

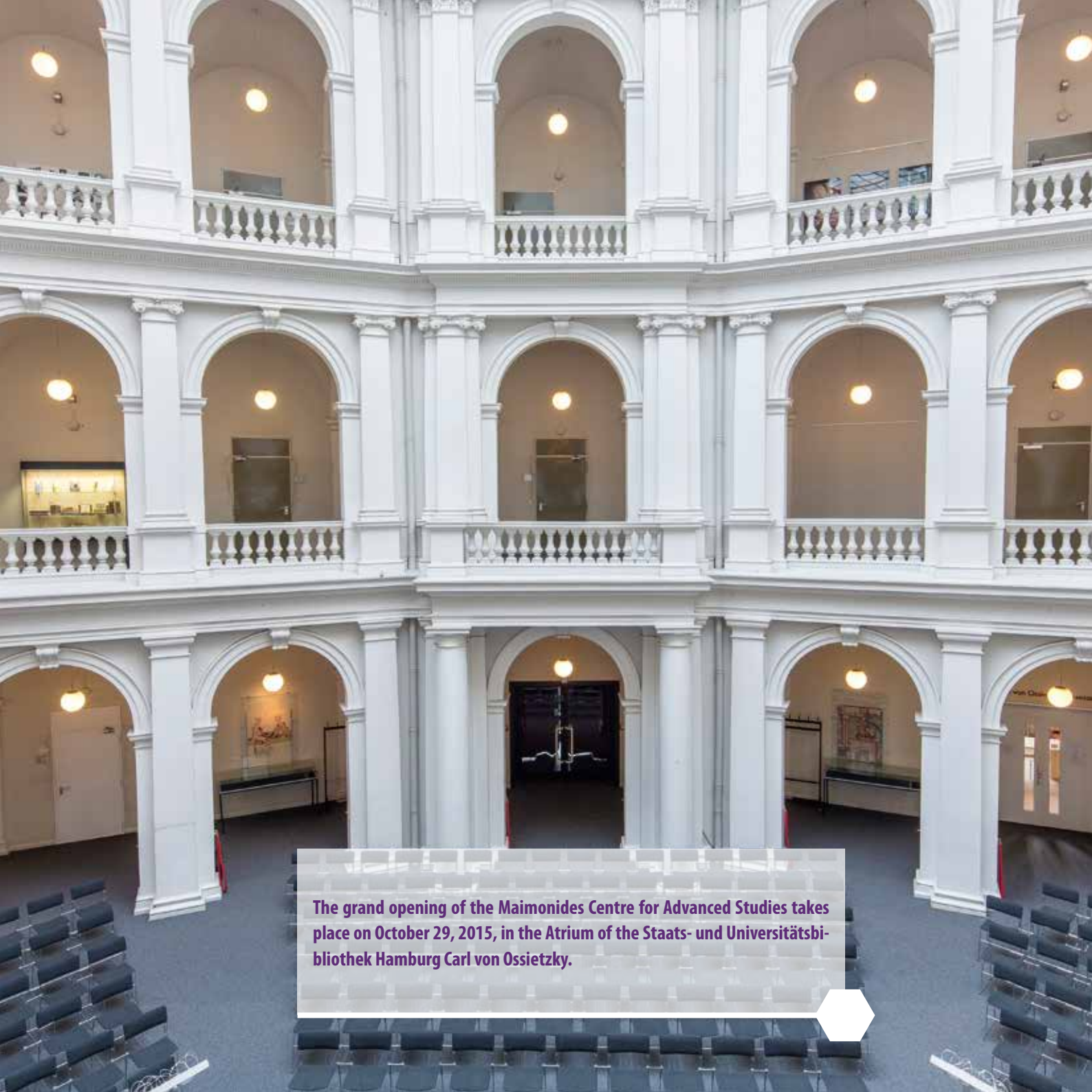
אחד עשר עשרים

**MAIMONIDES CENTRE
FOR ADVANCED STUDIES
– JEWISH SCEPTICISM**



**MAIMONIDES
CENTRE FOR
ADVANCED
STUDIES
JEWISH
SCEPTICISM**

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The grand opening of the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies takes place on October 29, 2015, in the Atrium of the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky.

When speaking about Jewish scepticism, I often like to begin with a story from the Babylonian Talmud which illustrates the Rabbinic approach to authority.

Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua were discussing a problem in Jewish law, a halakhic problem. After delivering many arguments in favour of his own legal interpretation, Rabbi Eliezer invoked the authority of Heaven. To this Rabbi Joshua exclaimed 'It is not in Heaven!'. According to Rabbi Joshua there was no need to pay heed to a heavenly voice, since the Jewish written law, the Torah, had been given at Mount Sinai. And since it was God himself who had written the Torah, 'after the majority must one incline'. And how did God react to Rabbi Joshua's argument, according to the Rabbinic tradition? He laughed and said: 'My sons have defeated Me, My sons have defeated Me'.

Autonomy is at the basis of the process of interpreting a text. In this process, dialogue and questions are essential, as explained in the parable about the four children from the Passover Haggadah: the wise son, the wicked son, the simple one, and the one who does not know how to ask questions.

The ability to ask the right question stands at the beginning of the continual interpretation and discussion of a text. It thus enhances an ongoing intergenerational dialogue based on a dialectic of questions and answers which is the epitome of Jewish scepticism. At its core there is the idea that authority can always be challenged by human reason, and more often than not – by wit and skill.

This vision is at the core of the Maimonides Centre we are launching today, conceived as a forum where scholars and students can discuss their research and their questions about Jewish philosophy and religion, in a space especially conceived for this purpose.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) for the generous funding that has made this Centre possible. I would also like to thank my Research Associates who have worked towards the realisation of this project with unremitting dedication.

Giuseppe Veltri
Hamburg, October 29, 2015

MAIMONIDES CENTRE FOR

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The central aim of the Maimonides Centre is the exploration and research of scepticism in Judaism in its dual manifestation: as a purely philosophical tradition and as a more general expression of sceptical strategies, concepts, and cultural attitudes. Scepticism is understood here as an enquiry of the 'perpetual student' who harbours doubts about different dimensions and systems of secular or revealed knowledge, calling authority as such into question. Scepticism does not represent an intellectual or theoretical worldview, but rather an attitude that provides a basis for numerous and diverse phenomena. Scepticism addresses fundamental processes and categorisations in Jewish philosophy, religion, literature, and society. More specifically, the term scepticism is applied to expressions of social deviance from, and conformity with, political structures. It is also applied to systems of governance, when responding to and being in exchange with adjacent cultures.

