

This-Worldly and Other-Worldly

A Holocaust pilgrimage

Pilgrims and the Holocaust

Częstochowa is a town known for a shrine to the Black Madonna and every year millions of pilgrims from all over the world come to this Virgin Mary town in south-west Poland. My story is about another kind of pilgrimage, which in a sense is connected to the course of events which occurred in Częstochowa on 22 September 1942. In the morning, the German Captain Degenhardt lined up around 8,000 Jews and commanded them to step either to the left or to the right. This efficient judge from the police force in Leipzig was rapid in his decisions and he thus settled the destinies of thousands of people.¹

After the Polish Defensive War of 1939, the town (renamed Tschenschow) had been occupied by Nazi Germany, and incorporated into the General Government. The Nazis marched into Częstochowa on Sunday, 3 September 1939, two days after they invaded Poland. The next day, which became known as Bloody Monday, approximately 150 Jews were shot dead by the Germans. On 9 April 1941, a ghetto for Jews was created. During World War II about 45,000 of the Częstochowa Jews were killed by the Germans; almost the entire Jewish community living there. The late Swedish Professor of Oncology, Jerzy Einhorn (1925–2000), lived in the borderhouse Aleja 14, and heard of the terrible horrors; a ghastliness that was elucidated and concretized by all the stories told around him (Einhorn 2006: 186–9). Jerzy Einhorn survived the ghetto, but was detained at the Hasag-Palcery concentration camp between June 1943 and January 1945. In June 2009, his son Stefan made a bus tour between former camps, together with Jewish men and women, who were on this pilgrimage for a variety of reasons. The trip took place on 22–28 June 2009 and was named 'A journey in the tracks of the Holocaust'. The programme included

1 Captain Degenhardt had a Jewish mistress who was executed, to 'save' the Captain. 'The Germans, if caught having sexual relationships with Jewish women, could face a firing squad, accused of *Rassenschande* (race shame)' (Bender 1995: 81).

(Monday 22nd) Warsaw, with the Synagogue, burial grounds, the ghetto wall, and the Old Town; (Tuesday 23rd) Lodz Jewish Assembly, burial grounds, remnants of the Lodz ghetto, and the memorial monument; (Wednesday 24th) Warszawa Mila 18, Umschlagsplatz, and a bus journey to Treblinka, the extermination camp, staying over night in Lublin; (Thursday 25th) tour in Lublin, Majdanek, Kazimirz Dolny, overnight in Krakow; (Friday 26th) bus to Auschwitz, guided tour to Birkenau, guided tour to Auschwitz, Remu Krakow Synagogue, Shabat meal in Krakow; (Saturday 27th) guided tour in Krakow, visit to Kazimierz, the factory where *Schindler's List* was filmed, the pharmacy, and then Klezmer festival; (Sunday 28th) free day in Krakow, in the late afternoon the return trip to Sweden.

In his book *Pilgrimages and Literary Tradition* (2005), Philip Edwards pays attention to a novel by David Lodge, called *Therapy* (1995), in which the subject says: 'I'm not a true pilgrim, a true pilgrim being someone for whom it's an existential act of self-definition. . . a leap into the absurd, in Kierkegaard's sense' (Edwards 2005: 208). Further, Edwards discusses various pilgrims: 'the aesthetic' (basically on holiday), 'the ethical' (confirmed to everything that is expected of her/him), and 'the religious' (the true pilgrim in Kierkegaard's sense of religion). In this latter case, walking a thousand miles to the shrine of Santiago, without knowing whether anybody was ever buried there, is a Kierkegaardian leap: you choose to believe without rational compulsion—you make a leap into the void and in the process choose yourself.

Those on the Holocaust tour represented different 'pilgrim-modes'. My focus in this article is on two distinct differences when it comes to creed, or conceptions of the world: 'this-worldliness' and 'other-worldliness'. And for the pilgrims:

Whatever they might take in en route, their primary motivation is religious: to visit a site of special religious or numinous significance. By contrast, tourism is seen as either mere recreational activity, or at best as visiting beautiful buildings, landscapes, or works of art to evoke an aesthetic response to wonder. (Williamson 2005: 220.)

Maybe such distinctions are over-schematic, though, since 'sacral fulfilment' can be seen 'at work in all modern constructions of travel, including anthropology and tourism' (Williamson 2005: 220).

In the eyes of a Reconstructionist Jew, who has accepted the pantheistic God image of Mordecai Kaplan, God is revealed through Nature, so the wonders evoked by a fascinating tree, or a fantastic art museum, which involves

an aesthetic response, might be equal to the bewilderment that sacred sites arouse, the awe that links a wonder to the presence of divine power. The separation of religious and secular spheres is, in other words, not clear-cut when it comes to this Holocaust tour; the whole pilgrimage is therefore labelled as religious, and besides, several of the pilgrims have ideas about miracles. 'The gap between tourism and pilgrimage closes from two directions, because visitors . . . might visit with pious intent or at least with their credulity intact', and holy places are 'not merely a goal of sacred focus and intent, but also the appropriate locus for the display of votives and epiphanies, which might form the raw material for accounts of *mirabilia*' (Williamson 2005: 246).

Just as Judaism began as the nomadic religion of a group who carried the Ark of the Covenant with them as they travelled, so its later history has been a story of displacement from the Promised Land. The motifs of exile and return have become central to Jewish tradition, experience and identity. 'Return to the sacred centre is perceived as an act not merely of movement but also of restitution in moral and spiritual terms' (Coleman & Elsner 1995: 36). A pilgrimage like this offers an initiatory quality; the pilgrim is exposed to powerful *sacra* such as consecrated mass graves and holy *besoylem* (sanctified burial grounds), and therewith a guidance into the future. Sites and spaces of special and sacred significance are visited in a funereal atmosphere, with woeful expressions, and at the same time, the pilgrims are hopeful, as it all provides ways of including and celebrating a certain community; the pilgrimage suggests lines of association and alignment with ancestors and untold others. It provides an identity, and part of the liminal space and culture of pilgrimages is characterized by something merry.

'The pilgrims in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* mixed serious religious and spiritual intent with a great deal of play. . . tending towards an especially heightened form of excitability' (Franklin 2003: 124). A female participant of the Holocaust tour, my key-informant, gave evidence of excitement on several levels. Victor Turner's idea, that the pilgrimage is open and not conceptualized as religious routine, underlines the individual choice, and being 'liminoid' it tends 'to be generated by the voluntary activity of individuals during their free time' (Turner & Turner 1978: 231).² Since there were firmly established and

2 Liminality is a period of transition where normal limits of thought, self-understanding, and behaviour are relaxed—a situation, which can lead to new perspectives.

The sense of identity dissolves to some extent. Turner coined the term 'liminoid' for experiences that have characteristics of liminal ditto, but are optional. To someone sure about his Jewish identity, as a son of a survivor, a visit to a Holocaust museum might not involve a resolution of a personal crisis, it can instead be part of a scene in

deeply rooted Chassidic Orthodox Jews in the Swedish group, certain individuals never reverted from the liminoid to the liminal, but to some pilgrims, the places associated with holiness created something 'pseudo-liminal'. They went from voluntaristic processes to obligatory performances (cf. Turner & Turner 1978: 231–2).

The notion of pilgrimage as a liminoid phenomenon, which is productive of social encounters without hierarchical constraints, can be accepted and criticized at the same time. Simon Coleman and John Eade point this out in *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (2004). In this anthology, Coleman shows how members of a group '(who do admittedly have processional traditions of their own) are on a permanent search for means of personal and collective acceleration, and see such movement as the ultimate expression of an agency that must permeate all of life and not just time in church [cf. synagogue]' (Coleman 2004: 66).

The sacred travelling time is the whole bus tour from Sweden to Poland, with concentration camps and a Klezmer festival. In her ethnographic account of Rajasthani pilgrims, anthropologist Ann Grodzins Gold has shown that the highlight of the trip for most of the pilgrims was bathing in the Bay of Bengal, an act with no religious significance (Grodzins Gold 1988). In his book *From Pilgrimage to Package Tour* (2005) David Gladstone points out that, according to sociologist Erik Cohen, there are different tourist typologies, and the so called 'existential tourism' is most similar to the traditional religious pilgrimage, but this 'pilgrimage is not one from the mere periphery of a religious world toward its center; it is a journey from chaos into another cosmos, from meaninglessness to authentic existence' (Gladstone 2005: 6).

