, applicable skills, and career-advancing tools, suitable for a technologically-saturated world—none of which the humanities seem to provide. Meanwhile, those who defend the humanities often resort to arguments about their general “usefulness” and productivity. Both sides of the debate rely on an “economized” worldview that regards the humanities in particular and academic work in general as means to an end—whether they support budget cutbacks in these disciplines or resist them. We thus seem to find ourselves in a double predicament: on the one hand, the cultural climate and economic conditions are such that deem the humanities irrelevant; on the other hand, the condition of the humanities is such that their defenders resort to arguments that stress their material utility—thereby paradoxically weakening the cultural relevance of these disciplines.

Our motivation goes deeper than an interest in “rescuing” these academic disciplines. It is rather based on the understanding that the humanities offer indispensable insights regarding human activity, knowledge, and the irreducible critical and normative dimension of both. Dismissing the unique perspective on knowledge provided by the humanities results in a series of epistemic and normative “deficits” that we are witnessing today: a view of knowledge as detached from the material, historical, and institutional contexts of its production; a view of academics as disconnected from the society in which they operate; and a view of human beings cut off from their webs of cultural interaction and negotiation.

The humanities have three essential characteristics that set them apart from other disciplines. First, they are relational vis-à-vis other disciplines: a second-order reflection on already-existing knowledges, practices, normative orders, etc. Second, they have an inherently “educational dimension,” in the sense that humanistic knowledge is not knowledge about objects, but a reflection on the meaning and significance of human practices; in a sense, a reflection on “who we are.” Third, humanities thereby have an inherently “political” dimension in the broad sense: not in the sense of serving an already-established position on current affairs, but in the sense of being an inherent examination of society’s own self-understanding and its idea of “the good life.” Taken together, we can regard the humanities as “the sciences of critique.”

At the same time, this inherently critical dimension of the humanities is in a state of crisis, where much of the critical spirit or potential of the humanities has dissipated. This appears to be result of both external and internal processes. External pressures—political, economic, cultural—relegate the humanities to the position of “esoteric knowledge” or “cultural enrichment,” thereby emptying them of any public significance. Part of this is the tendency to regard the notion of critique as external to humanistic knowledge-production or as “politically tainted.” Furthermore, the humanities suffer from two internal impasses. On the one hand, there is a...
tendency within the humanities themselves to assign critique to the cultural position of "resigned knowledge": a disengaged mode of inquiry that forfeits in advance any attempt to adopt an engaged public position. On the other hand, there is the tendency to insist on a rehearsal of enlightenment values—chief among them freedom and equality—in a manner that does not seem to come to terms with worrying contemporary developments. These include changes to the very idea of citizenship in the post-welfare-state era; the changing relation between the economic and the political spheres; transformations in the very perception of knowledge and in the cultural position of the universities; the idea of public debate and its relation to global digital media, and more.

Many among the current generation of our graduate students and junior scholars view the 2011 global wave of social protests as a paradigmatic test-case of the failure of the humanities to reclaim this critical function. Although those academic interventions that did take place did seem to succeed in pointing out the shortcomings of current government policies, and analyzing their failures and costs, they appeared to reach an impasse when trying to integrate these into a comprehensive critical viewpoint. We believe this impasse resulted from the inability to pose reflexive questions about disciplinary discourses and boundaries, and thereby to critically reevaluate such fundamental concepts as state, democracy, representation, economics, citizenship, justice, rights, profit, welfare, and so on.

In light of this “impasse diagnosis,” we find it important to re-investigate, in an explicit, direct manner, this inherently critical dimension of the humanities. We understand the task not so much in terms of uncovering this critical dimension, but as placing it at the forefront, and of re-thinking the channels through which it is delivered—from the classroom to the journal, the newspaper, and the (real and virtual) public sphere. Our methodology is to map and compare what we refer to as “models of critique”: critique in both its epistemological and normative sense; critical practices employed by different humanistic disciplines; critique of the humanities vis-à-vis other disciplines on the one hand, and other cultural fields on the other; conceptions of the relationship between the academy and the public sphere; the image of the intellectual as critic, and more.
will conclude this essay with a broader question: what are the
ways in which Yizhar’s 1948-time might inform Hebrew literature
as a whole? Or in other words, what would the history of Hebrew
literature look like if we conceptualized it from the vantage point of
1948-time? It should have become clear that such a history would
not be that of Israeli literature. In 1948-time, to which we now return
(only to find that we’ve never quite left it), Israel is not—or perhaps is
no longer and maybe never has been—a stable, naturalized,
sovereign national space, a space whose literary history one could
track and write. Nor is “Israeli literature” there to allow a
representative Israeli voice—and the same is true of an “Israeli
collectivity,” about which such literature would be written, to be
consumed by its national readers. The texts written by “the most
important Israeli writer in Israeli literature” can attest to that; and if
that is the case with the most Israeli of all, there are surely other
twentieth- and twenty-first-century Hebrew literary texts that could
escape the category of “Israeli literature.”

Walter Benjamin formulates the principles of an antihistoricist and
nonnationalist historiography that would open in the contemporary
moment of the historian as it is transformed into a new temporality—
the Jetztzeit, the time-of-the-now. This temporal domain becomes
a place of recognizability (Erkennbarkeit) for all past moments:
there, the present recognizes the image of the past as one of its
own, in a spatial constellation where past moments gain their full
signification and are for the first time entirely “citable,” indeed,
“readable.” I would therefore suggest that the return of 1948-time
in Israel/Palestine calls for a speculative historiography along the
lines suggested by Benjamin, which would begin with 1948 as
its Jetztzeit. In this essay I have stressed how Yizhar’s speculative
temporality becomes readable through our (and his own)
1948-Jetztzeit—how reading Yizhar’s work from 1948-time reveals
its melancholic, nonpresent, antinovelistic textuality, together with
the unfocalized voice it circulates and the a-national collectivity it
envisioned.

