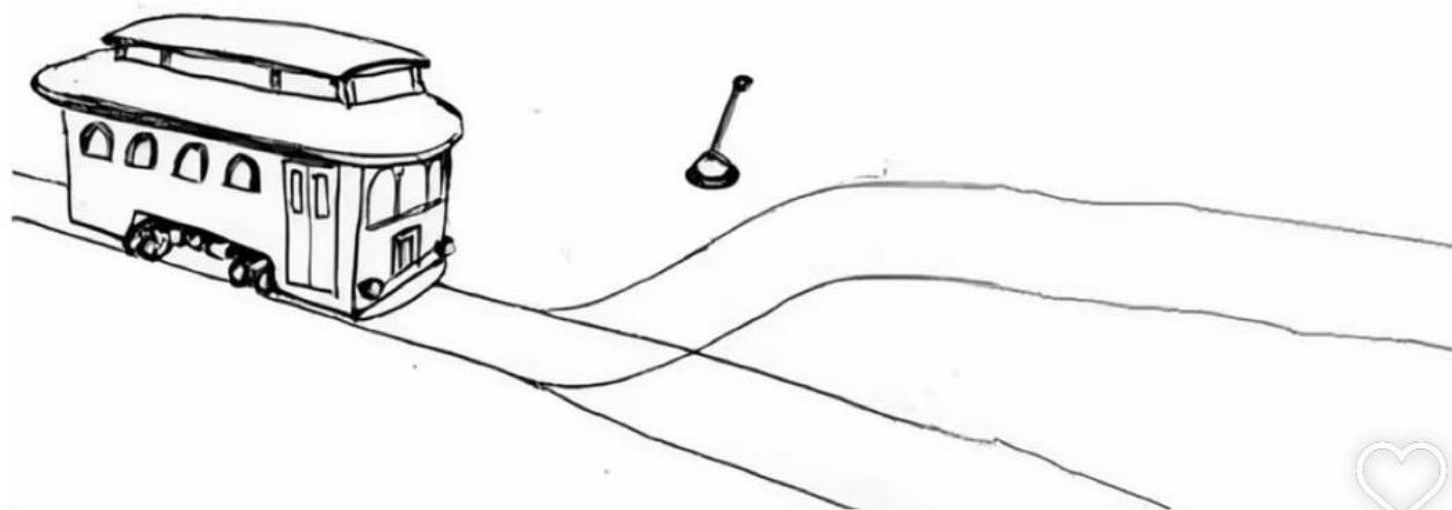


Unorthodox: Thoughts on Tradition from Non-Traditional Thinkers

Rabbi Barry Kleinberg



Nobody is in any danger. You are a professor for moral philosophy. Do you tie people to the rails to save your job?



111K



Osteopath and non-practicing lawyer

Teaching Fellow at The London School of Jewish Studies

Inaugural Cohort of Sacks Scholars

PhD student – Haifa University (Philosophy of Religion)

Some definitions...

Jewish
'Thinkers'

'Jewish'
Thinkers

'Jewish
Thinkers'

Tradition

Non-
Traditional
Thinkers...

'Jewish Thinkers' I

Jewish thought is not a single continuous tradition, but rather a varied mix of works, which reflect the specific ideological and historical positions of those who wrote them....

...A clear definition of Jewish thought has been tested in modern times by thinkers who are Jewish, but whose work isn't concerned with explicating Judaism, as well as thinkers who split their time between general thought and Jewish thought. Were Karl Marx, the father of communism, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, the philosopher of language—both of whom were of Jewish heritage—Jewish thinkers? Are all of Hermann Cohen's works, even his commentaries on Immanuel Kant, “Jewish”?

'Jewish Thinkers' II

The contemporary French philosopher Jacques Derrida represents an interesting recent example of these uncertainties. Derrida, whose philosophy of deconstruction is one of the most influential intellectual movements of our time, has rarely written on explicitly Jewish themes and sources. However, the question of his “Jewishness” has generated great debate, resulting in symposia, articles, and at least one book, Gideon Ofrat’s, *The Jewish Derrida*.

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-thought/>

Jewish Secular Thought

In “The Non-Jewish Jew,” the Polish social revolutionary Isaac Deutscher, who began his education as a yeshiva student, argued that those who rejected their ancestral religion and their people in favor of secular universalism had historical precursors. In a paradoxical formulation that captured something of his own identity, Deutscher wrote: “The Jewish heretic who transcends Jewry belongs to a Jewish tradition.” This “Jewry” is Judaism— not only the religion but all of the traditions built up over nearly three millennia. Yet, in transcending Judaism, the heretic finds himself or herself in a different Jewish tradition, a tradition no less Jewish for being anti-traditional. Secular universalism for these heretics paradoxically became a kind of Jewish identity.

Not in the Heavens: The Tradition of Jewish Secular Thought. David Biale

**Excluded
from this
course...**

A J Heschel

Eliezer Berkovits

Louis Jacobs

Who else might be included in
this list?

**Who would
you include
in the
course from
before the
20th
century?**

Spinoza?

Herzl?

Mendelssohn?

Who else might be included in
this list?

Outline of this course

15th May – Isaiah Berlin

22nd May – George Steiner

29th May – Erich Fromm

5th June – Martin Buber

12th June – Cynthia Ozick



Aims of this course

For each thinker:

- A brief (where possible) biography
- An overview of key works (books and articles)
- Central views relevant to Judaism, Zionism and more...

Next week – Isaiah Berlin

Best academic put down! “On the surface, he’s profound, but deep down, he’s superficial”

According to Rabbi Sacks (The Isaiah Berlin Memorial Lecture 2003) there were 3 dominant themes in Berlin's work

- 1) A defence of freedom
- 2) The Power of Ideas
- 3) Ideas have a history

We will explore how these ideas relate to Jewish ideas and Berlin's views on Jews, Judaism and Israel