Reasons and incentives for the Holocaust tour

Ann (b. 1960) was looking for some kind of excitement on the bus tour, and historical explanations in Poland. All the participants wanted to confront the horrible past. My other informant, Lennart (b. 1952), whose mother was interned in Auschwitz, went on the tour together with his brother Bernt. They both wanted to grasp something in themselves. Lennart is anxious about the situation in Sweden, where the Jews and Judaism are threatened because of assimilation. It is his 'duty' to be an Orthodox, Chassidic Jew, as he puts it.

his life-drama. That is, a liminoid experience. To somebody else, the visit can be the same as entering the realm of Purgatory, the situation is doubly liminal.

Appeals directed at ‘ordinary Jews’ to become ‘more Jewish’ as a memorial to the six million murdered by the Nazis have appeared from the US. ‘American Jewish communal activists transformed Europe’s Jews into the dwellers of “the shtetl”, a mythical imagined all-Jewish space where all-Jewish warmth, life, learning, and communal cohesion flourished’ (Diner 2009: 323). The Jews that were killed represented Jewish piety, intensity, and traditionalism, lived out in profoundly Jewish settlements. But in fact, many Jews had become highly secularized, and lived in cities, ‘and articulated complicated, and often tenuous, connections to their Jewishness’ (Diner 2009: 323). Across the ideological spectrum, leaders asserted that the Jews ‘had to compensate for what had been demolished. Only more Jewish knowledge, greater Jewish commitment, and deeper understanding of the destroyed world of European Jewry, they exhorted, could even begin to make up for the grievous losses.’ (Diner 2009: 323.)

For someone with killed relatives, to try to be ‘more Jewish’ is, of course, felt as ‘a duty’. Further, Lennart is not satisfied with a ‘soulless’ Judaism. He finds it vacuous. The liberal Conservative Judaism of Stockholm is dull and vapid, in his opinion.

The Conservative movement’s attempt at defining a role for itself in between Reform and Orthodoxy is today coming unstuck, and not entirely due to modern trends. It is often argued that the intellectual roots of the Conservative movement were basically incoherent, since it preserves a good deal of orthodox practice while rejecting the rationale for that practice. Being positioned in between Reform and Orthodoxy is not possible since there is no room between them. They see each other as the Other against which they define themselves, and Conservative Judaism tries to establish a form of religion out of the space between these two positions. (Leaman 2006: 138.)

Oliver Leaman sees Conservative Judaism as ‘sitting on the fence’, but in Stockholm it has been very successful, and appreciated by many Jews, in great part thanks to Chief Rabbi Morton Naro. The Great Synagogue in the city of Stockholm belongs to Masorti Judaism, the Conservative Movement. Naro questions religious fanaticism and finds extreme devotion peculiar. The idea that an older rabbi gives orders and the younger follower just obeys, is in his eyes somewhat odd. To Naro, unconditional submission is dangerous; a reluctance to question and to challenge does not make sense to him. The Lubavitch School in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, is too fundamental to be suit-

able for this broad-minded and open man (Narrowe 2005: 143). The Rabbi's wife Judi has a PhD in Social Anthropology, and has other goals than writing about cooking and flower arrangements, which is the advisable thing to do if you belong to Chabad and are of the female sex. In other words, this fantastic, creative, intelligent woman would have problems as a Chabad Lubavitch follower in Crown Heights (cf. Narrowe 2005: 246)! For Chassidic women, traditional marriage and motherhood are the only viable options. Lubavitch female priorities are clear:

[T]heir central mission is to create the best possible Jewish home. . .there is little place for the person who falls beyond basic assumptions about belief, desire, or personality. For many, a limited band of choices can offer a measure of safety, but for others, it walls off the only satisfying options. (Levine 2003: 204.)

Schools for boys and for girls in Crown Heights differ in curriculum and aim: females shall not study the Torah the way men do. 'Women would do well to focus their attention on the Aggadic aspects of the Torah as assembled in Ein Yaakov, since our Sages have noted the powerful impact of such study in cultivating one's spiritual emotions' (Touger 2010).³ At an age when many young women feel insecure and lose confidence, Chabad 'Lubavitcher teen-aged girls maintain a strong sense of self and purpose. . . this may come from spending most of their time in the company of other girls and women, as well as the especially strong belief among Lubavitchers that each girl's everyday actions have cosmic potential to help bring the Messiah' (Fader 2009: 25).

The girls' curriculum is carefully chosen to avoid sexuality or contradictions with Lubavitch ideals. Women belonging to Chabad-Lubavitch strongly reject North American feminism. Since they have a higher purpose than secular women, Chabad girls repudiate their values. 'Several young women also mentioned the notion that females are innately on a higher spiritual plane than males, so they are better able to withstand the potential dangers of secular subjects.' (Levine 2003: 46.)

Stephanie Wellen Levine spent a year living in the Lubavitch community of Crown Heights, and my informant Ann has a close relative who has become a Chabad follower in the US, so she has been to several meetings at Chabad Houses. Ann, as well as Stephanie Wellen Levine, has gained an insight into

3 See Aggadah on page 135.



Auschwitz I (the *Stammlager*) had a much higher standard than Auschwitz II-Birkenau. There were mainly Polish resistance fighters and Soviet prisoners of war in Auschwitz I. Despite their 'comfort', few survived more than some months. Photo © Jacob Kaluski 2009.

the Lubavitch community. For someone with liberal ideals, the woman's role is abhorrent, and the view of women is discouraging. Therefore Ann happily belongs to the above mentioned version of Judaism, developed in Stockholm by Narrowe. Her grandparents came from the Baltic States. All through her life, Ann has heard different stories about Auschwitz, and now she wanted to see and experience the place for herself.

Looking for historical interpretations

'One of the least appealing aspects of the Soviet analysis of Auschwitz, was the downplaying of the scale of the suffering endured by Jews in the camp' (Rees 2005: 329). In a study called 'Antifascist Pilgrimage and Rehabilitation at Auschwitz: the Political Tourism of *Aktion Sühnezeichen* and *Sozialistische Jugend*' (Huener 2001), the State Museum Oswiecim-Brzezinka (Auschwitz II-Birkenau) is examined, a site that since 1947 has been institutionalized as a charge of the Polish government. *Aktion Sühnezeichen* and *Sozialistische Jugend* were movements with idealistic young Germans who helped Poland to build up the State Museum at Auschwitz, but both groups neglected to assert in the narrative the specificity of crimes against European Jews at Auschwitz.



Auschwitz II-Birkenau—a true hell on earth. You had to choose in the morning—five minutes in the queue for the toilets or for breakfast. Photo © Jacob Kaluski 2009.

Their gesture and public pronouncements were directed towards ‘Poland’ and ‘the Polish people’; ‘as abstractions that may have implicitly included the remaining members of Poland’s decimated Jewish community, but did not designate European Jews in general, the broad category of deportees that composed the great majority of Auschwitz victims’ (Huener 2001: 526).

In his book *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz*, Jan Gross (2006) gives us an essay on historical interpretations. A year after the war ended, Jewish Holocaust survivors returning to their hometowns were harassed and persecuted. A *pogrom* took place in Kielce and anti-semitism was an obvious fact.

Thus, the new rulers’ neglect of the Holocaust of Polish Jewry, their putting the issue aside with other unmentionables, did not necessarily exemplify bad faith, but flowed naturally from the essence of the leading ideology and practicalities of the moment. That is why, also, in the Auschwitz museum, dedicated to the commemoration of the international anti-fascist struggle and martyrology, the word ‘Jew’ could hardly be found at all throughout the period of Communist rule in Poland. (Gross 2006: 243.)

Visits to the State Museum at Auschwitz I were for Polish schoolchildren a matter of recalling Polish political prisoners and Soviet POWs. The Jewishness of the victims at Auschwitz II-Birkenau was defused, 'victims were remembered as citizens of largely socialist republics first and foremost, and as Jews only secondarily' (Cole 1999: 100). In many ways, Majdanek would seem to have as much of a claim on memory as Auschwitz, but it was Auschwitz and not Majdanek that was chosen by the Polish government as the site for a state museum. Yes, the number of victims at Auschwitz outnumbered Majdanek, but there were other reasons involved as well: 'Majdanek faced eastward and while pointing to Soviet liberation, also pointed to a darker side of Polish-Soviet relations. Majdanek was liberated and then promptly made into a concentration camp for the Soviet secret police. Therefore, it was Auschwitz, not Majdanek, which became the symbol of fascist atrocity in post-war Poland.' (Cole 1999: 101.)