Scholars at the Centre will benefit from comparative perspectives, gaining new insights into Western philosophy and culture and their inherent connections to texts and manifestations of Eastern cultures and thought. This will be essential to mapping the transcultural dimensions of this barely explored field of research.

The Maimonides Centre is designed to offer outstanding conditions for research and for a fertile exchange of ideas. The successful creation of an inspiring atmosphere, favouring original research based on continuous dialogue, will depend on the establishment of an interconnected academic community of scholars. Experts from many different fields will gather in Hamburg in order to develop innovative approaches and methods.

Our senior and junior fellowship programmes will give internationally established scholars and aspiring junior researchers the opportunity to spend time in Hamburg – for shorter or more extended visits. Both fellowship programmes have been designed with the aim of creating a school of learning, a place where senior and junior scholars can closely collaborate – similar to the ancient 'academies'.



Research undertaken at the Centre will complement and strengthen already existing research structures at the Universität Hamburg. In such a rich collaborative context it will become possible to explore the history of ideas, concepts, paradigms and structures of thinking in European philosophy, to which much Jewish thought substantially belongs, and also in the philosophy of Non-European cultures. Particular attention will be devoted to the Early Modern period, a core research field at the Universität Hamburg. Humanist and Early Modern Europe, a period of rediscovery and reinterpretation of early scepticism, can be seen as an era offering a host of incentives for the exchange of ideas and concepts. Structures of sceptical thinking left a lasting impact on Philosophy, Religion, the Sciences and the Arts of subsequent centuries.



The Maimonides Centre is found at Schlüterstraße 51, 20146 Hamburg.

MAIMONIDES CENTRE FOR

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees will monitor the activities of the Maimonides Centre. Part of the tasks of the Board of Trustees will be a bi-annual evaluation of the Centre, to assist in monitoring the quality of its work.

CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg

represented by the Second Mayor and Senator for Science, Research and Gender Equality, Ms. Katharina Fegebank

Universität Hamburg

represented by the Vice-President, Prof. Dr. Susanne Rupp

Akademie der Wissenschaften in Hamburg

represented by the President, Prof. Dr.-Ing. habil. Prof. E.h. Edwin J. Kreuzer

Prof. Dr. Anthony Grafton

Princeton University

Prof. Dr. Sabine Schmidtke

Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton

Prof. Dr. Josef Stern

University of Chicago

Prof. Dr. Edith Franke

Philipps-Universität Marburg

Erck Rickmers

E.R. Schifffahrt GmbH

ADVISORY BOARD

The Advisory Board is comprised of six distinguished senior scholars from the Universität Hamburg. They will supervise the activities of the Maimonides Centre in the areas of research and development and thereby ensure the operation of the research group. Members of the Advisory Board and the Directors of the Centre are jointly responsible for the annual research programme and the selection and invitation of Fellows.

CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

Prof. Dr. Katajun Amirpur

Professor of Islamic Studies and Deputy Head of the Academy for World Religions

Prof. Dr. Michael Friedrich

Professor of Chinese Studies at the Asien-Afrika-Institut and Speaker of the Centre for Manuscript Cultures in Asia, Africa and Europe

Prof. Dr. Margit Kern

Professor of Art History at the Department of Cultural Studies

Prof. Dr. Ingrid Lohmann

Professor for Intellectual and Social History of Education

Prof. Dr. Benjamin Schnieder

Professor for Theoretical Philosophy

Prof. Dr. Johann Anselm Steiger

Professor for Protestant Church History and Speaker of the Graduate School *Interconfessionality in the Early Modern Period*

SCIENTIFIC LEADERSHIP

DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRE PROF. DR. PROF. H.C. GIUSEPPE VELTRI

Giuseppe Veltri was appointed professor at the newly established Institut für Jüdische Philosophie und Religion at the Universität Hamburg in April 2014. From 1997-2014 he held the chair of Jewish Studies at the Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg.

His research interests are the religion of ancient Judaism, Medieval philosophy, the culture and philosophy of the Renaissance and Early Modern period, and the Science of Judaism. Giuseppe Veltri has devoted much of his research to the study of Renaissance philosophy and religious views. He raised funds from the DFG in order to translate and publish the philosophical sermons of Yehudah Moscato and organized several conferences and symposia on Jewish intellectual life during the Early Modern period, in Italy and elsewhere. Giuseppe Veltri also headed another DFG-funded research project about this period – the preparation of an edition of the works of Simone Luzzatto.

In January 2013, Giuseppe Veltri was elected corresponding member of the Accademia Pontaniana, Naples, and in February 2014 ordinary member of the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz.

Giuseppe Veltri publishes monographs and articles in a number of languages. His most recent publications are *Mirror of Rabbinic Hermeneutics. Studies in Religion, Magic, and Language Theory in Ancient Judaism* (De Gruyter 2015) and *Language of Conformity and Dissent: On the Imaginative Grammar of Jewish Intellectuals in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Academic Studies Press 2013).



JUNIOR PROFESSOR DR. RACHELI HALIVA

Racheli Haliva is Junior Professor and one of the Co-Directors at the Centre. She will be in Hamburg from December 2015. She earned her PhD at McGill University in Montréal, Canada in 2015. Her dissertation entitled 'Isaac Polqar – A Jewish Philosopher or a Philosopher and a Jew? A Study of the Relationship between Philosophy and Religion in Isaac Polqar's *'Ezer ha-Dat* ('In Support of the Religion') and *Teshuvat Apikoros* ('A Response to the Heretic')' was completed under the supervision of Prof. Carlos Fraenkel and Prof. Lawrence Kaplan. She is currently preparing a book based on her dissertation.

Her main interests are Jewish Averroism, Medieval Jewish and Islamic philosophy, Political philosophy, Philosophy of religion, and Jewish converts in the Middle Ages.

At the Centre, Racheli Haliva will be focusing on scepticism in Medieval Jewish philosophy. She will concentrate on the Jewish Averroist School which attempted to reconcile Ibn Rushd's confident rationalism with Maimonides' scepticism and the principles of Judaism.



RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

DR. ANNA LISSA

Anna Lissa has been a Research Associate at the Centre since September 2015. She earned her PhD in 'Cultura storico-giuridica ed architettonica in età moderna e contemporanea nell'area mediterranea', at the Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II in co-tutorship with the Université Paris 8. Between 2011-2014 she was a Research Associate at the Seminar für Judaistik, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, and between 2014-2015 a Research Associate at the Institut für Jüdische Philosophie und Religion at the Universität Hamburg.

Originally an expert on Modern Hebrew literature, Anna Lissa has extended her field of research to Jewish culture and philosophy and to the history of ideas. Her investigations are currently focused on Jewish philosophy of the Renaissance and Early Modern period in Italy.

She has cooperated with Giuseppe Veltri and Paola Ferruta in preparing an Italian edition of Simone Luzzatto's works (*Scritti politici e filosofici di Simone Luzzatto, rabbino e filosofo nella Venezia del Seicento*) and has published an essay about Luzzatto's philosophical scepticism and political appraisal of men and of the Jewish people. She is currently preparing an annotated English edition of Luzzatto's *Discorso*.



DR. DES. FELIX PAPHENHAGEN

Felix Papenhagen has been a Research Associate at the Centre since March 2015. He studied Jewish Studies and European Ethnology in Freiburg im Breisgau. His M.A. thesis examined the life and work of the Israeli singer-songwriter Meir Ariel (1942-1999).

His PhD research, a qualitative study of the 'new wave' of Jewish religiosity in Israeli popular music, was undertaken at the interdisciplinary Graduate School *Religious Non-Conformism and Cultural Dynamics* at Universität Leipzig. A book publication is forthcoming. Felix Papenhagen's research interests are: the modern reception of traditional Jewish texts, Jewish religion in Israeli popular culture and music, everyday culture, studies of stereotypes, minorities and regionalism, psycho-analysis.



RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

DR. BILL REBIGER

Bill Rebiger has been a Research Associate at the Centre since March 2015. He earned his PhD at the Freie Universität Berlin in 2004 with a dissertation on *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim* ('Book of the Magical Use of Psalms').

His research interests are Jewish mysticism, Kabbalah and Magic, Jewish Philosophy, Manuscripts and philological editions, History of Jewish Studies, and Jews in Berlin. He is the author of numerous books and articles on these subjects.

Between 1998-2015, Bill Rebiger was a Research Associate in the following DFG-funded research projects: *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, *Sefer ha-Razim – Buch der Geheimnisse*, *Übersetzung des Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Yohanan Alemanno*, and *Hebräische Einbandfragmente*.

He is currently engaged in research into the early opponents of the Kabbalah. He intends to collect, translate and discuss relevant texts written against the Kabbalah, and to collect claims and counter-arguments written by notable Kabbalists and their opponents. The results will be presented in a series of articles and eventually a monograph.



DR. MICHELA TORBIDONI

Michela Torbidoni has been a Research Associate at the Centre since October 2015. She studied at the University of Rome La Sapienza, where she earned her PhD with a dissertation on Spinoza's pantheism as mysticism in the context of neo-idealistic philosophy, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Irene Kajon.

Her areas of research are Early Modern Philosophy, Ancient and Modern Scepticism, as well as Jewish Scepticism.

Michela Torbidoni has spent one year at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales in Paris (INALCO) and was a Research Fellow at the Institute of Jewish Studies of Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, as member of the DFG-funded project *Werk und Wirkung des Rabbiners und Philosophen Simha (Simone) Luzzatto (1583?-1663)*. She is currently translating Luzzatto's *Socrate* from Italian into English, in order to prepare the first translated and commented edition of this philosophical work.



RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

MARIA WAZINSKI

Maria Wazinski is Scientific Coordinator and Research Associate at the Centre. Her research interests include political philosophy of the Middle Ages, Judaeo-Arabic and Judaeo-Persian as well as Middle Eastern politics and history.

Maria Wazinski studied at the Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg and Cairo University. She earned a B.A. in Middle Eastern Studies and Political Science and an M.A. in Arabic/Islamic Studies and Jewish Studies. Her 2014 M.A. thesis in the field of Iranian Studies is entitled 'The Jangal Movement as reflected in the newspaper "Jangal" and in the contemporary press: The Jangal Movement as portrayed by itself and by others'.

Maria Wazinski was a Research Associate in the DFG-funded PESHAT in Context project. She has been a Research Associate at the Centre since 2015 and is currently developing her PhD project.



DR. ROI BENBASSAT

**PREVIOUS AFFILIATION: INSTITUT FÜR VERGLEICHENDE ETHIK,
FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN**

Research Project:

Yeshayahu Leibowitz – Strict Orthodox Practice and Unbound Scepticism

October 2015 –
September 2016

**DR. ROI
BENBASSAT**

JUNIOR FELLOW

Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1903-1994) was a scientist and scholar of religious philosophy who wrote a book on Maimonides, among other publications. Roi Benbassat will explore Leibowitz's scepticism with regard to four interrelated themes: the legitimacy of scepticism in the Jewish religion, the conflict between religion and science, the moral status of Judaism, Judaism and 'the Jewish state'.

Yeshayahu Leibowitz's challenging insights and reservations with regard to religious knowledge has gained him a reputation as an iconoclast. According to his view, the institution of Halakhah alone defines the Jewish religion, namely its system of duties, whereas any other features of Judaism (beliefs in particular) are dismissible. Judaism is thus conceived of as a normative system, devotion to which is comparable to the commitment to a legal system. Leibowitz's sceptical attitude is outlined in various descriptions of his concept of religion. He suggests that Jewish faith is a volitional decision, not a rational one, and that it is in fundamental conflict with morality and humanism. He stresses that since God cannot be approached by our cognition, the assumption of his existence is not the basis of the authority of the Jewish law. On the contrary, the Torah is 'data preceding recognition of the Giver of the Torah'.

Roi Benbassat will provide a substantial contribution to the Centre's research in the form of academic articles, essays, or chapters in books.