But a further study of Hebrew literature and 1948 could reveal how
1948 itself challenges some of the presuppositions structuring not
only Yizhar’s work but also Hebrew literature as such: the speculative
temporality of 1948 calls into question the historicist tendency with
regards to Hebrew literature (moving uninterruptedly from past
to present, while also passing through the year 1948), its linear-
teleological developmental narrative (from a sacred, textual Hebrew
to a vernacular, daily one), and finally its tight relations to national,
statist, and historically based discourse. To think radically about
Hebrew literature and 1948 means not to view the two components
of this compound as discrete categories. Rather, 1948 itself
potentially transforms Hebrew literature as a whole.
In her discussion of evil in Origins of Totalitarianism Arendt's mistake was to think that Nazi evil was radical, and that it was radical because it made millions of people superfluous. Writing her report on the Eichmann's trial she came to understand that in order to account for Nazi evil she needed to revise first not Nazism itself but the common concept of evil. Evil in itself, she came to understand, cannot be radical. Rootless evil cannot be understood as a “tree-like” phenomenon—deeply rooted, binary, vertical, and hierarchical. It cannot be radical because its numerous roots are all on the surface. Evil is therefore a rhizomatic phenomenon… From this follows the assertion that evil is built into the political structure and interwoven with its other elements, just like the space for freedom allowed by the regime or the modes of control and domination necessary for its perpetuation. Rhizomatic evil can spread anywhere, and anyone can be engulfed by it. If evil is rhizomatic, its extremity is a matter of continuum. The moment in which the individual is required to break that continuum by open resistance or tacit desertion manifests itself as an urgent existential question.

Moreover, that decisive moment raises a vital theoretical question: how does one recognize the accumulating outcome of this rhizomatic evil and on what basis does one draw the boundary between cooperation and inaction? If evil is produced and distributed rhizomatically, regimes could be distinguished from each other in the manners in which the rhizome is shaped, in its patterns of expansion—to various geographical regions, to different groups, races, and classes, in its density, and in the measures taken to restrain its expansion.

Rhizomatic thinking requires continuums and refuses simple binary oppositions between victims and perpetrators. It is always more difficult and more dangerous, and arouses anxiety and anger. No wonder that her argument was indigestible for the victims of the Nazi regime. Naturally, it was also rejected by the victims’ descendants and representatives, who began to profit from taking the victim position. It is that anxiety and anger that Arendt failed to understand, even when she recognizes the State of Israel’s instrumental use of the Holocaust. At the time, Arendt could not see how that instrumentality became a part of a new political order and of the Israeli regime’s own rhizomatic distribution of evil. She could not see how the taboo on the comparison between Nazi evil and everything else soon to be enforced by the Israeli culture generated by the Israeli regime would become part of that same rhizome, contributing to the production and distribution of evil. Adopting Arendt’s rhizomatic conception of evil we are better equipped to grasp the grey zones in which we are placed and face rhizomatic evil when it is spreading among us and within us.
When refugees are more or less protected, only their right to live is recognized, not their right to belong. They may be allowed to struggle for their right to migrate to another country, but they will be ignored if they insist on fantasizing about a world without states, or at least a world in which one can choose between belonging to a state and opting for some other form of political association. Whosoever dares to dream of such a world, whether refugee or citizen, is regarded as an anarchist, or – worse - as childish and naïve, or even delirious – as if the state were the only possible form of power. Yet the division of the old world into states was completed only in the nineteenth century and of the entire world - only in the second half of the twentieth, following the dissolution of the global colonial order and the establishment of “nation-states” in Africa and Asia. Since then, every single human settlement belongs to a state and every newborn is made to belong to “his” country as it is defined by his state (just as he is born into his family, religion or language). When entertaining the notion of a world without states is portrayed as childish or delusional, the ideological role of the image of the state is clearly exposed: in order for the state to appear as a real and inevitable fact, as something that is taken for granted, any challenge to its inevitability or questioning of its facticity must be represented as a type of insanity. •
Biological thinking about heredity and evolution is undergoing a revolutionary change. What is emerging is a new synthesis, which challenges the gene-centered version of neo-Darwinism that has dominated biological thought for the last fifty years. The conceptual changes that are taking place are based on knowledge from almost all branches of biology, but our focus in this book will be on heredity. We will be arguing that there is more to heredity than genes:

• some hereditary variations are nonrandom in origin;
• some acquired information is inherited;
• evolutionary change can result from instruction as well as selection.