Were there more obscure strategies operating? According to Tim Cole, 'the Holocaust heritage industry' has produced an 'Auschwitz-land' for the present from the death camp of the past. Authentic relics, such as shoes, glasses, human hair and gas containers, have been taken from Birkenau and placed at Auschwitz. A mediated past is being served up, a contrived tourist attraction.

In many ways then, the 'tourist Auschwitz' is little more than a post-war Polish creation. However, the historical Auschwitz was not. But the danger is that in constructing a mythical 'Auschwitz', we distort the horrific reality of Auschwitz, and in its place create an 'Auschwitz' which is open to the attack of those who would deny that the Holocaust ever took place. Representing the complexities of the past in a ghoulish theme park for the present has consequences. The 'tourist Auschwitz' threatens to trivialise the past, domesticate the past, and ultimately jettison the past altogether. (Cole 1999: 110.)

The complex Auschwitz-Birkenau represents a great dilemma for interpretation. During operations, the camp consisted of three major parts and more than 40 sub-camps. The area was abandoned in 1944 by the Germans, who set part of it on fire, and blew up crematoria and gas chambers with dynamite. The Red Army burned down several of the barracks at Birkenau, and then local residents used remnants as building materials (Lennon & Foley 2007: 46-7). 'True international accord was not reached until 1977. . .the work of the International Auschwitz Committee (IAC) achieved the designation of Auschwitz-Birkenau as a World Cultural Heritage Site in 1973' (Lennon &

Foley 2007: 49). Well, a World Heritage site presents policy-makers and tourists with a dilemma, as John Lennon and Malcolm Foley have pointed out, and so does 'Schindler tourism'. The book *Schindler's Ark* by Thomas Keneally (1982) was filmed as *Schindler's List* by Steven Spielberg, which affected tourism immensely. The 'Schindler tour' was created in 1994–5, and for many tourists, the film sets located near Krakow were exciting. 'They were nearer, more contained and less time-consuming to visit than travelling to and re-viewing the real camps of Auschwitz I and Birkenau' (Lennon & Foley 2007: 64). The policy-makers, handling so called 'dark tourism', have to be careful, since partly distorted messages and poorly told stories, in combination with mute tourist brochures, say nothing about 'the political and historical preconditions that made the Holocaust possible' (Lennon & Foley 2007: 65).

The pilgrimage into the void is a parallel tour, in progress while the pilgrims over and over again confront well-groomed ghastliness. The construction of memory in memorials is shown when Holocaust monuments are examined. They 'reflect particular kinds of political and cultural knowledge even as they determine the understanding future generations will have of this time' (Young 1988: 173). James Young has tried to examine the activity of Holocaust memorialisation and the ways in which viewers respond. The rep-



Gas chamber in Majdanek death camp. The walls were coloured blue from cyanide. When the chamber was full, small children and infants were thrown over the heads of those standing, to keep a high efficiency. Photo © Jacob Kaluski 2009.



Anything of economic value was taken care of. Prostheses were collected and sorted for potential sale or use among those who 'served their cause'. Photo © Jacob Kaluski 2009.

representations (memorials, museums, monuments etc.) transform the memory, and affect the Holocaust narratives. The memorial camps collapse the distinction between themselves and what they evoke, 'their significance derives both from the knowledge we bring to them and from their explanatory inscriptions' (Young 1988: 175). The pilgrimage of the Swedish Jews in Poland meant a different kind of voidness to different individuals: some of the pilgrims had deep historical knowledge, and were familiar with political and cultural circumstances, other pilgrims were in the dark about those matters. Irrespective of a frame of reference, to grasp the messages of memorial sites, places that call to mind what relatives went through when the Final Solution became a primary goal of the war for the Nazis in 1941, is horror *per se*.

Liora Gubkin's book *You Shall Tell Your Children: Holocaust memory in American Passover ritual* begins: 'Be very, very careful, for we are prone to forgetting fast' (Gubkin 2007: 1). A pilgrimage in the void of 'history-less-ness' can appear in the form of new ideas, while memorials pass by or penetrate the memory storage of the pilgrim. The challenge of Holocaust memory is enormous. We can see the Holocaust as 'Otherworld':

[T]he word 'Auschwitz' often serves as metonym, representing the whole of the destruction of the Jews during the Shoah. Auschwitz is a significant icon for the experience of the concentration camps and the evil acts committed in them. . . The ruins of Auschwitz reside in Poland; 'Auschwitz' as



Shoes exhibited in Auschwitz I. The greater part came from Auschwitz II-Birkenau.
Photo © Jacob Kaluski 2009.

icon for the horrors of the Holocaust resides at the limits of our experience. (Gubkin 2007: 14.)

The pilgrims were confronted with stimuli that made thoughts take on an active, embodied quality. ‘Ultimately, however, the subject remains the facilitator of her own experience; she must actively engage her imagination, set the “stage” for the idea to have impact. The subject’s experience is the site for transformative knowledge’ (Gubkin 2007: 15).

When it comes to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and ‘ghetto heroes’, as a place name in Polish town quarters, we can see that the unique fate of the Jews, the Holocaust, did not find expression in the Polish landscape. A significant part of contemporary Polish society believes that Polish and Jewish sufferings during World War II were similar and comparable.

Thus, although there are Ghetto Heroes squares in many Polish towns, there are no Holocaust Victims squares. This seems to be a case of the heroization of death. The death of the Ghetto fighters accorded well with the Polish historical paradigm of glorifying those who died in a hopeless fight. It was therefore much more easily assimilated into the Polish mental landscape and subsequently into the landscape of Polish towns than the tragedy of the Holocaust. Moreover, the focus on the heroization of death equalized, consciously or not, the situation of the Jews and the Poles: the latter had many heroic fighters too. (Kapralski 2001: 47–8.)



Crematoria in Auschwitz I. In November 1944, Heinrich Himmler ordered the crematoria in Auschwitz II-Birkenau to be destroyed before the Red Army would reach the camp. Photo © Jacob Kaluski 2009.

To be Jewish in a secular world is a condition of wakefulness, of perpetual motion and interrogation of God, the world, and above all oneself. Even a Jew must become Jewish, and when I heard Lennart talk about Judaism, I realized that he is engaged in the process of becoming ‘more Jewish’. His mother survived Auschwitz. ‘The Jews in Poland dwindled from 3,300,000 to about 5,000’ (Cohn-Sherbok 2003: 321). The horror of the atrocities, so pedantically recorded by German bureaucratic efficiency in tons of captured paperwork, engages scholars and survivors, psychoanalysts and pedagogues, to such an extent that myriads of books proliferate alongside the newest accretions to collective memory: memorials and museums. A veritable new scholarly industry has arisen, derisively called ‘*shoa* business’, which threatens to trivialize the special nature of what has come to be known as Holocaust Studies (Bowman 1997: 211–15). But to the Jews on the bus tour in June 2009, on a pilgrimage into the void, the ‘special nature’ was clear, and my informants had at least one thing in common with Kierkegaard: they understood that the truth is not something we know, but something we are, or are in the process of becoming. Contemporary Judaism is by no means homogeneous in its approach to the world and the place of Jews within it. Modern Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist branches seek to negotiate a range of compromises between the traditions of Judaism and the demands of a modern, secu-

lar world. The persistence of conflicting ideas within the main movements of Judaism, about what happens to the body and soul in the afterlife, shapes popular Jewish understanding of the integrity of the body and what entails a proper burial. Of course, the spectrum of Jewish responses to the afterlife affects how the living continues to relate to the deceased. In this way, beliefs about the afterlife and rites of death and mourning are clearly intertwined (Golbert 2006: 49–52).

My studies of Jewish pilgrimages in Central Asia organised by Chabad-Lubavitch, have shown that the recitation of the Kaddish is particularly significant. The Kaddish prayer is probably the most important single ritual around burial grounds. It is the most frequently and deeply experienced aspect of Jewish custom for pilgrims at concentration camps; the most ethnically rooted moment, sweeping together all the individuals present, connecting them with earlier parts of self, with each other, and with Jews who had lived and died before. Anita Diamant writes about the power of the Kaddish prayer in terms both of the meaning of its words and the repetition of its sounds. ‘The mystery of Kaddish is revealed every time it is spoken aloud with others. The truth is that the sounds of the words are more important than their definitions. The text is secondary to the emotional experience of its recitation. The meaning only come clear when given communal voice.’ (Diamant 1998: 14.)

