

Judith Butler on Eichmann in Jerusalem

The Hannah Arendt Lecture in Modern Jewish Thought has developed into one of the Centre's most successful events on campus. Whilst Seyla Benhabib attracted 350 students in 2010, this year the American philosopher and public intellectual Judith Butler delivered an inspiring lecture on 'Arendt, Cohabitation, and the Dispersion of Sovereignty' to a packed audience of enthusiastic students from departments across the university. The lecture was followed by a very stimulating discussion. The CGJS sees this success as further encouragement to continue giving Sussex students the opportunity to encounter prominent speakers in different areas of Jewish political thought and philosophy.

In contrast to Seyla Benhabib, who had focused on the concept of human rights arising from Arendt's famous reports on the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1962, Judith Butler devoted her reflections to the social and political implications of thinking as expressed in Arendt's book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.

As Butler pointed out, Arendt did not mean to speak in the name of a nation or religion but in the name of 'the heterogeneous plurality that we are'. She famously criticized the way the Israeli legal authorities used him for their own national aspirations and focused her main attention on what the Eichmann case could teach about the concept of collective guilt under specific historical circumstances as well as about the role of individual responsibility under dictatorship.

Challenged by Arendt's problematic ideas about the 'banality of evil', historians have sometimes overlooked her sharp philosophical critique of Eichmann's failure to think independently that led to his prominent role in the Nazi genocide. Whilst Eichmann

claimed that his obedience to Nazi authority was derived from a Kantian ethos, rephrasing the categorical imperative according to the Nazi principle: 'One should act in a way that the Führer would approve', Arendt emphasized that Kant's theory of judgment completely ruled out such blind obedience. Hence, Eichmann's crime, according to Arendt, was that, instead of thinking, judging or making use of practical reason, he deferred to a regime which attempted to eliminate an entire people from the earth. Thus he deserved the death penalty because he shared the Nazi conviction that Germany was entitled to determine with whom to share life on earth. 'Co-habitation' is a given characteristic of the human condition – Arendt calls this 'social plurality': by violating this, Eichmann inevitably accepted genocide, thus forfeiting his own life.

In her lecture, Judith Butler analysed Arendt's philosophical

'Jews and Revolutions' – Conference in Jerusalem

What is the link between political and social continuity, radical change and the Jewish People? Did the fact that many Jews throughout history took part in revolutions have something to do with their ethnic or religious identities? Was it a response to their experience as a discriminated minority in Europe, or was it a historical tradition? These are only some of the questions that will be discussed at the conference.

The conference is part of the 'Jews and Revolutions' project, which is a collaboration between the Centre for German-Jewish Studies at the University of Sussex and the Martin Buber Chair in Jewish Thought and Philosophy at the University of Frankfurt.

New Research on German and Central European Zionism

Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, 'Lavater and Lessing Visit Moses Mendelssohn' (1856)

International research on the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) has been flourishing over the past few decades. We are all familiar with the idealistic image of the dialogue between Jewish and Christian thinkers, as represented in the painting by Moritz Oppenheim (see illustration). A more differentiated view has been provided by detailed studies devoted to different aspects of its intellectual development and cultural context and new interpretations regarding its diverse forms in Western and Eastern Europe. As one of the most productive areas of research on modern Jewish Thought and Culture, the study of the Haskalah has been dealt with in three international conferences during the past 15 years in Oxford (1994), Jerusalem (2000) and Wrocław (2006).

Since then research on the Haskalah has become further specialized and differentiated. On behalf of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies at Sussex and the Martin Buber Chair in Jewish Thought and Philosophy at the University of Frankfurt, Christian Wiese has organised a major Haskalah conference (in cooperation with Shmuel Feiner, Bar Ilan University, Israel) that will take place from 3-6 July 2011 at the Goethe University in Frankfurt. The conference will bring together prominent speakers from Israel, the USA, Germany, the Czech Republic and the UK in order to revisit the relationship between the modernization of European Jewry during the Enlightenment period and religion: How were Haskalah and tradition, Haskalah and Orthodoxy, Haskalah and Hasidism, Haskalah and secular philosophy related to each other? How did Jewish Enlightenment in uence the emergence of Jewish nationalism during the 19th century? Instead of focusing mainly on Germany, the conference will explore the Haskalah in other regions of Europe, particularly France, England, the Netherlands, Italy, Poland, Lithuania and Russia. In addition, the conference will centre around questions regarding gender, languages and literatures associated with the Jewish Enlightenment (including Hebrew in the later East European Haskalah) as well as the relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish Enlightenment(s).

Publications, Conference Papers and News

Speaking at Sussex about his research on the experiences of Jewish Refugees in the United Kingdom, Anthony Grenville summarized the findings of his recent book *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain 1933-1970: Their Image in AJR Information*. On the basis of his systematic study of the journal, he highlighted a number of significant points.