These statements may sound heretical to anyone who has been taught the usual version of Darwin’s theory of evolution, which is that adaptation occurs through natural selection of chance genetic variations. Nevertheless, they are firmly grounded on new data as well as on new ideas. Molecular biology has shown that many of the old assumptions about the genetic system, which is the basis of present-day neo-Darwinian theory, are incorrect. It has also shown that cells can transmit information to daughter cells through non-DNA (epigenetic) inheritance. This means that all organisms have at least two systems of heredity. In addition, many animals transmit information to others by behavioral means, which gives them a third heredity system. And we humans have a fourth, because symbol-based inheritance, particularly language, plays a substantial role in our evolution. It is therefore quite wrong to think about heredity and evolution solely in terms of the genetic system. Epigenetic, behavioral, and symbolic inheritance also provide variation on which natural selection can act. When all four inheritance systems and the interactions between them are taken into account, a very different view of Darwinian evolution emerges. . . . By adopting a four-dimensional perspective, it is possible to construct a far richer and more sophisticated theory of evolution, where the gene is not the sole focus of natural selection.
The notion of physical system requires philosophical reexamination. Debates regarding the nature of physical systems do not have a clear account of how parts of systems retain their identities and what relates the properties of the parts to the properties of the whole. Part of the difficulty in understanding items from a long habit of disguising assumptions about physical structure in various “calculational” devices or “laws of nature,” which forms a significant part of our physical knowledge. A law of nature is most commonly interpreted as a rule that governs the behavior of objects. Laws of nature are interpreted as governing how a particle or a field evolves over time. But I argue that momentum and energy conservation laws implicitly encode assumptions about the structure of physical systems, i.e., they implicitly encode rules for constructing the description of composite systems from descriptions of their parts. To further current discussions about the nature of physical systems, I will take on the task of bringing to the foreground the structural assumptions implicit in momentum and energy conservation laws. Moreover, I will argue that the assumptions regarding the structure of physical systems are more fundamental than spacetime structure, the existence of material properties such as mass, and laws of nature. Much of the work will consist of reconstructing Newton’s physics and the Special Theory of Relativity using the notion of physical system as a philosophical guide.
The political lexicon project, over and above its unique contribution to research in political philosophy, serves as a unique hotbed for critical thinking in the university. Almost no other department provides infrastructure for a sustained group effort in engaged, politically relevant intellectual work, and none does so in the traditions of critical theory, continental philosophy, literary and cultural theory, and through close association with intellectual history. In fact, most university units discourage this kind of activity due to two related reasons. First, because it interferes with an existing division of labor within the humanities and between the humanities and the social sciences. Second, because it undermines the attempt to make the university “free of politics” in the perverted sense that celebrates a narrow model of scholarly expertise: a model that presents such experts as non-political, while deeming any form of critique that problematizes the dominant ideology, which is perceived as common sense, as being itself political. Whereas the public sphere allows more and more expressions of sheer racism and violence against the most vulnerable tranches of the population, the Israeli Academia has suffered in the past few years from a growing climate of fear, intimidation and self-censorship. In fact, scholars, particularly young ones, are expected to refrain from thinking about the current reality or the future of Israel and Palestine, about the conflict, the occupation, human rights, citizenship or poverty. Today it is well known in the Israeli Academia that if one wishes to receive tenure and achieve professional success, one should avoid taking a public stance about “sensitive” or debated issues (and preferably about any public matter at all), and refrain from thinking or publishing about anything that is tightly related to the profound political and social questions that are at stake in Israel. In this political climate it is no wonder that many of the activities of the Lexicon project and the fellows affiliated with it are often attacked by politicians, right-wing activists and journalists, whose recent impact on narrowing the space open for free academic exchange and research in Israel (and for critical political discourse in general) cannot be underestimated. Due to these unique circumstances, the first task of the Political lexicon project should be to withstand this kind of negative forces and maintain and expand its reach by providing resources to students interested in engaged and critical political theory.
The call to give up on rationality is premature. The proponents of rationality did not argue that humans are immune to error and bias. Rationality is an ideal, intended to guide action and conversation. For this reason it is also impossible to understand rationality by studying individuals: Rationality is deeply social. In fact, it is the social nature of rationality that makes it possible to combine errors of individuals to produce conclusions that are not erroneous, even if these conclusions are neither final nor impervious to further debate. The move from divergent emotional responses to rational discussion is what enables conversation, without which democratic society is impossible. In my view, these distinctions are also critical if we want to understand the evolution of the human mind. Biology should not disregard human rationality. •
The bible story of the deluge is an odd one. What kind of God has one come up with, who, only a few chapters after the glorious account of creation felt coerced to change his mind and compelled to eradicate most of humankind. And even if humanity had to be punished for their sinfulness – what was the animals’ crime? Animals which after all were still as what they had been created: pure nature? This must also have crossed the minds of those who authored the Bible. For whereas Noah and his kin as the only righteous members of their kind were retained as generic samples of the human race, the animals, not endowed with morality and thus incapable of sin, were at least saved pair wise, two specimens of each species and genus. In the renowned painting of the deluge by Gustav Doré, the hierarchy of innocence as visible shortly before cataclysm is symbolically preserved as it is: Next to a summit of a rock, washed around by the rising flood, figures of two drowning parents stretch, in a last effort to haul up their children on the towering stone, trying to save them from the calamity. The moribund children populate the summit—and next to them, surmounting all, a tigress tends her offspring. A captivating image: In the face of uppermost danger, approaching death, animal and men seem, penned up as they are, not noticing each other, reconciled. The “hostility”, caused by the civilising formation – the subjugation of animals by man, their persecution, killing and utilisation – is extinguished momentarily in view of the biblically approaching final solution: The human mother still reaching for her children while drowning herself and the mother animal carrying its offspring between its jaws are “united” in approaching death as it is. Is it so? No, certainly not. The civilisation which formed after the deluge will have learned nothing from this God-caused natural disaster. Instead they will rid themselves of God by degree, initiate man himself as the murderous God and progress for so long as it takes to bring the industrialised extermination of man and animal to its cultural barbaric perfection. One should divide between animal and man at all cost? Should one? When did this high-handedly argued separation ever prevented mankind from butchering one another “as if they were animals”? While still witnessing the bloody raging battle of the revolution, Rosa Luxemburg, envisioning the true reconciliation between man and nature, between man and animal, knew to say: “The most ruthless revolutionary energy and the most wide-hearted humanity, this alone is the true breath of socialism. A world must be overthrown, but every tear, that is shed, although it could be wiped off, is an accusation; and someone who, while rushing to fulfil an important deed, crushes a worm in raw carelessness, commits a crime.” •
In recent years two seemingly conflicting trends can be discerned in the discourse of citizenship in Israel, leading to an apparent inconsistency in the measures taken by the Israeli state organs towards its Palestinian citizens. On the one hand, there is a distinct increase in demographic discourse that views the very existence of a Palestinian population in Israel as a problem, even as an imminent threat to the state of Israel, and proposals advocating a population swap have become legitimate in public discourse. As a result, we are currently witnessing a conspicuous increase in bills aiming to put a serious question mark over the status of the Palestinians in Israel as full-fledged citizens. On the other hand, the state is simultaneously promoting a new law designed to establish and institutionalize civic service. As it stands now this platform offers Palestinian citizens (but not only them) the chance to perform a two-year term of civic service in a designated public institution in place of the mandatory military service usually required by law. Those who choose this course are entitled, upon completion of the service, to the same rights and benefits granted to those who serve in the army. In order to advance this option, the government has established a special body titled “The Administration of National and Civic Service” for the coordination and supervision of this project. This council explains the aims of the new civic service project in civic terms, as a means for allowing the Palestinian citizens to serve their community, and apparently offers a new path of inclusion for the Palestinian citizens of Israel.

At first glance it seems that this move stands in stark opposition to the first tendency described above: while the state is trying to get rid of its Palestinian citizens, or at least to put substantial limitations on their civic rights, it is simultaneously offering them an alternative path towards citizenship. How are we to understand this duality? Is there a true contradiction here, or is something else happening? •
Two partners approached the Rabbi to adjudicate their argument. The Rabbi listened to the first and ruled: “You are right.” Then the second told his story, whereupon the Rabbi ruled again: “You are right.” The synagogue beadle questioned the Rabbi: “Rabbi, how can you possibly tell both of them that they are right?!” The Rabbi thought for a minute and then determined: “You too are right!” The anecdote comprises the relevant conditions upon which a discussion over a disagreement qualifies as a “controversy” in the sense intended here: Both views must have a reasonable claim to truth; they should be mutually exclusive and there should be a reasonable expectation to reconcile them within a more comprehensive view and yet retain their opposition.

Moreover, the conduct of the controversy, the exchange of arguments, must itself make sense. I therefore understand “scientific controversy” as a promising exchange of arguments over a scientific disagreement that cannot be readily resolved by the means at hand. Thus, if there is or seems to be a way to resolve the disagreement by some available information, or if there exists a recognized method to generate this information, be it by observation, measurement, experiment or inference, then the discussion should not count as a controversy. A disagreement becomes a controversy because it cannot be resolved by the standard ways of the profession involved. On the other hand, the conduct of the controversy must promise to enhance understanding. Thus controversies over issues which on principle are not open to rational conviction are ruled out. (“De gustibus non est disputandum” is a prominent, but by far not the sole example.) This limitation restricts the concept of “controversy”, but I believe that it proves productive as an analytic tool.