CURRENT FELLOWS

PROF. DR. PAOLO L. BERNARDINI
PROFESSOR OF EARLY MODERN EUROPEAN HISTORY
INSUBRIA UNIVERSITY, COMO / ITALY

Research Project:

Jacob ben Amran, *Porta Veritatis* (1621). Towards a Critical Edition of a Clandestine and Sceptical Unpublished Latin Treatise

Paolo Bernardini will prepare a critical edition of the *Porta Veritatis*, a seventeenth century Latin manuscript with quotations in Hebrew. There is no printed version of this text, and the authorship of Jacob ben Amran still has yet to be established. The work might have been written in Venice between 1621 and 1634. It is contemporary with the writings of Rabbi Simone Luzzatto, who worked in a context where sceptical ideas were circulating, influencing Jews and Christians alike. Since the manuscript appeared and was passed on in the United Provinces before and during Spinoza's time, Spinoza may have been aware of it.

Some sceptical elements in the *Porta Veritatis* can be found in its textual criticism: there are empirical and rational arguments against the 'evidence' of the Gospel narrative, there is methodological doubt about a large number of ordinary as well as miraculous performances by Christ, and there are attacks on logical fallacies of some episodes in the Gospels.



**PROF. DR. PAOLO
L. BERNARDINI**

SENIOR FELLOW

October 2015 –
February 2016

DR. TERESA CALIGIURE
UNIVERSITY OF CALABRIA, ARCAVACATA / ITALY

Research Project:

A Case of Ethical Scepticism in the Fourteenth Century: Francesco Petrarca

Teresa Caligiure's research project will investigate the ancient sources of the sceptical attitude present in the philosophical and moral writings of Francesco Petrarca. The cultural debates around these sources, which were held between the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries, have greatly influenced the thinking of Humanism during the Renaissance in Italy and Europe. The appearance of a 'sceptical Petrarca' in his work, will not only touch upon the ethical individual, but also contextualise it with regard to the political situation in which he lived and worked.

This project will address the issue of scepticism in Petrarca's works, particularly in the *Secretum*, the *De ignorantia*, the preface to the second book of the *De remediis*, in some letters and other works. It is worth investigating how Petrarca retains Augustinian ideas, according to which doubt turns into dialogue between man and the truth. As is shown in Petrarca's controversial work *De ignorantia*, his point of view is polemically in contrast to the acceptance of Aristotelian principles and radical Averroism en vogue during his time.



**DR. TERESA
CALIGIURE**

SENIOR FELLOW

**February –
July 2016**

CURRENT FELLOWS

PROF. DR. YUVAL HARARI

**DEPARTMENT OF HEBREW LITERATURE, BEN GURION UNIVERSITY
OF THE NEGEV, BEER-SHEVA / ISRAEL**

Research Project:

Dream Enquiry: Theory and Praxis of Dreaming in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism

During his stay at the Maimonides Centre, Yuval Harari will work on his planned book about a branch of Jewish magic dealing with practices for manipulating dreams. The primary sources for his research are Jewish manuscripts of magic and practical Kabbalah, in which practices of dream magic are explicit and abundant. He also considers and includes halakhic, Kabbalistic and narrative sources. Both dreams and magic undermine the borderlines of nature and society and are in conflict with 'rational' interpretations of the human experience. Despite engendering scepticism and ridicule, they retained a strong hold on Jewish communities, East and West.

'Dream enquiry', which seems to have been a prevalent practice in the Medieval and Early Modern periods, is an especially interesting test case of this debate. Dream request, or better, dream enquiry, is the common pattern of magic dream divination in Jewish culture.

The most significant source for understanding this practice, the worldview in which it was anchored, and the criticism and disdain it raised, are the dozens of recipes for dream enquiry scattered in the broad and yet unexplored corpus of Jewish manuscripts of magic and practical Kabbalah from the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. Yuval Harari's research will focus first and foremost on this corpus aiming at a comprehensive survey of the phenomenon and its place in Jewish thought and action. The results will be published as a chapter of his planned monograph on Jewish dream magic.

July –
August 2016

**PROF. DR. YUVAL
HARARI**

SENIOR FELLOW

PROF. DR. MARIETTA HORSTER
PROFESSOR OF ANCIENT HISTORY, JOHANNES GUTENBERG-
UNIVERSITÄT, MAINZ

Research Project:

Fairness in Ancient Societies: Non-Philosophical Narratives about 'What One Deserves' in the Roman Imperial Period

The current research of Marietta Horster is part of a larger project (monograph and articles) concerning fairness in ancient societies: 'Distributive Justice and Equity in Greek and Roman Societies'. During her stay at the Centre, she will focus on narrative traditions in the Roman Imperial period. Accordingly she will investigate the intellectual culture of the Roman world and its discussion of the necessity, organisation, quality and consequences of distributive justice in society from an ideological point of view. The practical aspect of the project resides in the enquiry into the behavioral norms and patterns of various groups in the Roman world.

Aristotle explored the nature of particularistic justice which pertained to just distribution and retribution in accordance with merit. The Aristotelian claim is that only reason should guide judgements on equitable treatment. The subject 'distributive justice', an antique inquiry into the understanding of 'what one deserves', focuses on the negotiation processes at various levels of society. These can be adequate participation in decision-making, adequate access to resources and markets, adequate insights into the workings of government and the adequate opportunity to participate and stimulate (or even instigate) changes in societal ideology and cultural practices.

Various verbal and visual expressions of Eastern Mediterranean cultures within the Roman Empire thus present us with subtle but remarkable traces of scepticism. However, these sceptical tendencies hardly ever challenge the Roman entitlement to rule.

PROF. DR.
MARIETTA HORSTER

SENIOR FELLOW

April –
August 2016

CURRENT FELLOWS

PROF. DR. LAWRENCE KAPLAN
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR FOR RABBINICS, JEWISH LAW AND PHI-
LOSOPHY, MCGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTRÉAL/CANADA

Research Project:
Rabbi Yehudah Moscato's *Kol Yehudah*

Lawrence Kaplan's contribution will consist of two parts, an essay and an annotated translation.

The essay will be an elaboration on and defense of Yehudah Moscato's *Kol Yehudah*, an appraisal of Yehudah ha-Levi's treatise *Sefer ha-Kuzari*. Moscato lists what he views as the four key issues of the *Kuzari*: the People of Israel, the Land of Israel, the Temple, and the Torah. They are God's four *kinyanim*, and 'when they are joined together, the world is filled with light, joy, gladness, and honour'. Moscato, both in his description of the *Kuzari*'s five sections and in his commentary proper, seeks to show how these key issues structure all the sections throughout the text.