Memories of the Holocaust

Richard Rubenstein published his *After Auschwitz* in 1966 and created a great interest in the Holocaust. Starvation of ‘useless mouths’ was practiced in Poland, before the extermination centre at Chelmno was ready. Starvation was the method of murdering preferred by German bureaucrats. ‘At Auschwitz, which became the largest killing center, the magnitude of death was the equivalent of one death per minute, day and night, for a period of three years’ (Rubenstein & Roth 1987: 147). To many, surviving was a miracle, and prayers together with Jewish tales helped them to go on. The anecdotes, parables, legends, philosophy and so on, that explain or illustrate points of the Jewish law is called *The Aggadah*; some call it storytelling, others ‘theological narration’, since it comprises biblical tales and rabbinical midrashic elaborations of biblical stories. With its more popular emphasis on miracles and legends, it is not, however, a basis for *halachic* judgements.

The Shoah is to be distinguished from traditional Christian anti-semitism by virtue of its transcendence and inversion of all ethical and mediating norms.

The Nazi racial imperative that *all* Jews must die, and that they must die here and now, has no Christian precedent (Katz 1994: 580).

Today, we can see *Shoah's* memories as *Aggadah*, according to Rabbi Peter Knobel, who belongs to the Union for Reform Judaism.⁴ The *Aggadah* was of great importance to many survivors, since they found existential and psychological truth in the ancient mythic hyperbole of the rabbis. Jeremy Popkin has studied first-person narratives and the memory of the Holocaust, and he suggests 'that historians need to re-examine the question of whether the Holocaust experience necessarily strengthened a survivor's sense of Jewish identity and convinced those who lived through it that assimilation was an impossible life strategy' (Popkin 2003: 78). Conflicted attitudes about Jewish identity or a sense of not belonging wholly to any group are a common theme in these memoirs. Ann had the same feeling after the pilgrimage, a bit of an outsider, now being particularly conscious about collective memories, and therefore trying hard to find her context in the Jewish tradition. Lennart has solved this problem through becoming a Chassidic, Orthodox Jew. This gives him a strong sense of belonging. According to Emil Fackenheim, Jews have to find an authentic Jewish future, whether religious or secular. 'The *Tikkun* which for the post Holocaust Jew is a moral necessity is a possibility because during the Holocaust itself *Tikkun* was already actual' (Fackenheim 1999: 392). It is all about mending the world; there is a Jewish future with a recovered tradition—for the religious Jew, the Word of God, for the secular Jew, the word of man and his 'divine spark' (Fackenheim 1999: 393). Every act of human good, like the performance of *mitzvot*, restores and perfects the broken universe, in a process called *tikkun* ('rectification'). Thus the classic Jewish process of turning from sin to righteousness, *teshuvah*, is as critical for the universe as it is for the human relationship with God.

Fackenheim was a leader of the existentialist revolt against the rationalist establishment of liberal Jewish theology. Nevertheless, he conceded that Elie Wiesel and Richard Rubenstein were right: God was not present in the Holocaust. But what do we mean by 'Holocaust'? Fackenheim identifies two factors in the Holocaust that newly transform the old problem of suffering. In previous persecutions, Jews could often save their lives by conversion; but the Nazis condemned the Jews because of their biology. Being itself was made a capital crime and there was nothing one could do about it. Thus, the Nazis knew the evil they were doing. They were educated people whose moral consciousness was shaped by a Christian culture, yet they routinely proceeded to

4 <http://www.bethemet.org/Highlights/Sermons/PSKYK5767.pdf>.

process the mass murder of Jews. During the last stages of the war, the hatred of Jews transcended the drive to self-preservation. After the war, Fackenheim no longer found it useful to distinguish between religious and secular Jews. Any Jew, regardless of label, who helps preserve and maintain or, better, enriches the life of the Jewish people fulfils the supreme Jewish responsibility of our time (cf. Fackenheim 1999: 388–95).

Jewish identity

In recovering a Jewish identity in depth, many found themselves on new terms with Hashem, the Name/Godhead. A sizeable minority within the Jewish community is now involved in exploring the dimensions of their personal relationships with God. Through mysticism or the study of texts, in liturgy or Jewish activism, many Jews are seeking to draw closer to what they sense is the still living God of the universe. In Lennart's opinion, it is more about a feeling than theological knowledge. Judaism to him and to many of his Jewish friends mostly concerns rituals. A Chassidic branch as Chabad-Lubavitch



Auschwitz I—a popular tourist sight not far from Krakow. Since the museum site combines elements from Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau, it can be difficult for the visitors to comprehend what is preserved, and what is moved and restored. Photo © Jacob Kaluski 2009.

brings about Jewish tradition and Jewishness in a plain and clear way, it makes Judaism visible and perceivable, and therefore it is attractive.

The children of the survivors, living in Sweden today, want to assert a positive Jewish identity, as practising or secular, as consciously living individuals adding creative input, as Jews, to society as a whole. To Lennart, the rituals of Chabad-Lubavitch are helpful. He fears ideas like those by which the remembered presence of Jews and Jewish space can become a symbol of the past. Therefore, to be active and support the publishing of new educational material about Jews, Jewish culture, and Jewish history is of importance. It helps the next generation to stay Jewish in the secular Swedish society. Jewish organizations are trying to develop strategies to secure that there is actual living input. But in many cases, there is a problem of representation. As Ruth Ellen Gruber puts it:

There is a difference between official, established Judaism and how Jews actually live. And there is an imagined Judaism, created *ex nihilo*. How do we Jews represent Jewish culture in relation to ourselves, to non-Jews, in the media? Should we participate or stand by? . . . Representation is a moving target. Jewish culture is undergoing such changes that to pin it down to one representation is an illusion. (Gruber 2002: 238–9.)

Rituals

Altogether—the pilgrimage in Poland, the lifestyle in Sweden—it all comes to rituals. The social dramas mirroring controversies fomenting in the group psyche, that Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner have discussed, are always of interest when it comes to rituals. They constitute a norm for actions. This imaginative force for action implies that the past can be read as the exclusive source of the present, when connected to traditionalism. To experience the real meaning of being part of a continuing tradition is important to Lennart. He is alive to the fact that ‘tradition describes the body of representations, images, theoretical and practical intelligence, behavior, attitudes and so on that a group or society accepts in the name of the *necessary* continuity between the past and the present’ (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 87). What comes from the past is only constituted as tradition when the old has authority in the present, but rituals are here as becomings all the time. Lennart says:

I know most of all the important rituals and can even function as *chazan*⁵ in the synagogue. But, honestly, I am not sure that I fully understand what I sing or read, but it is not so important, it is the feeling of belonging that matters, and the whirl of happiness that I experience. (Lennart, August 4, 2009.)

Religious worship to Lennart is an action such as lighting the Chanukah *menorah* in December, doing things in a Jewish way; and in the different rituals there is space for a homage to his mother, who suffered in Auschwitz during the war.

The Chanukah menorah can, and does, bring many Jews back to their Jewish roots. . . Chanukah commemorates the revolt, in 165 BCE, of a small band of Jewish warriors led by Judah the Maccabee against the powerful Syrian-Greek occupiers of ancient Israel. . . the Jews recaptured their Temple and tried to light the menorah inside but found just one day's supply of sanctified oil. Miraculously, the Temple oil burned for eight days, long enough for more oil to be produced. (Fishkoff 2003: 287.)

On the third eve of Chanukah 2007/5768, the Chabad Rebbe of Stockholm, Chaim Greisman, lighted Chanukah candles with Nobel Prize laureates in the park Kungsträdgården, in Stockholm city. It was a success to all present. The lightning of large, outdoor *menorahs* in cities around the world, often filmed and telecasted, is part of Chabad's outreach efforts. 'These efforts not only transform a private, domestic ritual into a large-scale, public spectacle with universal implications; they also establish acts of publicizing the miracle of Hanukkah as integral to the miracle itself, essential to realizing its spiritual significance' (Shandler 2009: 243).

Lennart draws attention to what *Jerusalem Post* journalist Sue Fishkoff has written: 'The Lubavitcher Rebbe said that by going beyond our nature and reaching out to someone else, we can bring about a transformation of the entire world' (Fishkoff 2003: 299–300). Religion is about generosity, on many different levels. And *tikkun* is the present scheme of creation, which is intended to rectify the spiritual damage that occurred when the world of *tohu* (the original scheme of creation) ended. To be generous is a way to mend the world. *Tikkun* refers to the elaborate activity of mending the cosmic flaws brought about by the intra-divine rupture known as the 'breaking of the ves-

5 A Jewish cantor who helps lead the congregation in songful prayer.

sels,' as well as by human sin. But performances of intricate contemplative and theurgic rites are not feasible to most Jews of today. A Chassidic Jew, with a family and full time job, tries to find plausible ways, since *tikkun* is a central concept in the history of *kabbalah*: 'It signifies both the positive function that man fulfills generally when he serves God, and also the purpose of prayer in particular' (Tishby 1995: 362). The worshipper and the physical world can both be restored by human prayer.