Numbers are present in so many aspects of our day-to-day life that we take their presence for granted. But this situation is by no means an inevitable law of nature. Rather it is the result of a very specific, long, convoluted and multilayered historical process. A very important turning point in this process came in the seventeenth century, in the framework of what is typically known as the “scientific revolution.” Developments in disciplines such as the science of mechanics during this period turned them into all-out mathematical branches, in opposition to what was the case in the Aristotelian tradition that had dominated European intellectual life since the late scholastic period around the fourteenth century. The dominant ideal of explanation of natural phenomena before the seventeenth century did not encourage (and indeed sometimes actively opposed) the search for mathematically formulated laws of nature. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the role of numbers became increasingly central in natural science as well as in other aspects of knowledge and day-to-day life. These kinds of significant transformations that affected the role of numbers in society throughout history have attracted the attention of historians, and, indeed, many educated audiences are well aware of them to various degrees of detail. What is less recognizable at first sight, and has typically escaped the attention of those same audiences, is that even the very idea of what is a number and how it is used within mathematics has itself been at the focus of a more circumscribed yet no less long and complex process of debate, evolution and continuous modification.

Controversy

GIDEON FREUDENTHAL

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A Brief History of Numbers

LEO CORRY

Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 2-3
My analysis seeks to lessen the tension between two ways of experiencing nature. On one view, science presents an objective picture, one that has been obtained by a stark separation of subject and object. The contrasting vision, the one characterized by contemporary science studies and indebted to the romantics, understands science as melding various ways of knowing and drawing from many reservoirs of cultural influences. Each perspective accepts that science offers a unique way of depicting reality, but the former admits no subjective elements into its process, while the latter argues that the subjective remains constitutive to the scientific endeavor at every level.... [S]cience began with the desire to master nature coupled to probing the wonder of nature’s mysteries for human understanding. This latter metaphysical pursuit often remains obscured by the technical triumphs of modern science. I wish to remind that this dual agenda has always guided the scientific enterprise .... I am committed to placing science within the humanistic context from which it originated. In that placement, my interpretation unlocks the interplay between science as an epistemology and science as part of a metaphysical construction of reality. By appreciating the wide reach of sociology of knowledge, we achieve a deeper comprehension of the scientific enterprise. Science and the Quest for Meaning thus presents a description of science from two vantage points: the instrumental and the humanistic. These are not necessarily opposing, or even in competition, but rather complementary. To disregard the original humanistic role of science distorts its character. By acknowledging the wonder of nature and a search for meaning as crucial sources of scientific imagination, we uncover a richer and more comprehensive picture of modern science. This older piece of the story, forgotten or too often ignored, finds its rightful place here...
For Freud, science, with its claims to certainty and truth, offered at least a partial means of addressing (and perhaps providing an answer) to the dilemma of how the world might be understood. … Freud rejected a false choice—knowledge or romance, science or narrative—and instead presented a synthesis. Both modes of experience are crucial in fulfilling his quest for psychic reality. The “ethics” of understanding drives the quest to know. This moral venture of “seeing”—one developed, exercised, and pursued—becomes an act of self-actualization, an act of self-definition. Psychoanalytic knowledge obviously remains in the employ of that agenda, so Freud’s own notion of science belied the more profound purpose of self-knowledge. On this view, scientific knowledge was in the employ of this deeper moral agenda. … Thus the epistemological and ethical components of Freud’s theory must be scrutinized separately and then put back together into a moral epistemology. Psychoanalysis joins these two domains in a complex dialectic, where the standing of knowledge depends on the fixture of values arising from, and responding to, human need. Indeed, psychoanalytic facts become elements in a narrative created by a constellation of subjective interpretations, and in this sense, Freud offered the analysand the opportunity to create his or her own narrative—an autobiography based upon return, recognition, and reconciliation. Thus the rigid separation of facts and values collapses on the analytic couch, for no psychic fact exists independent of its interpretation. According to this perspective, Freud fits within the orbit of those who sought a more inclusive epistemology than championed by the positivists, for in the larger philosophical context of his time, he practiced a form of investigation in which the subject-object divide, formed in radical opposition, was countered with an attempt to integrate human nature in terms of human value… [Thus] on the one hand, Freud sought to establish a science of the mind, and on the other hand, psychoanalysis directs itself towards its ethical mandate, one that is inseparable from the epistemology that drives it. This integrative project rests at the foundation of Freud’s ambitions.
In a certain sense, all science, every scientific argument or procedure, has an ideal—and if you wish, fictional—aspect to it. It is the ultimate justification why the historian of science ought to distinguish between ideals and actual arguments and then detect the former in the latter. •

Theology and the Scientific Imagination: From the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century

AMOS FUNKENSTEIN

Princeton University Press,
Consciousness and memory can only be realized by an individual who acts, is aware, and remembers. Just as a nation cannot eat or dance, neither can it speak or remember. Remembering is a mental act, and therefore it is absolutely and completely personal.
Instead of reducing psychoanalytic discourse to only one of its dimensions, as so many other Freud commentators have done, I seek to show not only that hermeneutics and mechanics are inevitably intertwined in Freud’s work, but also that his attempt to achieve such a fusion led him to adopt a plethora of political metaphors and analogies—which I regard as constitutive and structuring, rather than illustrative and embellishing… By revealing the politics in Freud’s discourse, I seek to make three interrelated arguments: first, I contend that rather than contradictory and inconsistent, Freud’s discourse is internally complex but coherent. Second, I maintain that a political reading of Freud not only captures both its complexity and coherence, but is also more fruitful, comprehensive, parsimonious, consistent and cogent than reductionist presentations that turn him either into a natural scientist of the mind or into a hermeneutician. Third, I claim that the politics of race, class and gender are intrinsic to Freud’s discourse and cannot be severed from it.
Suspicion is intrinsic to the discourse on trauma because of the precarious nature of claims of chronic traumatization, combined with the possibility of substantial gain from traumatic suffering in terms of money, power, or status. In developing and applying etiologic and diagnostic models of trauma, medical practitioners have been guided by their suspicions as much as by scientific reasoning. To a large extent, therefore, the history of the discourse on trauma is the history of such suspicions and the various social bodies, groups, and individuals on which they have been cast. To grasp the nature of the suspicions involved and the targets toward which they have been directed at various stages of this history, we need to know with what social and political groups, values and institutions the trauma experts identify. … If they identify with dominant social groups, state institutions, the military, corporations, or insurance companies, they will promote trauma models that are based on and foster suspicion of individuals who might seek illicit gain by pretending to be traumatized. If they identify with groups whom they regard as especially vulnerable, exploited, or situated in the lower ranks of society, such as workers, women, and soldiers, they will promote trauma models that allay suspicions against ostensible victims, even though some of them, such as Vietnam veterans, may simultaneously have been perpetrators of crimes. Instead, they will stress the moral responsibility and legal liability of dominant groups, large-scale institutions, corporations, and society at large (through its representative bodies, such as legislative assemblies and the courts) toward actual or potential victims.
Science is best understood when the impulse to demarcate it from other creative human endeavors is resisted rather than emphasized. Science is best conceived of, taught and cultivated as a very human endeavor, employing the very same sort of rationality or rational behavior as many other realms of reflective human activity. This idea has taken root enough so that it no longer seems strange to imagine that a baseball player working methodically to improve his swing, a cellist to improve her fingering, a poet to improve a verse, or a mechanic to fix a car are all doing a pretty good job of employing the same rationality that is common to all efforts to solve problems. It is hard for us to see how they, at least once we understand the collection of their self-conscious actions as rational ones, do not show that their own portrayal of their protagonist was as rational as that of the researcher mixing batch after batch of experimental vaccine. It no longer seems strange to think that when scientists act rationally to disclose and solve their problems, they act much like people in other fields and fields and that the problems they act on are very different in their content and in their solutions. It still seems strange, however, to conceive of those who framed the central formative texts of the Judaic tradition as acting the same way. This is because many of these texts are taken as authoritative dictates. A close reading of these texts will show that their own portrayal of their protagonists were as rational as that of the researcher mixing batches of vaccine, and that their own rationality was directed toward exposing and solving the sorts of problems that they faced.