Given the great importance of Moscato's introduction to *Kol Yehudah*, the second and major part of the project will be a complete and fully annotated translation of that introduction. This project will complement Giuseppe Veltri's translation of Moscato's collection of sermons, *Nefutsot Yehudah*.



**PROF. DR. LAWRENCE
KAPLAN**

ASSOCIATE FELLOW

**March –
September 2016**

DR. REUVEN KIPERWASSER**PREVIOUS AFFILIATION: FRANKEL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED JUDAIC STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, ANN ARBOR/USA****Research Project:****The Sceptical Meditations of *Kohelet* (Ecclesiastes) in Rabbinic Midrash and the Embodiment of Scepticism in Rabbinic Narratives**

Reuven Kiperwasser will explore *Midrash Kohelet Rabbah*, which expounds the verses of *Kohelet*. In addition, he will scan other Rabbinic texts in order to discover the sceptical topoi in *Kohelet* exegesis not preserved in *Kohelet Rabbah*.

Ecclesiastes was accepted by the rabbis as a prophetic book composed by King Solomon. The tendency to treat components of a prophetic script with scepticism already appears in ancient Midrash. The rabbis inverted problematic verses of scepticism and the narrator's pessimistic point of view, and frequently interpreted them apologetically. This raises a question about Rabbinic culture: what kind of sceptical reasoning was appropriate for the rabbis and what function did it have within Rabbinic culture? These questions will be explored and the nature of this exegetical phenomenon and its theological background will be examined. The project aims to approach the cultural expressions of scepticism, manifested in Rabbinic exegetical narratives, based on the verses of Ecclesiastes as well as on other 'problematic' verses from wisdom literature.

A portrait of Dr. Reuven Kiperwasser, a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a dark red shirt. The portrait is set within a light green hexagonal frame.

**DR. REUVEN
KIPERWASSER**

SENIOR FELLOW

A dark green hexagon containing the text 'April – September 2016'.

**April –
September 2016**

CURRENT FELLOWS

PROF. DR. DAVID RUDERMAN
JOSEPH MEYERHOFF PROFESSOR OF MODERN JEWISH HISTORY,
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, PHILADELPHIA/USA

Research Project:

The London Missionary Alexander McCaul and his Assault on the Talmud

David Ruderman's research will focus on the London missionary Alexander McCaul, one of the primary leaders of the famous *London Society for the Promotion of Christianity amongst the Jews*, his assault on the Talmud, the very interesting converts he attracted, and the debate he engendered in the mid-nineteenth century with Jewish thinkers, especially Eastern-European *maskilim*.

The topic of scepticism insinuates itself into the project in the revival of the Jewish-Christian debate engendered by McCaul's attack on the Talmud and rabbis. Both sides use sceptical arguments to undermine the certainty of their opponent's positions. This of course is standard in all Jewish-Christian debates, but the present debate applies methods of modern scholarship in highly innovative ways, particularly by using historical arguments about ancient history and culture. After winning the loyalty of several Jewish intellectuals to his cause, several of them change their positions vis-à-vis the missionary of the London Society and offer a sceptical critique of the very foundations of Christianity, and its need to save the souls of Jews, by obliging them to relinquish Rabbinic Judaism. Their arguments are highly revealing when defining and redefining the implications of being a Christian and how Jews and Christians could co-exist.



February –
March 2016

**PROF. DR. DAVID
RUDERMAN**
SENIOR FELLOW

DR. CHARLES SNYDER
PREVIOUS AFFILIATION: THE HANNAH ARENDT CENTRE, ANCIENT GREEK AND ROMAN PHILOSOPHY, BARD COLLEGE, ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON/USA

Research project:
The Secret of the Sceptical Academy

Charles Snyder plans to write an article on the origin and development of the Sceptical Academy during the Hellenistic period.

The article has three interconnected aims: to explain the emergence of the sceptical Academy in terms of an unprecedented and innovative reading of Plato; secondly, to re-cast the so-called rivalry between Academic sceptics and Stoic philosophers as a relation of mutual benevolence, not adversarial refutation; and, finally, to separate the sceptical Academy from the misleading and anachronistic definition of 'sceptical' developed by Sextus Empiricus.

DR. CHARLES SNYDER

JUNIOR FELLOW



**October 2015 –
 March 2016**

The evidence and source material for the understanding of the sceptical Academy is precarious. But unlike the misfortune of lost Stoic handbooks and treatises composed in the Hellenistic period, Academics of the Hellenistic period deliberately left posterity almost nothing to interpret. This deliberate refusal is a significant clue. Alongside secondary source reports from antiquity, this refusal helps us piece together an accurate understanding of the Academy after Plato and the importance of Socrates.

CURRENT FELLOWS

PROF. DR. CHRISTIANE THOMPSON
PROFESSOR FOR THEORY AND HISTORY OF EDUCATION, JOHANN
WOLFGANG GOETHE-UNIVERSITÄT, FRANKFURT AM MAIN

Research project:
Education and Scepticism as a Form of Life

During her stay at the Centre, Christiane Thompson would like to carry out a comprehensive study on scepticism as educational and cultural practise – limited to Plato, exemplary text fragments from the (older and middle) Stoic tradition and possibly from Pyrrhonianism. However, rather than treating these school(s) as epistemological endeavour(s) she will focus on the above-mentioned significance of scepticism as a cultural practice of the self.

Christiane Thompson will attempt to look out for coherent structures in the dispersed field of educational voices on scepticism today. Since scepticism has not formed a guideline to unravel the educational dimension of self-relations or self-practices, it is important to compare contributions and to put them in contrast to the limited significance of scepticism in education today. She will devote the major part of her stay to the examination of the original Greek texts. She has chosen Plato's early dialogues, *Protagoras and Charmides*, which offer themselves for analysis because they explicitly mention and emphasise the care for the self. From the Hellenistic tradition she will turn toward text fragments from the Stoa, and possibly move on to Pyrrho's scepticism, which will enable her to formulate initial conclusions.