The first *tikkun* is the restoration of oneself, self-perfection; the second *tikkun* is the restoration of this world; the third *tikkun* is the restoration of the world above throughout all the hosts of heaven; the fourth *tikkun* is the restoration of the holy name through the mystery of the holy chariots, and the mystery of all the worlds above and below with the proper kind of restoration (Tishby 1995: 362).

The *tikkunim* (restorations) during the process of unification open the supernal source of influence and cause it to flow down from one level to the next. This inflow spreads bliss and satisfaction, and the followers of Rebbe Greisman in Stockholm feel good about their belonging, without having the theoretical insights that he has. In the rituals they get his knowledge served in a comprehensible way. Chabad-Lubavitch is to a high degree about *shechinah* ('indwelling'), the divine power that is present in everything. 'The Godly "energy" that fills the universe, giving life and existence to each created being in accordance with its particular characteristics. . . The *Shekhinah* [= *shechinah*] is also called Knesset Israel ("the community of Israel") because it is the collective source of the souls of the Jewish people.' (Steinsaltz 2007: 322.)

All Jews who suffer shall see affliction and torment as more than personal; problems shall be placed 'within the context of the entire Jewish people, as a representation of the *Shekhinah*, the presence of God. . . This idea is expressed in almost every Jewish prayer, keeping prayer from remaining solely on the individual level.' (Steinsaltz 2007: 36.) This is religion to Lennart, the feeling of togetherness, and Adin Steinsaltz is an important person in Lennart's life. 'We take the problem out of its private context and instead intercede on behalf of the individual as a part of the Jewish people' (Steinsaltz 2007: 36). In Isaak Luria's view, the most fundamental and ultimate goal of all human existence is *tikkun*. The liberation of divine light in all of its forms, from its entrapment in the material sphere, its return to its source on high, and the ascent of all the worlds to their elaborate and painstaking regimen of contemplative devo-

tion. This reparation was conceived by Luria as synonymous with messianic redemption. (Fine 2003: 144.)

Messianic ideas

The great Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–94) was proclaimed as the Messiah by many Chabadniks. In 1998 the Central Committee of Chabad-Lubavitch Rabbis issued a statement denouncing this kind of messianism:

Belief in the coming of the Moshiach and awaiting his imminent arrival is a basic tenet of the Jewish faith. It is clear, however, that conjecture as to the possible identity of Moshiach is not part of the basic tenet of Judaism . . . The preoccupation with identifying the Rebbe as Moshiach is clearly contrary to the Rebbe's wishes. (Fishkoff 2003: 268–9.)

Orthodox rabbi and professor David Berger published *The Rebbe, the Messiah and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference* in 2001. Berger argues that the assertion a person could begin a messianic mission, die, and posthumously return to complete his mission has been unanimously rejected by the Sages and Jewish polemicists for nearly 2,000 years. The 'dominant institutions of the Lubavitch movement are either overtly messianist or unwilling to declare unequivocally that the Rebbe is not the Messiah' (Berger 2008: 92). Conservative Judaism, Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism all have messianic ideas in their theologies, but the liberal Jews belonging to those branches never talk about the arrival of a flesh-and-blood saviour. According to Chabad, though, *be'as ha'Moshiach*, the coming of Messiah, is a foundation stone. Even though, as Gershom Scholem pointed out, there was a neutralization of messianism in early Chassidism (Scholem 1971: 176–202).

To an analytic person such as Lennart, messianic ideas are not so attractive. Swedish followers agree with Fishkoff when she asks: 'Why didn't Schneerson himself put a stop to Chabad messianism?' In the US, many left the movement because of the Messiah proclamation.

But Lubavitch spokesman Zalman Shmotkin says that after March 1992, Schneerson had expressive aphasia and was physically unable to communicate his needs and wishes. . . Any statements issued in the Rebbe's name during the final two years of his life were filtered through his closest aides, themselves divided as to how far they believed and were willing to push his messianic status. (Fishkoff 2003: 266.)

To the pilgrim Lennart, Chabad-Lubavitch is a way of being Jewish, it is a communion that strengthens his ties with his dead relatives, and with family and Jewish friends all over the world. Chabad-Lubavitch in the United States sends emissaries to all corners of the globe, and 'in particular has provided religious guidance and facilities to Jews in countries of oppression and persecution. More so than any other ultra-Orthodox group, Habad Hasidism [Chabad Chassidism] has learned how to utilize the advantages of a prosperous society and the tools of modern technology for the dissemination of its teachings.' (Ravitzky 1996: 181–2.)

Several members of liberal Conservative Judaism are not so happy about the spreading of Chabad and the fact that it is found all over the world. To some of the pilgrims, this is 'tricky'. Aviezer Ravitzky formulates it for them:

[O]n the one hand, Habad Hasidism adheres to a consistent, radically conservative posture regarding matters of faith and religious norms: it clearly rejects such concepts as liberalism, pluralism, and universal human equality; it condemns any trace of modern epistemological skepticism; and it openly advocates fundamentalist positions on questions relating to religion and science. On the other hand, more than any other trend in contemporary Haredi Jewry, it displays a dynamic and activist attitude, approaching reality as a field of movement and change, consciously expanding the boundaries of its religious involvement. (Ravitzky 1996: 183.)

But unlike many critical Conservative Jews, Ravitzky is fascinated by the Chabad movement. When he wrote about them in 1996, it was hard to tell in what direction the Lubavitch Chassidic movement would go. Still, Ravitzky pointed out that the concrete messianism and the intense personal dependence probably would disappear. According to the followers that I have talked to, belonging to the Swedish branch, he was right about that, and the interesting feature emphasized in the analysis is that the far-reaching acosmic conception inherent in traditional theology and ideology, in fact, suits secularized Jews of today who search for 'more Jewishness'. Chabad rejects a dichotomy between sacred and profane; divine immanence is present everywhere, and all of being is conceived as an arena for the service of God (cf. Ravitzky 1996: 184).

Dichotomy constructed

A dual focus, alternating between two pilgrimages with different approaches, with two different branches of Judaism behind them, makes my informants placeholders. They are defined by their groups rather than being presented as characters, whose ideas constitute unconnected subjects. The dual focus depends heavily on a distinction between those who are within and those who are without. But ‘insider/outsider’ changes depending on the focus of attention. Rituals that celebrate inclusion are of importance in Jewish life, and the risk of exclusion is high. I am shifting between Orthodox Lennart and Conservative Ann in the text, since a dual focus system disregards cause-and-effect connections.

Occasionally, the informants operate as representatives of a group or category rather than as independent individuals. Tradition and other established systems are therefore very important. Chabad and Orthodox Chassidism is depicted as one group, and the other group painted is liberal Conservative Judaism: Lennart and Ann. Causation is not central, ‘[f]or we understand that the past not only molds the present, but at the same time, the present sculpts the past’ (Markle 1995: 136).

The Holocaust has different connotations for the two individuals; neither of Ann’s parents was interned, but nevertheless, the Holocaust, this specific large-scale human destruction, is part of Ann’s life in many ways.

Until a phenomenon has a commonly agreed upon name, it lacks a certain cognitive reality. The way in which we define a subject and identify it determines, at least in part, the way that we think of it, its meaning for us. With a name, we gain an identity, a certain clarity; but as boundary, the name also excludes as foreign that which is on the other side. (Markle 1995: 137.)

Holocaust memorabilia

For pilgrims, souvenirs are important and the Holocaust is an object of unfinished mourning for all Jews. Hana Greenfield, who was in Terezin, Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen, says in her *Fragments of Memory* that ‘[w]hen visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau some years ago, three survivors crawled inside the gas chambers, as macabre as it may sound, to scrape out some ashes to take home with them’ (Greenfield 1998: 93). Gerald Markle has also pointed out the same phenomenon when it comes to Auschwitz: ‘These visitors have not left the site untouched. The pile of inmate shoes and the mound of women’s hair are

considerably smaller now than they were a few years ago. One presumes that tourists, for whatever reasons, treat objects as memorabilia (or icons?) and take them home.' (Markle 1995: 1.)