From their very inception, all three monotheistic faith traditions interacted with each other constantly – reacting to the (mostly distorted) images they formed of each other, and mutually informed by the mostly unconscious transfer of hermeneutical, theological, liturgical and legal content across interreligious divides, by virtue of effective go-betweens and/or shared mediating languages. The three religions engaged each other at all times and all levels of religious life, to the extent that it is impossible to understand any significant moment in the life of any one of them without taking into consideration the subtle give and take the community under study was conducting with the other two, much of the time unknowingly. This requires that they be studied under the same roof by experts of each working in collaborative dialogue with one another. And in view of its complexity, it is a project no university can properly undertake alone.
here is something intensely alluring, and sinister too, in writing about the Galileo affair. The wish to solve the riddle plays against the consciousness that it may be insoluble… My long-term involvement with the affair has only increased my anxieties in the face of those difficulties. They have not, however, eroded my belief that though we may never know “how it really happened”, we should abide by the duty to understand the kind of thing that could have happened… The story of a necessary, inevitable, immanent clash of science and religion has long passed beyond the boundaries of historical research to become one of the formative myths of modern science. Underlying this myth was the idea of a conflict between darkness and light, between reason and unreason… It is characteristic of myths that they force the imagination to use and abuse them in its attempts to fashion cultural identities. The story of Galileo is no exception to this familiar pattern… Primarily, the “clash” is an organizing concept, the basis for a narrative that has become a much too forceful explanatory model… An alternative narrative may be suggested, which would make possible an equally true and no less interesting account of the dialogue of Galileo and the church in the seventeenth century.

Galileo and the Church: Political Inquisition or Critical Dialogue?

RIVKA FELDHAY

Cambridge University Press, 1995
The situation is particularly scandalous in the history of ancient and medieval mathematics. It is in truth deplorable and sad when a student of ancient or medieval culture and ideas must familiarize himself first with the notions and operations of modern mathematics in order to grasp the meaning and intent of modern commentators dealing with ancient and medieval mathematical texts. With very few and notable exceptions, Whig history is history in the domain of the history of mathematics; indeed, it is still, largely speaking, the standard, acceptable, respectable, ‘normal’ kind of history, continuing to appear in professional journals and scholarly monographs. It is the way to write the history of mathematics. And since this is the case, one is faced with the awkward predicament of having to learn the language, techniques, and ways of expression of the modern mathematician (typically the manufacturer of ‘historical’ studies) if one is interested in the historical exegesis of pre-modern mathematics; for it is in fact that the representative audience of the mathematician fathering ‘historical’ studies consists of historians (or people identifying themselves as historians) rather than mathematicians. The latter look condescendingly upon their (usually older) colleagues in their new and somewhat strange hypostasis which seems to indicate to the working mathematician an implicit, but public, confession of professional (i.e., mathematical) impotence.

This brings us naturally to Geometrical Algebra. What exactly is it? To put it bluntly, but accurately, it is the view that Greek geometry, at least in its fundamental, operational aspects, is nothing but algebra in disguise. Whenever we feel, with our mathematical instincts, that something looks awkward geometrically, despite its clear-cut outward appearance, it is because it is algebra in disguise. Why does algebra need the geometrical garb? This is not at all clear and the various attempts at an answer strike us as incoherent on different levels. They amount to the view that, after the discovery of the “irrational” by the Pythagoreans, algebra could appear only in geometrical apparel, for the sake of rigor. We are not told where Greek algebra was before that fateful discovery, nor is the secret divulged to the curious student under what attire, if any, it was hiding, then, in pre-lapsarian days, nor, needless to say, are we informed adequately about the narrowly specific reasons for the change of toilet and for the specific garments interchanged.
Most scientific research is, so to say, “mundane”; it is painstaking labor that requires much time, effort, study, skill, and indeed ingenuity, but it rarely involves revolutionary path-breaking, fundamental issues of Nature and her behavior or the attention of a wide audience and the concomitant glamor. The adjective “mundane” in this context should imply neither dullness nor diminution. Creativity and originality come out of this kind of research not less than from the more glorious studies. The daily basis on which much scientific work is carried out makes it neither less important nor less creative. Romantic notions of the isolated genius who exposes the great secrets of Nature by revelation, like the legendary story of Archimedes jumping out of the bath, are not confirmed by detailed studies. Despite what might sometimes be thought, mundane science can be an intriguing intellectual and practical enterprise, which, like the more glamorous stories in the history of science, involves among other things originality, surprises, and controversies. •

The Beginnings of Piezoelectricity: A Study in Mundane Physics

SHAUL KATZIR


From Territory / 2010
When Lamarck had reached the limits of then prevalent modes and models of explanation of living nature, he transferred the model of progress, which could be found not only in the actual writing of prominent contemporary figures such as Turgot and Condorcet, but also under various guises and in odd combinations in the then contemporary public festivals, political speeches and orations, pamphlets, drafts for regulations, laws and constitutions. It was part and parcel of the administrative discourse, as well as of the political-cultural programs and projects for reforming and reshaping social, cultural and scientific institutions, the society at large and every individual in it. This was a model which by virtue of combining time, genealogy and causality could provide a better description and analysis of processes of emergence—of emergence of complexity and of complex organizations—which Lamarck came to see as the principal feature of the living entities. •

