

An Introduction to Modern Jewish Philosophy

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A.

In all things whose true reality is known through demonstration there is no tug of war and no refusal to accept a thing proven - unless indeed such a refusal comes from an ignoramus who offers a resistance that is called resistance to demonstration.

Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), I: 31, 66

That the Deity is not a body has been demonstrated; from this it follows necessarily that everything that in its external meaning disagrees with this demonstration must be interpreted figuratively. (*Guide*, II: 25, 328)

I believe that Judaism knows of no revealed religion in the sense in which Christians understand this term. The Israelites possess a divine legislation - laws, commandments, ordinances, rules of life, instructions in the will of God as to how they should conduct themselves in order to gain temporal and eternal felicity. Propositions and prescriptions of this kind were revealed to them by Moses in a miraculous and supernatural manner, but no doctrinal opinions, no saving truths, no universal propositions of reason. Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, tr. Allan Arkush (Hanover, NH: 1983), pp. 89-90

B.

[T]he analytical enterprise is one more strategy for “disenchantment.” . . . [P]eople do not stand to their language as masters of a system of rules, above which they may hover in critical appraisal, but in the more intimate manner that Heidegger’s metaphor of language as a house in which we dwell seeks to capture.

David E. Cooper, “Analytical & Continental Philosophy,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 94 (1994), 16-17

There is no place for appeals to a practical rationality-as-such or a justice-as-such to which all rational persons would by their very rationality be compelled to give their allegiance. There is only the practical-rationality-of this-or-that-tradition and the justice-of-this-or-that-tradition.

Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (London: Duckworth, 1988), p. 346.

[T]he philosopher labors to produce a systematic account of the general conceptual structure of which our daily practice shows us to have a tacit and unconscious mastery.

P. F. Strawson, *Analysis and Metaphysics: An Introduction to Philosophy* (Oxford, 1992), 2

C.

I do not by any means know atheism as a result; even less as an event: it is a matter of course with me, from instinct. I am too inquisitive, too questionable, too exuberant to stand for any gross answer. God is a gross answer, an indelicacy against us thinkers – at bottom merely a gross prohibition for us: you shall not think!

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is* (1888), tr. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1969) II §1.

[Religion] has debased the concept “man”. Its ultimate consequence is that everything good, great, true is superhuman and bestowed only through an act of grace.

Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, tr. W. Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), §136

Theory is not my concern at the moment. I want instead to focus attention on a human life situation in which the man of faith as an individual concrete being, with his cares and hopes, concerns and needs, joys and sad moments, is entangled.

J.B. Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith [LMF]* (New York: Random House, 2006), 5

What can a man of faith like myself, living by a doctrine which has no technical potential, by a law which cannot be tested in a laboratory, steadfast in his loyalty to an eschatological vision whose fulfillment cannot be predicted with any degree of probability, let alone certainty, even by the most complex, advanced mathematical calculations – what can such a man say to a functional utilitarian society which is saeculum-oriented and whose practical reasons of the mind have long ago supplanted the sensitive reasons of the heart? (*LMF*, 6-7)