First, the refugees should not be seen as passive recipients of treatment handed out by the British

Forthcoming Workshops, Lectures and Events

Conferences and workshops

29 May – 1 June 2011

Young Scholars' Workshop in Beer Sheva on 'New Research on German and Central European Zionism' (in cooperation with Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Beer Sheva and the Martin Buber Chair in Jewish Thought and Philosophy at the University of Frankfurt).

3-6 July 2011

4th International Conference on Jewish Enlightenment: Haskalah and Religion (in cooperation with the Martin Buber Chair in Jewish Thought and Philosophy at the University of Frankfurt and Bar Ilan University). The conference will take place in the Casino-Building on the Westend-Campus at the Goethe-University, Frankfurt.

6-10 July 2011

The third annual Max and Hilde Kochmann Summer School for PhD students in Jewish History, Culture and Thought will take place at the Goethe-University in Frankfurt am Main. 20 students from Europe, Israel and the USA will be given the opportunity to discuss their research projects with Prof. Christian Wiese, Prof. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Berlin) and Prof. Andreas Gotzmann (Erfurt).

Lectures

Thursday 12 May 2011

Dr. Nicolas Berg (Simon Dubnow Institute Leipzig) 'On Modern Jews and Jewish Modernity: Political Economy and its Interpretation of Capitalism (1900-1930)' (in cooperation with the History Department Work in Progress Seminar and the Centre for Modern European Cultural History)

4.00 pm, University of Sussex, Arts A 155
All welcome, booking not required

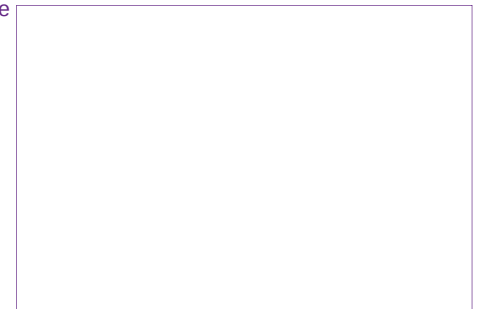
Monday 23 May 2011

Prof Oren Kosansky (Portland, Oregon), Jewish Life in Morocco (Joint lecture series with Kings College on 'Jewish Communities in Contemporary Europe and Beyond', co-organised by Prof. Christian Wiese and Dr Andrea Schatz)

5.30 pm, Kings College, London, Strand Campus, Council Room (please ask for directions at the reception desk in the main entrance) – booking not required

On Sunday 22 May 2011, the University of Sussex campus will be the venue for a Day Limmud that promises an exceptionally stimulating programme of talks and activities. Speakers will include the Director of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies, Professor Christian Wiese, whose subject will be 'The Dignity of Powerlessness: Leo Baeck's Spiritual Resistance to the Nazi Regime'. Astrid Zajdband, doctoral student at the Centre for German-Jewish Studies will speak on 'German Rabbis in British Exile during and after the Nazi Period'. Those interested in inter-faith dialogue will have an opportunity to hear from Fiyaz Mughal, the Founder and Director of 'Faith Matters', an organization that works for conflict resolution between Muslim and Jewish communities in the UK. Fiyaz and Donald Franklin, author of Groups in Conflict, will relate their 22-year experience in setting up the 1990-1995

Taking up the Torch



Edward Timms admiring the Centre for German-Jewish Studies plaque, unveiled by University Chancellor Lord Attenborough in January 2000 (illustration from Taking up the Torch)

Readers of this newsletter are likely to encounter old friends in the memoirs of Edward Timms, Taking up the Torch: English Institutions, German Dialectics and Multicultural Commitments, published by Sussex Academic Press. This copiously illustrated new book documents the formative experiences of a pioneering teacher and researcher in the field of German and Austrian Jewish culture and politics. The narrative relates the shaping of self to the drift of history in a period of radical social change, extending from the refugee crisis caused by Hitler's seizure of power through the ordeals of the Second World War to post-war reconstruction, the radical reforms of the 1960s and the transformation of Britain into a modern multicultural society.

There is a special focus on educational institutions from Anglican schooling through Cambridge and other academic environments to the new map of learning at the University of Sussex. The 'Torch' in the title alludes to the transmission of a radical intellectual tradition and to a specific commitment to the vision of Die Fackel, the satirical journal edited by Karl Kraus in Vienna from 1899 to 1936. From this emerged the innovative agenda developed by the Centre for German-Jewish Studies with the encouragement of successive Sussex Vice-Chancellors and of Richard Attenborough as university Chancellor (see illustration above).

This publication, which marks the fiftieth anniversary of the University of Sussex, is priced at £55 in hardback. However, a limited edition paperback of Taking up the Torch is available to Friends of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies at £25 (including postage and packing). To order a copy, please contact Diana Franklin (contact details on this page). Relicphi Philosophy222 in tPsejo

Discounts on publications associated with the Centre

Publications by researchers at the Centre for German-Jewish Studies may be purchased at a discount by Friends of the Centre.

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