Interactions between Social and Biological Thinking: The Case of Lamarck

SNAIT B. GISSIS

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Spencer declared himself an “individualist” in matters political. Nevertheless, his basic evolutionary unit in *Principles of Sociology* was the collectivity, presented as a special kind of individual. By deploying the analogy to the individual biological organism, Spencer allowed the social collectivity in its interrelations to become epistemologically real, observable, perceivable and accessible. … In all fields Spencer held a hybrid notion of individuality, which could be viewed either as “collective individuality” or as “collectivity of individuals.” Spencer’s use of this hybrid category allowed him to use either individuals or hybrid individuals or collectivities in the role of the “organism” within his basic frame of analysis, and thus stretch both the extension of the model and the extension of possible interactions. This fitted well with his agenda in the *Principles of Ethics* to explicate the deep roots of human morality through evolution, i.e. through a reconstruction of the history of evolvement of living entities as an evolutionary development of moral actions, starting with lower life forms and ending with humans. In all the fields in which he theorized, Spencer made explicit his underlying assumption that it was conceptually impossible to separate and isolate individuality from collectivity. And this conceptual impossibility is crucial for understanding his totalizing endeavor.
The Council for Higher Education (CHE) Law was passed in Israel in 1958. Its aim was to mediate between the State and the institutions for higher education, and to anchor these relations in legislation. The law stipulates that: “a recognized institution is free to manage its own academic and administrative affairs as it sees fit, within the framework of its budget.” This law was preceded by years of heated disputes in the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) and repeated rejections of bills. The main bone of contention focused on the relative weight of two central and contradicting interests perceived by contemporaries: the “reign of academic freedom,” in the words of the Minister of Education of the time, Ben-Zion Dinaburg (who later changed his name to Dinur); and the desire to recruit the academia and its research programs for the needs of the young, recently established state. “Academic freedom,” wrote Dinaburg, “[…] has taught [our] generation to stand opposite reality, and to make the effort, independently and courageously, to observe it, to research it and to lift its veils of mystery—disregarding prevalent opinions and various prejudices”. Dinaburg spoke in the spirit of Kant and the eighteenth century Enlightenment, presupposing the idea that the autonomous faculties of reason and personal conscience are the undisputed foundations of academic activity. According to Kant: “The university would have a certain autonomy (since only scholars can pass judgment on scholars as such) […]. It is absolutely essential that the learned community at the university also contain a faculty that is independent of the government’s command with regard to its teachings. […] For without a faculty of this kind, the truth would not come to light (and this would be to the government’s own detriment); but reason is by its nature free and admits of no command to hold something as true.” Dinaburg, in accordance with Kant, emphasized the critical function of the academia and its objective: to put prejudice and common beliefs under the scrutiny of reason and conscience.

On the other hand, Dinaburg strove to recruit science for the needs of the state. Statements in this vein were made by Knesset members, who referred to “the unity between science and work in the colonizing-pioneering existence of the state during its first decades”. Following the discussions around the Council of Higher Education law during the fifties is a convenient point of departure for reflecting on the twisted ways, the gaps and ambiguities that have led to the crystallization of the norm that guides the relationship of academia and political power in Israel. The deep shift in the relation of the government to academic freedom from 2003 on, will then be demonstrated by analyzing a series of violations of academic freedom culminating in Netanyahu’s banishing a senior professor who had signed a petition against violation of international law on the West Bank thirteen years before, from a scientists’ meeting which he himself organized. Here is the public reaction of Professor Emeritus Itamar Even Zohar to the event: “Will the next step be to close down Tel Aviv Humanities Center? Or perhaps, to send the head of the Center for re-education in a camp in the Negev?”
To study the relationship between religion and liberalism is to study the dynamics between an absolute system of revealed and obligating knowledge — that aspires to be expressed in the inner realm of the private consciousness as well as in the outer interpersonal and public sphere—and a functional and neutral political system. The conflict is inevitable: while some religious individuals, or communities, oppose liberal politics and epistemology and lead a religious life that is in an active or passive struggle with liberalism’s principles and reality, others will strive to develop theoretical and practical mechanisms which allow them to maintain an Orthodox point of view while adapting to the liberal way of life.

One of the mechanisms that facilitate such a choice, i.e. to regulate and perhaps even to merge the two worlds, can be described as a project of compartmentalization - of liberalism, or in our case of liberal knowledge. Its characteristics and ways of function can be understood via the metaphor of skin, or membrane – a selective barrier that allows some things to pass through but stops others. Thus, while in biology the degree of selectivity of a membrane depends, for example, on the membrane’s pore size; we ask what configures selectivity in the case of the encounter between religion and liberalism. How do we decide what gets transferred and absorbed and what doesn’t? What determines when the existence and integrity of the basic structure is in danger?

A possible pattern that can be useful in thinking about these questions is the context of tradition, transmission and canon. For through them we might think of the challenge of internal and external knowledge not as a study of two static bodies of data that collide, but as a study of movement which creates living, active bodies of knowledge with constantly changing limits and borders between in and out; past-present and future; relevant and non-relevant; holy and secular-neutral (and maybe even profane). •
The world is complex and messy and always has been. Yet, the great idea of the Enlightenment in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries was to create knowledge in all areas, as if this were not the case – as if the world were predictable, context independent, coherent, linear and as if – in the end – all knowledge would be reducible to a few, universal formulae. Moreover, the Enlightenment was committed to the belief that there is strict compatibility between the world of nature and the world of human society, the ‘cosmos’ and the ‘polis’, called by some scholars the “cosmopolis”. As a result of this daring assumption an unprecedented richness of knowledge was created in the natural sciences, the social sciences and in the humanities.

Yet, this Enlightenment program began to break down in the twentieth century where more and more new knowledge was created that made clear that the world is not linear, not coherent, not free from contradictions, not reducible to a few formulae and context-dependent. It became increasingly clear that the cherished universals of the Enlightenment were actually local, Western universals.

Thus in our opinion we need no less than a ‘New Enlightenment’ based on the principle “from local universalism to global contextualism”. It must find its expression in higher education curricula, as the university is the only social institution established for the purposes of creating new knowledge and passing it on to future generations.
have become more and more convinced that the deepest political and social factor that motivates much of Israeli society in its relations with the Palestinians is not personal frustration, but rather a profound existential “Angst” fed by a particular interpretation of the lessons of the Holocaust and the readiness to believe that the whole world is against us, and that we are the eternal victim. In this ancient belief, shared by so many today, I see the tragic and paradoxical victory of Hitler.
The Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Ideas

There exists no space, at least in the modern meaning of the term, in an Aristotelian voidless ‘closed universe’, made of physical bodies, materially containing each other. In such a cosmos the only possible spatial discourse is provided by scientiae mediae such as mathematical astronomy and optics. However, besides the mathematization of cosmic hierarchy there is the possibility of its theologization. Here the mythical figure of angels plays an important role. None of our scholastic thinkers believes in any kind of void space, neither within nor beyond the universe. In spite of this, immaterial creatures like angels and other forms of separate substances, and the immaterial causality they produce, present the opportunity to discuss the hypothetical and realistic possibilities of divine, immaterial, hence ‘empty’ spaces.