PROF. DR. CHRISTIANE
THOMPSON

SENIOR FELLOW

May 2016

PROF. DR. CARSTEN WILKE
CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY, BUDAPEST/HUNGARY

Research Project:

Abraham Gómez Silveyra (1656-1741): An Amsterdam Sephardi Controversist in Search of a Theological Truce among Faiths

A comprehensive study and digital edition of Gómez Silveyra's work is at the centre of a new project designed by Carsten Wilke in cooperation with Professor Harm den Boer (University of Basel, Hispanic Studies). It is part of a larger joint research on the literary, intellectual, social and material history of the manuscript corpus inside the communities of the Sephardi diaspora.

Comprising more than four thousand still unedited pages, which were written in baroque Spanish between 1700 and 1738, the monumental theological oeuvre of the Jewish stockbroker Abraham Gómez Silveyra is the last highlight in the history of anti-Christian literature among the Early Modern Portuguese Jews.

Gómez Silveyra arrives at a disillusioned conclusion concerning the reliability of theological reasoning, and voices such wisdom in an idiosyncratic mix of learned scholarship and satirical buffoonery. He argues that Human understanding is always grossly misleading; truth can only be found in revelation, that is, in a strictly literal reading of the Scriptures in accordance with the Oral Law. Besides rejecting modern science, even Copernican cosmology, on such Biblical grounds, Gómez Silveyra also maintains that no theological system has ever been able to prove its superiority.



**PROF. DR. CARSTEN
 WILKE**

SENIOR FELLOW

**October 2015 –
 February 2016**

INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION



GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Institute for Jewish Philosophy and Religion was established in April 2014 with the appointment of Prof. Dr. Prof. h.c. Giuseppe Veltri as chair.

The academic focus of the Institute is on research in the field of Jewish philosophy. Jewish philosophy, which forms part of the general philosophical curriculum, is remarkable in its interconnectedness with different non-Jewish and Jewish traditions. Special attention is being devoted to the Renaissance and Early modern period, in accordance with the scientific traditions in the Humanities of the Universität Hamburg. Formally part of the Department of Philosophy of the Universität Hamburg, the Institute has developed an active cooperation with the Departments of Protestant and Catholic Theology, and the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures. It is in the process of increasing its cooperation with the Institute for the History of the German Jews, based in Hamburg, and the Jewish community of Hamburg. Internationally, the Institute cooperates with the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilisation in Paris (INALCO), the University La Sapienza in Rome, and the University Federico II in Naples. In December, the Institute will welcome its first PhD student from the University Roma 3, its partner in a joint PhD programme.

The Institute has secured funding to create a library in Jewish Studies, specialising in Jewish Philosophy and Religion. The library will provide primary and secondary literature in print and electronic format.

The Institute currently offers seminars and lectures that are open to all students of the University, within the framework of extracurricular studies or *studium generale*. Courses are taught in cooperation with the Departments of Protestant and Catholic Theology and the Institute for German Studies. A Masters programme in Jewish Philosophy and Religion will be introduced in the near future.

DR. PATRICK BENJAMIN KOCH

Patrick Koch has been a Research Associate at the Institute since September 2014. He studied at Freie Universität Berlin, graduating with an M.A. in Jewish Civilisation from Hebrew University. His PhD in Jewish Thought from the Hebrew University was supervised by Prof. Jonathan Garb.

Patrick Koch`s research interests include Jewish moralistic writings (*musar*), Jewish mysticism, Jewish ethics, and the comparative study of spirituality.

Before coming to Hamburg, Patrick Koch was Prins Foundation Post-doctoral Fellow at the Centre for Jewish History, New York, Research Fellow at Humboldt Universität Berlin, and Visiting Lecturer at Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg. He currently holds an Ephraim E. Urbach Postdoctoral Fellowship.

Together with his colleague Maria Wazinski, Patrick Koch organised the 2015 conference ‘Orchidee oder Mimose?’ about Jewish Studies in post-1945 Germany. He is presently organising a lecture series on ‘Jewish Languages’ in collaboration with Michael Studemund-Halévy of the Institute for the History of the German Jews, to be held at the Universität Hamburg in 2016.

His monograph *Human Self-Perfection: A Re-Assessment of Kabbalistic Musar-Literature of Sixteenth-Century Safed* was published in 2015. Patrick Koch currently teaches in the Religious Studies programme at the Universität Hamburg. He is responsible for designing the Masters programme ‘Jewish Philosophy and Religion’.



RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

YONATAN MEROZ

Yonatan Meroz has been a Research Associate at the Institute since 2015. He holds an M.A. in Arabic Language and Literature from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. During his work at the Centre for the Study of Judaeo-Arabic Language and Culture at the Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem, he has acquired a thorough experience with manuscripts from fields such as Rabbinic and Karaite Bible exegesis, theology and philosophy.

During his work on a research project headed by Prof. Menahem Ben-Sasson on the Maimonidean dynasty, Yonatan Meroz concentrated on the writings of Maimonides' descendants, which display strong Sufi influences. His M.A. thesis contained an analysis and a critical edition of an anonymous Medieval Judaeo-Arabic polemic against Maimonides, a text which is likewise heavily indebted to Sufism. Meroz contributed to a research project headed by Prof. Sarah Stroumsa and Prof. Sara Svir, investigating early Andalusian philosophical mysticism.



His translation from Hebrew to English of volume four of the sermons of the Italian Renaissance preacher Yehudah Moscato has been published by Brill. Yonatan Meroz was previously a Research Associate in the DFG-funded project PESHAT in Context. He is currently working on his PhD project.

DR. DES. LILIAN TÜRK

Lilian Türk has been a Research Associate at the Institute since April 2014. She studied Jewish Studies at Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg and Political Sciences at Universität Leipzig. Her PhD dissertation submitted at Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, entitled *Religious Non-Conformism and Radical Yiddishkayt. Abba Gordin (1887-1964) and group-building processes in the weekly paper Fraye Arbeter Shtime 1937-1945*, was published with open access in the summer of 2015.

Lilian Türk was Junior Fellow at the DFG-funded Graduate School *Religious Non-Conformism and Cultural Dynamics* at Universität Leipzig. She has held Fellowships with the Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation and Yad Hanadiv and has participated in Yiddish language programmes at New York University and Vilnius University. She is teaching courses on the History of Yiddish Literature within the framework of extracurricular studies at the Universität Hamburg. She is responsible for externally funded projects and the development of partnerships within the Universität Hamburg.