Unlike souvenirs, memorabilia are valued for their connection to a historical event. Holocaust memorabilia covers documents from the ghettos and camps, and are today sold on the Internet. To Ann, Nechama Tec's *Defiance: The Bielski Partisans* (2008) became a special choice. She picked up the book at the Galicia Jewish Museum, located in Kazimierz, the Jewish quarter of Krakow. After the tour to concentration camps, a book that describes the hero Tuvia Bielski, who rescued more than a thousand of his fellow Jews from the Holocaust, was breathtaking and more than 'a book'. It was *the* antithesis, not just an extraordinary feat worth recording, but something unbelievable, and in a way spiritual—a carrier of memorabilia. Not to be compared to amulets, *kame'a*, which are supposed to be 'peculiarly potent objects'. The Biblical Hebrews were well acquainted with their merits. [Nothing of value for a matter-of-fact person as Ann, though.] Their use was very extensive in the Talmudic period, and was even accepted by certain rabbinic authorities (Trachtenberg 2004: 132.)

Two ritual objects of ambiguous character, the *phylacteries* and the *mezuzot*, have played a part in superstitious usage as well as in religious. The phylacteries were popularly believed to drive off demons, but the effect of religious teaching and custom made for a triumph of religion over superstition. They lost their meaning as 'anti-demonic', and when someone says that the *tefillin* wards off the unwelcome ministrations of Satan, the sense is figurative. The *mezuzah*, on the contrary, retained its original significance as an amulet despite rabbinic efforts to make it an exclusively religious symbol. Originally a primitive charm, affixed to the door-post to keep demons out of the house, the rabbinic leaders literally gave it a religious content in the shape of a strip of parchment inscribed with 'Shema' and 'Ve-haja im shamoain' (from Deut. 6 and 11) in the hope that it might develop into a constant reminder of the principle of monotheism, so instead of prohibiting the charm, the religious leaders re-interpreted it (cf. Trachtenberg 2004: 145–6). Holocaust museums sell *mezuzot*, but it would be hard to classify them as souvenirs, even though they are special keepsakes. They are part of a pilgrimage between former concentration camps, and remind Jewish visitors of their heritage.

A pilgrimage can be a collective affirmation of values and the journey is both physical and psychological. In fact, visiting sites which are connected to death, have become a significant part of tourist experiences in many societies. A death site which is part of a stop on a coach tour itinerary is as important

to the individual as a trip to a remote shrine, but maybe physically somewhat more convenient. Clearly, 'some death sites have become the locations (or, even, excuses) for service industries supplying conveniently-spaced watering-holes, lavatories and retail outlets designed to intervene in the journeys made by visitors through our heritage sites and landscapes' (Lennon & Foley 2007: 5).

Lennart with his 'enjoying-every-precious-moment-here-and-now' attitude only buys costly and valuable keepsakes, and nothing sumptuous was on offer during the pilgrimage, so he bought nothing.

Orthodox Judaism

My female informant, Ann, is a representative of modern, liberal Conservative Judaism. Lennart represents Orthodox Judaism and the *baal teshuvah* phenomenon. The people making this sweeping change in their lives grew up in a secular world. They went to good colleges and got excellent jobs. They did not become Orthodox because they were afraid, or because they needed a militaristic set of commands for living their lives. They chose Orthodoxy because it satisfied their need for intellectual stimulation and emotional security.

[D]espite his learning, [*baal teshuvah*/B.T.] is often still ignorant and unsure of the reasons for everything he does. . . The newly-religious B.T. is unable to distinguish between Law (*halachah*), custom (*minhag*), and stringency (*chumrah*); being as fearful as he is of the slightest transgression, he simply emulates his mentors or takes upon himself the most extreme stringencies. (Bauer 1991: 16–17.)

Chabad followers in certain countries are told that an intellectual and ideological equality exists between the genders in Chabad-Lubavitch, which, however, seems to be a myth. As already mentioned, but worth underlining: in the religious schools, boys and girls study different subjects. 'Women were encouraged to study certain Jewish texts, especially those essential to the keeping of Jewish tradition, but they were discouraged from studying the Talmud and philosophical/theological texts, in accordance with traditional Orthodox culture' (Ehrlich 2004: 200).

Women study practical or inspirational literature, not *halachah* as the men do. They learn the observances necessary for their roles as homemakers and mothers (family purity and *kashrut*).

Even women employed outside the home in outreach functions did not have extensive authority within the movement, and were limited to pub-

lishing cookbooks and magazines for women, with spiritually uplifting stories and advice on how to raise children. This is a reflection of the prevalent view in Habad [Chabad] of the essential difference between men and women. (Ehrlich 2004: 200.)

To this day, in almost all right-wing Orthodox schools women are not taught the Talmud because of the Talmudic injunction (*Mishnah Sota* 3:4), that liken teaching a woman Torah to teaching her frivolity, since women are known to be light-headed! And, in fact, not until 1984 were women belonging to Conservative Judaism given the full right to receive *aliyot* and read from the Torah.

Conservative Judaism, Maimonides, and back to Chassidism

When Conservative Judaism confronted feminism in the 1970s, the movement realized that crisis represents both danger and opportunity. Then the question about the ordination of women threatened to overthrow the carefully constructed structures of Jewish communal life. It represented anarchy. The ordination issue meant a breaking with the past, and in the early stages, many men fervently prayed that the issue would simply go away. But it did not. Instead, the calls for action grew stronger and louder. A commission was formed between 1977 and 1979, and it was required to make a decision. The report dealt at length with the *halachic* dimensions and the commission came to the conclusion that there is no direct *halachic* objection to the acts of training and ordaining a woman to be a rabbi, preacher and teacher in Israel. It was agreed that a decision not to ordain women would mean the rejection of a pool of talented, committed, and energetic women who could play a major role in revitalizing Jewish tradition and values within the Conservative Movement. For four years the issue lay dormant; in 1983, at the Dallas convention, the debate was long and bitter. It was inevitable that sooner or later a woman ordained at the Reform or Reconstructionist school would apply for membership in the Assembly. At the end of 1983 the Seminary faculty voted 'yes' and in 1985, Conservative Judaism had its first woman rabbi (cf. Gillman 1993: 124–36). Gerson Cohen is a very important man for Conservative Judaism, also in Stockholm. Morton Narowe emphasizes in his Swedish memoirs, that Cohen was an excellent teacher, and very open minded, in a straightforward critical way (Narowe 2005: 90–1).

In my constructed dichotomy between Ann and Lennart, that is, liberal Conservative Judaism and Chassidic Orthodoxy, I now turn to Moses Maimonides (1135/8–1204). In his times, it was also a matter of confronting

new challenges by compiling a code of Jewish law, but then it was more a matter of creating something that would make Jews independent of any central institution or rabbinic authority.

Maimonides wrote a *Guide for the Perplexed* so that Jewish philosophers would accept and take over certain intellectual ideas, or at least, adapt to the currents of the contemporary surroundings. In the debate about female rabbis, Cohen said: 'To me, the spirit of Cordova is the response of a community that seeks creativity, the opening of the gates of thought and practice, the creation of new vehicles to unite Jewry in spirit and practice as a consequence of challenge' (Gillman 1993: 139).

The *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides' 14 volumes on Jewish law, established him as the leading rabbinic authority of his time. His philosophical masterpiece, the above-mentioned *Guide for the Perplexed*, is a sustained treatment of Jewish thought and practice that seeks to resolve the conflict between religious knowledge and secular. Cohen's colleague Joel Roth, an expert on *halachic* issues, decided to help Cohen with a formal legal opinion, and wrote 60 pages in *The Ordination of Women as Rabbis: Studies and Response*, edited by Simon Greenberg at the Jewish Theological Seminary (1988). It contains Gerson Cohen's address to the Rabbinical Assembly convention in 1979, and Roth's contribution was very influential. Reactionary men emphasized, that the rabbi must lead the congregation in prayer as a *shaliah tzibbur*, literally 'the representative of the community', in place of other Jews who do not fulfil the obligations; but a woman cannot do that, since she herself is not obligated to observe certain commandments. According to tradition, women are freed from time-bound commandments, those that have to be performed at a specific time, for example thrice-daily prayer. 'Roth's answer is that Jewish law provides for the possibility of a woman's obligating herself to perform all the positive commandments, effectively overriding the freedom given to her by the tradition. His recommendation is that women who wish to enter the rabbinate should privately and personally perform this act of self-obligation.' (Gillman 1993: 142–3.) For many, the argument was decisive, but traditionalists were, of course, negative to all kind of 'pros'.