**Divine Space and the Space of the Divine: On the Scholastic Rejection of Arab Cosmology**

Yossef Schwartz

In the thirteenth century, Paris became a laboratory for experimentation with power, where the political, religious, and scholarly elite began to develop institutional means of exercising authority. As a result, Paris became not only the most prominent European intellectual center of that time, but also the most organized, centralized, and scrutinized. This study analyzes the Talmud Trial and related events in Paris during the 1240s to describe the forms of control that became possible once intellectual restrictions and censorship traversed their academic boundaries and became integrated with clerical and political power. Such synchronized pressures … became commonplace in the early fourteenth century … and continued well into the early modern period. … I present a twofold argument: first, that the triumvirate of monarchic, papal, and academic authority—normally identified as an early fourteenth-century political development—was already operative in the mid-thirteenth century, at least in the context of the Talmud Trial; and second, that a nuanced understanding of this trial must incorporate the perspective of this shared exercise of authority.

Authority, Control and Conflict in Thirteenth-Century Paris: Contextualizing the Talmud Trial

YOSSEF SCHWARTZ

Why should economists read Charles Dickens? His genius in monetary affairs is found in his insight into the traumatic nature of possessing money. The “monetary” characters of Dickens do not simply possess money but strictly speaking are possessed by it. They are possessed by their possessions, experiencing them as a source of an overwhelming influence. This insight should not be read in psychological terms but as a genuine insight into economic ontology. In this respect, Dickens can be read as complementary to Marx. What Dickens suggests is that money is the pure form of property precisely because it carries to an extreme the element of in-ownership that is essential to property.

One of the best portrayals of this aspect is found in David Copperfield in the coupling of Mr. And Mrs. Micawber, on one side, and Barkis, the cart driver, on the other. The Micawbers lavishly spend money that they don’t have. They extravagantly spend the money that they expect to receive after the success of their latest economic initiative, which eventually and invariably fails. Barkis, on the other hand, has gathered a “heap of money” without such colorful schemes but simply through years of thrift, and he keeps it under his bed in a closed box that he pretends is full of coats and trousers. These two approaches to money should not be seen simply as opposites.

Recalling again how Simmel brings together avarice and extravagance, we should see these approaches as mirror images, two complementary positions in reference to money: not spending the money one has and spending the money one does not have.

These two positions can be seen as the two extreme forms of the enjoyment of money. Naturally, one can also buy pleasurable things with the money one has but, strictly speaking, this would not be an enjoyment of money. To use Keynes’s words, in this case money is only “a means to the enjoyments and realities of life.”

Following Simmel we can also understand why, in his strange way, Barkis, in contrast to Dickens’s portrayals of capitalists, is an affectionate figure. He is the true generous character in the plot, not only because he goes against his nature and, with the aid of ridiculous masquerades and presumably through immense spiritual efforts, takes money out of the box to give to Copperfield, but also because it is his will that resolves the plot, including the Micawbers’ ongoing predicaments. It is, paradoxically, a generous will, an act of generosity beyond death.

However, the symmetry between Barkis and the Micawbers should also be described in terms of the ontology of money. Rephrasing this ontology in terms of everyday experience, we can speculate that the fantasies about things we can do with money are related to the reality of money more than the actual things we do with money (which is another way of explaining how money is worth more than anything money can buy). This calls for conceiving of the reality of money as intertwining presence and absence. The money that is absent (as is the money the Micawbers spend) is somehow much more vivid and visible, much more present, than is the dull money that actually exists (Barkis’s money).
A form of absence informs Barkis’s relation to his money. To enjoy it, Barkis imagines it gone. Thus, when Copperfield visits him during his illness as he lays half paralyzed by his severe rheumatics, Barkis raises with great effort a stick attached to the side of his bed and pokes at the money box:

“Old clothes,” said Mr. Barkis.
“Oh!” said I.
“I wish it was Money, sir,” said Mr. Barkis.
“I wish it was, indeed,” said I.
“But it AIN’T,” said Mr. Barkis, opening both his eyes as wide as he possibly could.

This should not be read simply as a decoy. Copperfield is very well aware of the contents of the box. And if he doesn’t yet know, Barkis has surely drawn his attention to it. The gesture should rather be read literally as Barkis’s true relation to his own money: he wishes it was money. It is a manifestation of the manner his own money is somehow placed beyond his reach.

It is this element of grotesque display that gradually, through his illness, takes hold of Barkis’s whole being. When he is no longer fully aware of the presence of other people around him, he clings to this one gesture. That is how we see him, in the sentimental scene of his deathbed, as he is surrounded by the people he loved:

He was lying with his head and shoulders out of bed, in an uncomfortable attitude, half resting on the box which had cost him so much pain and trouble. I learned, that, when he was past creeping out of bed to open it, and past assuring himself of its safety by means of the divining rod I had seen him use, he had required to have it placed on the chair at the bedside, where he had ever since embraced it, night and day. His arm lay on it now. Time and the world were slipping from beneath him, but the box was there; and the last words he had uttered were (in an explanatory tone) "Old clothes!"

In standard economic terms, this as an extremely pathological relation to money. Yet there is a certain logic to it that can be described in simple formal terms: money that is not recognized by others is not money; therefore, Barkis’s efforts to hide his money from others turn it into a worthless object, no more valuable than old clothes. His obsession of hiding his money puts his money beyond his own reach.

A theoretical parallel is found in Marx’s "Comments on James Mill." Analyzing money as an extreme form of private property, Marx concludes in a statement that fully recapitulates Barkis’s position: "We ourselves are excluded from true property because our property excludes other men." Why does private property exclude its proprietor? In a society of private property, Marx writes, what a man produces is aimed at other men. It is produced to be exchanged with other men’s products—what a man produces is actually his other’s desire.

This statement can be seen as a basic condition of private property when it is conceived as a social relation. If we theoretically...
distinguish between possession, true property, as the direct relation to a thing—the enjoyments and direct uses afforded by it—and ownership as social institution, then what Marx notes is that ownership must include an element that is alien to possession, an element that is alien to the direct experience of the thing.