Her main research interests are Yiddish intellectuals, Yiddish language and literature, and religious anarchism.



PESHAT IN CONTEXT

PREMODERN PHILOSOPHIC AND SCIENTIFIC HEBREW TERMINOLOGY IN CONTEXT



PESHAT in Context is a DFG-funded long-term project (2014-2026) that aims at the systematic study of the emergence and development of the philosophic and scientific terminology of Pre-Modern Hebrew in its cultural and historical context. The project is supervised by Prof. Dr. Prof. h.c. Giuseppe Veltri and Dr. Reimund Leicht (Hebrew University Jerusalem), Prof. Dr. Resianne Smidt van Gelder-Fontaine (University of Amsterdam) acts as an advisor. The project team consists of three Research Associates in Hamburg: Dr. Daniel Davies, Florian Dunklau (part-time) and Dr. Michael Engel, and one in Jerusalem: Charles William Weber.

Hebrew philosophical and scientific literature emerged as a result of a cultural transfer, with texts being translated into Hebrew from Arabic or Latin, and from Hebrew into Latin. This multilingual and multicultural background will be documented in an innovative online thesaurus (www.peshat.org). The new thesaurus is a 21st-century upgrade of and supplement to its printed predecessor, Jacob Klatzkin's *Otsar ha-munahim ha-filosofiyim: Thesaurus philosophicus linguae hebraicae* (5 vols., Berlin, 1928-1933). Klatzkin's work is unsurpassed to this day (3042 entries; some 1200 pages in four volumes, plus one volume of texts) in that he studied a large amount of philosophical texts in Hebrew, mainly printed but also handwritten, and compiled the philosophical terms occurring in these writings. For over 80 years, Klatzkin's work has been an outstanding research tool for any student of Jewish intellectual life, but also for scholars and students of related fields. However, Klatzkin's Thesaurus does not offer the Arabic or Latin source terms underlying the Hebrew terms, nor its Greek equivalents. This lack of source terms affects the understanding of terms appearing in translations. It is not possible for users to examine a translator's accuracy or differences between two or more translators when it comes to technical terms in Arabic, Latin and Hebrew. Klatzkin's emphasis was on the earlier, pre-Maimonidean period, so that post-Maimonidean authors are less well represented. Numerous terms have been left out or overlooked, and the range of meanings of existing terms is often incomplete. The work lacks explicit criteria for inclusion and it is not clear what qualifies as a philosophical or technical term.

In the new database, each Hebrew term is accompanied by explanations, definitions and extensive quotations from a vast array of Hebrew sources that document its precise usage. Together with detailed background information, including geographical and chronological data, the exact circumstances in which a term was formed are highlighted. With the addition of parallel quotations in Arabic and Latin, and equivalent terms in several languages, it will be an indispensable tool in the comparative study of terminology on a linguistic and historical basis for scholars in Jewish Studies, Islamic and Arabic Studies, Classics, Medieval Studies, History of Science, and Philosophy.

The project group will host triennial conferences which will summarise and discuss the findings and put them into an interdisciplinary academic context. Regular project evaluation also draws on the results of these conferences. Researchers from the fields of Arabic Languages and Muslim Philosophy, Latin Studies, Historical Terminology, Philosophy, and the Digital Humanities will convene with those in the History of Jewish Thought. The first conference organized by the PESHAT in Context team, entitled 'First Conference of the *Officina Philosophica Hebraica*: Terminology Formation, Translation Procedures and Philosophical Debates in 12th Century Judaism', will be held in Hamburg at the beginning of April 2016.

The results of the research undertaken within the framework of the project, and the proceedings of regular international conferences on the study of premodern philosophic terminology will be published as *Officina Philosophica Hebraica*. The first of four projected volumes will be published in 2017. They will present a synthesis of research on the development of Hebrew philosophical and scientific terminology in a specific period of time. They will present the work of the team and of the scientific community on the study of Hebrew terminology and are intended to support future research on Hebrew philosophical and scientific literature. The publications will be produced in close cooperation with the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies.



RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

DR. DANIEL DAVIES

Daniel Davies has been a Research Associate since May 2015. He earned his PhD at the Divinity Faculty at Cambridge University, supervised by Tony Street, where he also studied for an MPhil. Before arriving in Hamburg, he worked at the Genizah Research Unit and was a Spalding Fellow at Clare Hall, Cambridge. He has lectured courses at Canterbury Christ Church University and Leo Baeck College, London. In the PESHAT in Context project he is focusing on translations of Arabic texts.

His main research interests relate to medieval philosophy, philosophy of religion, comparative theology, and Jewish theology.

Daniel Davies has published a variety of chapters and articles, and a monograph entitled *Method and Metaphysics in Maimonides' Guide for the Perplexed* (Oxford University Press, 2011), which was honoured by the Association for Jewish Studies book awards in the category of Philosophy and Jewish Thought. Alongside these works, he also translated Galen's 'On Character Traits', included in the volume *Galen: Psychological Writings*, for the Cambridge Galen Translations.



DR. MICHAEL ENGEL

Michael Engel has been a Research Associate since June 2015. He studied at Tel Aviv University for his B.A. and for his Master's degree. He completed his PhD at Wolfson College, Cambridge, under the supervision of Prof. John Marenbon. He taught Medieval Jewish philosophy at the Faculty of Divinity at Cambridge University, where he served as affiliated lecturer. Michael Engel was also a postdoctoral member of Clare Hall, Cambridge, and a Francis Yates Postdoctoral Fellow at the Warburg Institute, London.

His main research interests are Medieval and Renaissance Jewish philosophy, and in particular the relations between Medieval Jewish philosophy and Latin scholasticism.

He has published in journals of Medieval philosophy, and his monograph on Elijah Del Medigo is forthcoming in Bloomsbury Publishing.

Michael Engel's main focus in the PESHAT in Context project is the examination and implementation of the Latin equivalents of Hebrew philosophical and scientific terms from the Middle Ages.