The rationality in Maimonides played an important role for the Conservative rabbis. Not only does *Mishneh Torah* systematize all the commandments of the Torah, it tries to show that every part of Jewish law serves a rational purpose and nothing is given for the sake of mere obedience. Chancellor Gerson Cohen, through his fiat, gave Roth's argument authenticity. The realization of the proposal concerning 'self-obligation' had a rational purpose, only a prejudiced mind can deny that. And, of course, a religious

person who is strictly Orthodox will have a ‘made up mind’, especially if he belongs to a community in which women ‘undermine community stability’ when they show nonconformity. ‘Certainly these communities have a clear interest in suppressing or ridding themselves of those members. . . . Among people who believe that there is only one truth—and that they are in possession of it—tolerating other points of view is, by definition, impossible.’ (Winston 2005: 170.)

When Hella Winston did fieldwork among Chassidic Jews in Brooklyn for her doctoral dissertation in sociology, and met Chabad emissaries, she realized that Lubavitcher outposts are rarely as insular and tight-knit as they are in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. And ‘their openness to all Jews—in addition to their use of English, more modern styles of dress, and familiarity with the outside world and secular culture—seems to make Lubavitch an attractive, non-threatening option for many Jewish people who are seeking a deeper involvement with the religion’ (Winston 2005: 72). Away from the Messiah chanting in Brooklyn, many followers started wondering, like one of Winston’s female informants, ‘if the rebbe wasn’t actually Moshiach, but merely a normal human being, why should she have to live her life according to his dictates, submitting to all the rules and regulations of the community over which he presided, even in death?’ (Winston 2005: 75) (see the Appendix below).

On the pilgrimage, Ann represents the rational Maimonides, because of her belonging to Conservative Judaism, and Lennart becomes a symbol of the esoteric interpretations made by Chabad-Lubavitch. According to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the theological system of importance is *Dirah Betachtonim*, from the brief Midrashic statement ‘God desired to have a Dirah Betachtonim’, that is, ‘a dwelling place in the lower realms’. In his thousands of essays and talks the Rebbe did expound a here-and-now oriented *Weltanschauung*.

To Maimonides, in the interpretations of leading scholars within Conservative Judaism, the messianic era is primarily a spiritual phenomenon, something transcendent. Chabad also attaches significance to the spiritual value of the messianic era, but with a striking difference in nuance. There are Chabad followers with different attitudes in this matter, but according to the Rebbe Schneerson’s ideas, Maimonides is interpreted in a way which is closer to Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (1194–1270), or Nachmanides, who devoted a lengthy discussion in his Commentary on the Pentateuch to a clarification of Maimonides’ views. Nachmanides was the foremost *halachist* of his age. Like Maimonides before him, Nachmanides was a Spaniard who was both a physician and a great Torah scholar. However, unlike the rationalist Maimonides,

Nachmanides had a strong mystical bent. His biblical commentaries are the first ones to openly incorporate the mystical teachings of *kabbalah*.

According to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, it is a principle of faith that there will come a time when God will resurrect the dead.

Maimonides insists, however, that this will be but a temporary period. Eventually, the physical body must disintegrate. Ultimately, the soul will free itself from the body's grip and live a free spiritual existence. At the end of all time, resurrection too will be in the past, for the ultimate end will be spiritual rather than physical. (Levin 2002: 136.)

Rebbe Schneerson was of another opinion. He took Nachmanides' side against Maimonides on this matter. In the theology of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, 'the final state, the one in which the ultimate nature of reality will be realized, is in fact the state of resurrection. A spiritual reality does exist, even today, for souls after they pass on from this life—but it is that reality that is temporary: once the dead will be resurrected, that will be the way things will remain.' (Levin 2002: 136.) The *Dirah Betachtonim* idea of Chabad and the views of Conservative Judaism, when it comes to the final state, diverge. They also have different opinions about the ideal direction, before it is time for the terminal station.

According to *Dirah Betachtonim*, where transcendence itself is regarded as a light that blinds, hiding the essence, where escaping the body into a spiritual state amounts to being lured by the brilliant luminosity of Divine features (*manifestations*) at the expense of that which is truly rewarding, namely, a relationship with the Essence of G-d in the physical—the ultimate state of reality at the end of days must be a physical reality, souls resurrected in bodies. (Levin 2002: 137.)

In 1898 Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, the fifth rebbe of the movement, delivered a *maamar* (Chassidic discourse/essay), and in this he wrote about the superiority of the body: 'With the power of its primary source, the body forces the soul. . .to descend and draw itself forth to animate the body' (Schneersohn 2000: 39).

On this trip between concentration camps and Holocaust museums, one pilgrim is travelling as representative of a belief system in which the dead are somewhere in a spiritual realm, transcendent, beyond this world; while the other pilgrim has a Chassidic position, with a doctrinal background that

stresses personal aspects of redemption. Lennart represents 'the mystical-magical model, which combines the mystical ascent to God with the descent of the mystic's soul that brings down the divine influence' (Idel 2002: 66). To many inside Chassidism, Maimonides was considered a 'stalwart rationalist', his rationalism and lack of mysticism was not exciting. 'It is therefore ironic that Schneerson should have chosen Maimonides to provide the substance for a modern declaration of the imminent redemption. . . Whatever the reason for his endorsement of Maimonides, it had the desired effect. The rationalist Maimonides became a defender of the apocalyptic, messianic world view of the highly mystical Habad Hasidim.' (Ehrlich 2004: 78.)

Within Chabad-Lubavitch, during the last decade, there has been an extraordinary messianic fervour, because many followers continued to affirm the status of messiah of the Rebbe after the summer of 1994. 'Even during the latter years of the Rebbe's life, Chabad messianism was *sui generis*. . . for the messianists in Lubavitch, imminent redemption is a certainty, and the redeemer is Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson' (Berger 2008: 22).

The Rebbe declared this to be the generation of the redemption, and according to a Maimonidean passage, he was said to have fulfilled all the criteria for a presumptive Messiah. When he died, Chabad leaflets pointed to Maimonides, and the great medieval rationalist was mobilized to defend a failed messianic mission. (Shabetai Tzevi's prophet cited the same Maimonidean excerpt *anno dazumal*.) 'Needless to say, the Rebbe's death did create an intellectual and emotional crisis. The primary arguments for the Rebbe as Messiah had manifestly collapsed. If each generation must have its Messiah, this presumably means that he must be among the living, and any appeal to Maimonides' criteria seemed clearly impossible.' (Berger 2008: 24.) But no one should underestimate the power of faith; when a prophet has spoken, no further evidence is necessary. Many booklets were produced, explaining that the Rebbe never died. He was 'absolutely not dead like other people are' and the funeral was a 'test for carnal eyes' (Berger 2008: 25). Influential people in the centres at Crown Heights in Brooklyn and Kfar Chabad in Israel believe that Schneerson will 'return from the dead (or from his place of concealment) and lead the world to redemption. With rare, courageous exceptions, the hasidim who do not believe this, among them some impressive intellectuals and communal leaders, remain publicly silent in the face of social pressures that are very difficult to resist.' (Berger 2008: 26.)

Well, one of the major factors affecting Schneerson's later leadership 'and an important motivator in the expansion of the movement's activities and

influence, was the emergence of a strong messianic element in Schneerson's teachings' (Ehrlich 2004: 82).

Belief in the resurrection of the dead, a key element in Judaism's vision of the messianic age, dates from the period of the Pharisees. 'While the Pharisees accepted the idea of resurrection, the Sadducees rejected it emphatically' (Robinson 2000: 192). If we compare with the situation at the times of someone called a Messiah:

Jesus wanted to prepare his contemporaries for the kingdom. But he neither delineated a chronology of life eternal nor a geography of the beyond. Even the resurrection of the dead was not a central theme of his proclamation, though he believed in it and therefore sided on this issue with the Pharisees and against the Sadducees [cf. Mark 12:18–27]. (Schwartz 2000: 80.)

The Pharisees were, depending on the time, a political party, a social movement, and a school of thought among Jews that flourished during the Second Temple Era (536 BCE–70 CE). After the destruction of the Second Temple, the Pharisaic sect was re-established as Rabbinic Judaism. Different groups in different situations produced apocalyptic ideas and texts, and if we call it a genre, it was characterized by a conventional manner of revelation, through heavenly journeys or visions, often 'mediated by an angel'.

The conceptual framework assumed that this life was bounded by the heavenly world and by the prospect of eschatological judgment. A revelation of an apocalyptic kind,

can provide support in the face of persecution (e.g. Daniel); reassurance in the face of culture shock (Book of the Watchers) or social powerlessness (the Similitudes of Enoch); reorientation in the wake of historical trauma (2 *Baruch*, 3 *Baruch*); consolation for the dismal fate of humanity (4 *Ezra*); or comfort for the inevitability of death (the *Testament of Abraham*). The constant factor is that the problem is put in perspective by the other-worldly revelation of a transcendent world and eschatological judgement. (Collins 1998: 280.)