It is in this sense that money can be seen as the pinnacle of private property. What it carries to an extreme is precisely this element of exclusion, of not yours, that is essential to private property. Money is the extreme form of ownership because it has no other quality but ownership, yet as an extreme form of private property, it has nothing truly private in it: it is completely meaningless as a private object. Money embodies the element of dispossession inherent in private property. This observation proves useful for outlining how desire for money is inscribed back on things. Patek Philippe’s advertising slogan for its super-expensive watches pronounces this quite explicitly: You never actually own a Patek Philippe. You merely look after it for the next generation. This slogan is not addressed to the masses, who cannot afford a $20,000 watch, but at the people who might actually buy it. Strangely enough, what it tells them is even if you buy it, it will not be actually yours. It is in this sense that the watch can be seen as an object carrying the mark of money, an object that embodies wealth.
There is a camera at the airport’s gate. Often, it is left unnoticed, but if one is asked she would probably know to say it is there. Many of us are by now familiar with such cameras and various security apparatuses that are installed in public spaces — airports, streets, pubs, train stations, shopping malls, or elevators. Most of the readers of this book are probably also familiar with the many critiques of the growing expansion of such mechanisms, their uses and abuses. But what does the camera monitor? Some cameras today can identify faces (to match the profile of a runaway), body heat (to trigger an alert when detecting an anxious — and thus presumably a suspicious — person) or logos of cars (to identify the economic status of a person, in order to prompt the appropriate advertising on a billboard). But the vast majority of security apparatuses today monitor movement.

These security apparatuses are based on algorithms that analyze the data accumulated via a variety of sensors. The algorithms are used, first, to identify regular patterns of movement and then to flag movements that deviate from this identified norm. The norm thus becomes a pattern of movement deduced from sets of natural and social phenomena. Once established, every deviation from this norm is defined as a problem or a potential threat. We therefore have “normal” and “abnormal” movements: the movements of airport travelers (and the airplanes themselves), of the business people or shoppers in their daily routines, of subway passengers; but also the movements of those who seek to kill them or themselves (suicides...
on railways are apparently a major economic hazard for transit companies); to steal, or perhaps simply to reside in a nonresidential space of movement (homeless people whose presence is undesired by municipal, governmental, and economical authorities). The first (normal) movement is to be maximized; the second (abnormal movement), to be eliminated, or at least minimized.

Monitoring movement began as a solution for a technical difficulty: the need to separate an object from its background. A security threat is often imagined as an object (usually a bag that is an index for the bomb presumably hidden within it). Yet while the human eye can identify objects, the first learning algorithms could not. Like primitive brains, they could only see movement. Objects could thus be identified by these algorithms only once they moved, were moved, or stopped moving. Hence, questions had to be revised: suspicion could not be ascribed to objects but to the irregular movements that brought them to their suspicious location. This was the technological requisite that placed movement at the forefront of contemporary security apparatuses. However, we will see that the tie between the two — movement and security — has a long history. Whereas these surveillance technologies undoubtedly create new desires for regulation and reframe old questions, the regulation of movement was the object of political desires at least since Plato. This book sets to trace these desires, as well as the different — and differentiated — bodies they seek to capture, but also produce and shape in this process. It is a book about movement — about motion, locomotion, and mobility as physical phenomena, images, myths, and figures, and first and foremost about movement as an axis of difference.

The story of these technologies, however, does not end here, with a pervasive regulation of movement that is founded on parting normal from abnormal patterns of movement or modes of being in space. Irregular movements are, after all, quite common, and these systems therefore trigger alerts constantly. So the question had to shift again. “The question is no longer how to identify the suspicious bag,” said a CEO of a large security company whom I interviewed for this project. “Rather, the question is how to stop evacuating the airport every other week.” The objective was accordingly altered: neither identifying a suspicious object nor detecting suspicious movements, but securing the regular movement of goods, passengers, and airplanes. “Bombs don’t go off that often,” he remarked, “so it makes no sense to stop the activity of the airport so frequently for this statistically negligible chance.” This may bring to mind the attribute of liberal security/biopolitical regimes identified by Foucault: an integration of threats — albeit minimized — into the normal order of movement. This integration rests on the assumption that any attempt to completely eliminate threats would bring to a stop the circulation of things and people whose furtherance is perceived as the most essential goal of politics. Movement is the order of things.
What is the New Enlightenment? The New Enlightenment is the realization that all knowledge is contextual.
Individuality, the Impossible Project: Psychoanalysis and Self-Creation

CARLO STRENGER


I am proposing an existential and therapeutic perspective based on solidarity between members of a species who find themselves in an impossible plight. We have evolved through a process of biological evolution, which had nothing to do with happiness, individuation or living a worthwhile life, but with the propagation of genes. Nature tricks us into seeking action and excitement in order to keep us from starving – and it makes us seek safety because it wants us to survive. It goads us into attaching ourselves to members of the other sex in order to perpetuate the species – but it leaves males with the desire to impregnate as many females as possible, and females with the desire to find more powerful males than the ones they are presently bonded to. To make the mess complete, our brains have evolved to the point where we can ask questions about justice, beauty and truth, and about what kind of life we should be living.

The development of Western civilization has opened up the vista of a society of free individuals who are more or less secure in the most vital needs, and more or less safe from the ravages of nature and other human beings. We have gained the freedom to ask loftier questions: what is the good life, and how can we live it? Then, alas, we find out that we are singularly badly equipped to live lives of fulfillment and happiness. Our phylogenetic inheritance is not suited for civilized life, as Freud argued long ago. Nevertheless, we cannot help asking larger questions, and we strive for a life of goodness, beauty and fulfillment. Given this degree of complexity, it is not surprising that the project of living a life experienced as worthwhile often fails. If anything, it is surprising that it partially succeeds as often as it does. The solidarity we might develop is that of fellow travelers stuck in an impossible situation, with tools inadequate for the tasks at hand, with nowhere to go, and with the knowledge that the situation will never change.
According to the Western tradition, whereby Greek works are supplied with Latin titles, it would be preferable to call Plato’s second longest dialogue Civitas than retain the misnomer Res Publica. However, Western tradition has imposed upon this work the latter title, and the abbreviation Resp. should remain the accepted denotation for the dialogue in reference to it. This said, the dialogue is about a commonwealth per se, for which reason I refer in this philosophical analysis to Politeia. The term, as already noted, does refer to the constitution of a city, but in this dialogue the political constitutions are used as analogies for constitutions of the soul.
The philosopher accepts the truth as it is and not by allegory as the prophet does. The philosopher therefore is ranked above the prophet, since the intellectual knowledge is loftier than that produced in the imaginative power.