SFORNO PROJECT

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS: THE TRACTATE 'LIGHT OF THE NATIONS' OF 'OVADYAH SFORNO

The Sforno Project is funded by the DFG and chaired by Prof. Dr. Prof. h.c. Giuseppe Veltri. Prof. Dr. Saverio Campanini (University of Bologna) acts as advisor. The team of Research Associates consists of Dr. Giada Coppola and Florian Dunklau (part-time). The philosophically trained Jewish theologian 'Ovadyah Sforno (1475?-1550) is thought of as the last Jewish scholastic author. Sforno published only one philosophical work, entitled *Or 'Ammim* (Light of the Nations), which he made available to a Christian Humanist readership through his own translation into Latin, under the title *Lumen Gentium*.

Within an anticipated total duration of six years (2015-2021), the project will rediscover 'Ovadyah Sforno and his significance for the intercultural exchange between intellectuals and circles of Christian scholars and Humanists and an elite of Jewish intellectuals. The particular context is the Renaissance's late heyday of Aristotelian philosophy and the scholastic tradition during the last decades of the sixteenth century. *Or 'Ammim* is an important example of the reciprocity of input between Christian culture and Jewish philosophy. The *Or 'Ammim* is considered the last *summa* written by a Jewish author. The classical questions of medieval philosophy are raised in 15 theses (*quaestiones*), including, e.g., *creatio ex nihilo*, Divine omniscience, will and providence, and the immortality of the human soul. *Or 'Ammim* was first published in Bologna in 1537. The *Lumen Gentium* was printed by Anselmo Giaccarelli in Bologna in 1548, and dedicated to the French King Henry II. Sforno's stance against an uncritical acceptance of Aristotelian methodology and adherence to the heretical doctrine of the eternity of matter, made him appear to be an opponent of philosophy in general. In contrast, he was convinced of the truth of the Torah as a consequence of its philosophical rationalism. Sforno's work is unique in Early Modern Jewish philosophical literature. By examining the processes of compiling, editing and translating a work from Hebrew into Latin by a single person, who is both author and translator of that work, we hope to gain crucial insights into the transfer and exchange of philosophical and scientific ideas at the intersection of Judaism, Scholasticism and Islam.

The discovery of a variant autograph version of the summarising chapter of *Or 'Am-mim*, which was unknown to former editors of Sforno's oeuvre, as well as the neglect of the Latin text, makes it necessary to provide a new edition of the Hebrew version. A first critical edition of the Latin Version, on the basis of available prints and manuscripts, will be accompanied by an English translation and critical commentary. Further research will concentrate on the sources of Sforno's philosophy and his terminology. Comparing the two versions will shed light on the development of the Hebrew scientific and philosophic language in the Middle Ages, which will generate a synergic effect with the DFG-funded project PESHAT in Context. At a concluding stage of the project, Sforno's use of philosophical arguments and concepts in his exegesis of Biblical passages will be analysed.

The results of the project will be presented and discussed at two conferences at the Institut für Jüdische Philosophie und Religion at the Universität Hamburg. An edition of two volumes is planned, containing the edited Hebrew and Latin texts in synoptic form with the respective English translations in four columns, together with a critical apparatus and lexicographical commentary, as well as Hebrew-to-Latin and Latin-to-Hebrew indices at the end of the first volume. The second volume will contain a philosophical commentary on the text, as well as essays on lexicography and the relationship between Sforno's exegesis and philosophy.



RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

DR. GIADA COPPOLA

Giada Coppola has been a Research Associate since September 2015. She studied Philosophy and Theory of Human Science at the Università degli Studi Roma Tre (Rome), and completed a PhD in the Department of Languages, Literature, Societies (Philosophy) at the INALCO, Paris, in July 2013, under supervision of Prof. Alessandro Guetta and Prof. Elio Matassi (Roma Tre). Her dissertation was entitled 'David ben Yehudah Messer Leon, a thinker of the Renaissance between Aristotelism and Platonism'. From March 2014 to July 2015 Giada Coppola worked on a collaborative research programme conceived at the INALCO and the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Lorraine, named the ALIENTO project, which stands for 'Linguistic analysis, intercultural aspects of sapiential statements and their transmission from East to West and West to East'.

For the Sforzo project, Giada Coppola attends to the Latin translation of Sforzo's *Light of the Nations*, entitled *Lumen Gentium*. The Latin version can be considered a re-working of Sforzo's ideas for a Christian public.



FLORIAN DUNKLAU

Florian Dunklau is a Research Associate for two projects. He completed an M.A. in Jewish and Arabic Studies at Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg. His main research interests are Jewish philosophy of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Hebrew manuscripts, and Jewish local history of North Germany.

Since February 2014 he has been a Research Associate for the DFG-funded PESHAT in Context project (part-time). In the framework of the project he focuses on the development of Hebrew philosophical terminology in Maimonides' 'Guide of the Perplexed' in the translation of Samuel ibn Tibbon. He also supports the online database of the project.



In September 2015, Florian Dunklau joined the DFG-funded Sforno project as a Research Associate (part-time).

SUPPORT STAFF



KAROLIN BERENDS

Karolin Berends has been a Project assistant at the Centre since August 2015. She holds a Diploma in Business administration from the University of Applied Sciences, Wilhelmshaven. She is responsible for day-to-day administration and acts as Personal Assistant to Giuseppe Veltri in all matters related to the Centre.

SABINE SHARMA

Sabine Sharma provides part-time Office support at the Institute for Jewish Philosophy and Religion. Since completing a double M.A. programme in English language and literature and Modern Indian languages (Hindi) and culture at the Universität Hamburg, she has worked in administrative roles for different departments within the Faculty of Humanities.

SILKE SCHAEPER

Silke Schaeper is the librarian at the Maimonides Centre since October 2015. She studied Jewish Studies, Modern History, Library Science, and History of the Hebrew book in Berlin and Jerusalem, graduating in Library Science from the Hebrew University (MLS). Her own research has focused on Jewish library history, Hebrew bibliography, and German-Jewish history.

Silke Schaeper will build research libraries for the Maimonides Centre and the Institute for Jewish Philosophy and Religion and provide editorial support for the Centre's academic publications.



ANNE-JULIA SCHOEN

Anne-Julia Schoen currently works as a translator, copy editor, and proofreader for the Centre. She holds an M.A. in History and English and American Literatures from Humboldt Universität Berlin, where she is enrolled in a joint doctoral program with King's College, London. She has previously worked as a university lecturer, researcher, and translator. For her PhD project, Anne-Julia Schoen examines the works of three twentieth-century Anglo-Jewish avant-garde artists and writers.

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