

MAIMONIDES LECTURES ON SCEPTICISM

WEDNESDAY, 8 JUNE 2022
18:00

Necessity and Impossibility: On the Internal Split of Identity in Améry and Jankélévitch

Ilit Ferber (Tel Aviv University)

Jean Améry (1912–1978) and Vladimir Jankélévitch (1903–1985) were both Jews who grew up in assimilated families and did not have any special affinity, if any at all, with their Jewish origins and heritage. This changed dramatically during the Second World War. It was at this point that they both became suddenly and exclusively defined by their Jewish identity. This moment was formative for both in that it confronted them with the internal paradoxes inherent to their identity. This talk will closely examine the question of Jewish identity in two of their short texts. The first is Améry's "The Necessity and Impossibility of Being a Jew," while the second is Vladimir Jankélévitch's "Judaism as an 'Internal Problem.'" Both texts (written around the same time) deal with the paradoxical nature of Jewish identity and raise crucial questions that concern the unstable yet strangely strong feeling of identity that is never singular and always liminal. This paper will present a close reading of these two texts, situating them in Améry's and Jankélévitch's overall oeuvre, and will continue with a few remarks on what Ilit Ferber takes to be the important relationship between the two thinkers, locating both on the fine line between self-affirmation and self-doubt.

Ilit Ferber is an associate professor of philosophy at Tel Aviv University.

HYBRID (MCAS/ONLINE)

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