But there are movements that hope for a reversal of the social order, their goals are 'this-worldly, the attainment of heaven on earth, and they are often led by a charismatic prophet. . .the messianic age would approximate to heaven on

earth. The career of Jesus of Nazareth can be viewed as that of a charismatic prophet who inspired a millenarian movement.' (Collins 1998: 281.)

The texts mentioned above are reflective compositions 'that look back on a crisis such as the destruction of Jerusalem and try to make sense of it in retrospect. The goal they envision often includes the transformation of the earth, at least for a period. But the most distinctive features of apocalyptic hope are otherworldly.' (Collins 1998: 281.)

Charismatic leaders play a very limited role in this literature, and after the failure of the Jewish revolts against Rome, the rabbis turned away from eschatological expectations. When it comes to Chabad, it is interesting that various aspects of the tradition, i.e. messianic and eschatological beliefs, flourished in the *heichalot* literature, and developed within Chassidism. *Heichalot* (the Palaces) refers to a collection of Jewish literature from Talmudic times. Many motifs of later *kabbalah* are based on the *heichalot* texts. According to Moshe Idel, the *heichalot* literature was written in the Near East sometime in the middle of the first millennium CE. 'It was transmitted to European Jewry, and the most important Jewish community was the small sect of Hasidei Ashkenaz [Chassidic Ashkenazi] active from the end of the twelfth century to the middle of the thirteenth century. The mystical aspects of the study of Torah were also adopted and elaborated by those medieval masters.' (Idel 2002: 176.)

Because of their present affiliations, when it comes to denomination, Ann stands for a vertical visionary version, and Lennart represents horizontal eschatological concerns associated with messianism. But they have something in common: they both want to reconcile themselves to the Holocaust.

To Schneerson, the hope provided by the messianic ideology justified the atrocities of the Holocaust, the growth of secularism, the decay of Orthodoxy, and the many other ills faced by the post-war generation. The messianic redemption also explained to Schneerson many apparent irregularities in the world order and the eschatological realm. He could explain what looked like absurdities as pre-messianic birth pangs, events that were necessary precursors to the coming of the *mashiach*. Events that had seemed illogical or inhuman, such as the Holocaust, could be fitted into a messianic worldview. As part of the essential change that would occur in the cosmic nature of the world with the advent of the *mashiach*, they could be endured more easily. (Ehrlich 2004: 83.)

When it comes to opposites, the two representatives of two different thought patterns will be put under a magnifying glass.

'This-worldliness' and 'other-worldliness'

The terms, 'this-worldliness' and 'other-worldliness', are often used in the study of religion, but in different ways and sometimes in senses which cut across one another. The two words basically represent a dichotomy. The question is, though, what sort of a dichotomy (or dichotomies) do they represent?

A survey made by Arvind Sharma (1981), of the various uses, suggests the following directions in which the dichotomy seems to have moved:

1. The words obviously possess a spatial connotation, to begin with. This world is right here; the other world is up there somewhere. There seems to be a simple correspondence here between the earth as this world and heaven as the other world. But this correspondence is soon lost in the study of comparative religion, when, for instance, Hinduism is referred to as other-worldly, and in Hinduism it is not *svarga* (Heaven) but *moksa* which is ultimately sought.
2. The two words can also acquire a temporal connotation, for this world is not only right here, but is here right now, while the other world is not only up there, but is to be reached usually at some point in the future, usually after one's death. This use can cut across the former one, for the other world, inasmuch as it has paradisiacal associations, may be visualized as existing on the earth, as in early Shinto which shows traces of a horizontal cosmology. In Amidism, the devout repair to the Western paradise, but significantly this other world is not referred to as 'above,' but to the West (though it could be maintained that it is both above and to the West). In popular Taoism the Three Islands of the Blessed (San Hsien Shan) are located somewhere 'between the Chinese and Japanese mainlands, but nobody who had gone there had come back'. In this case the temporal connotation of the terms 'here' could often mean 'in this life' and 'other' 'after death'. Such a criterion would make those schools of Hinduism which accept *jivanmukti*, or living liberation, this-worldly and the rest other-worldly.
3. Sometimes, probably as a result of the overtones of the word 'worldliness', this-worldliness is associated with materialism, and other-worldliness with spiritualism either of the genuine or escapist variety, but more often with the escapist. Yet an allegedly this-worldly religion like Confucianism can hardly be called materialistic; it is rather essentially humanistic.
4. Sometimes this-worldliness might be used to refer to a view of the universe which regards this perceptible world as the only reality and which

denies the existence of any other world. Ancient Hindu and modern scientific materialism could be seen as taking such a view. Yet even here, associating such a view with materialism may be rather facile, for even then there are two ways of viewing this world. It may be seen in a completely materialistic way, and then man who inhabits the earth is a creature subject entirely to laws of matter. However, this world may be seen in another way as embodying some sacred value or spiritual reality, and in this case it has a good deal in common with 'other-worldly views'. In this-worldly estimates of man, however, man achieves his fulfilment, be it material or spiritual or an integration of the two, here and now in this earthly life.

5. The above remarks suggest that the distinction between this-worldly and other-worldly religions may turn on the *locus* of salvation specified in a religion. If this be so, then again ambiguity is likely to arise in some cases. Islam could clearly be called an 'other-worldly' religion by this criterion (a fact which is interesting in itself as it is usually considered a 'this-worldly religion'), but the case of Christianity would present a problem. Early Christianity, inasmuch as it awaited the establishment of God's kingdom on earth, would then have to be regarded as other-worldly, inasmuch as it seemed to locate Heaven somewhere up there in the sky.
6. This-worldliness and other-worldliness could also be made to relate to the means by which salvation is attained rather than to its location. Thus, if one achieved salvation right here on this earth by one's own effort, it could be regarded as 'this-worldly,' as contrasted with, say, salvation through grace from a 'wholly other.' This distinction, as between *tariki* and *jiriki*, made in Japan seems relevant here.⁶
7. The dichotomy between this-worldly and other-worldly means of salvation or its site should not blind one to the fact that a religion also offers a 'this-worldly' means of transcending mundane human existence in giving a standard of morals and ethics.

It is clear, then, that the words 'this-worldliness' and 'other-worldliness' both by themselves and, especially in their application to the various religious traditions of mankind, are capable of a very versatile usage and that this versatility

6 *Jiriki* (Self power), *tariki* (Other power). 'Self power' refers to the way of seeking to attain enlightenment by the power of one's own practice, while 'Other power' refers to relying on help received from the Buddha.

seriously impairs, if it does not destroy, the dichotomy one tries to set up by using these words (cf. Sharma 1981: 36–8).

Ann belongs to a liberal branch of Conservative Judaism, and Lennart belongs to the Chassidic Orthodox group Chabad-Lubavitch, and both of them switch between this-worldliness and other-worldliness, when it comes to religious beliefs. This was the pilgrimage within the bus tour between concentration camps, the hike between the facts of Arvind Sharma. To meet his enlightening clarity, was a pilgrimage from strength to strength, and it made the pilgrim behind the pen realize that labels are there just to be removed.

Finally, if we look at Chabad Lubavitch today, the words of Martin Buber are illuminating, since he pointed out that: 'In Judaism the border between the two realms appears at first glance to be drawn with utmost sharpness. . . [but of greatest importance in Chassidism] is the powerful tendency, preserved in personal as well as in communal existence, to overcome the fundamental separation between the sacred and the profane' (Buber 1988: 20). Malka Touger has been travelling all over the world to talk about the role of a Jewish woman, and together with many, many conscientious and diligent Chabad followers, she has inspired and directed a broad array of outreach programmes and educational institutions throughout the world (Touger 2006). Both men and women in the movement work hard to make Jews everywhere answer to Judaism in the affirmative, and to identify with their 'spiritual heritage'; and the stories of Chabad-Lubavitch outreach around the world are not negligible. Many liberal rabbis are concerned about the fact that Chassidism is so widespread: from Anchorage, Alaska, to Surfers Paradise, Australia; from Novosibirsk, Siberia, to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; from Kinshasa, Congo, to Beijing, China, and everywhere in between, you will find Chabad representatives. When other-worldly Jewish pilgrims become increasingly secularised, this-worldly pilgrims prevail in areas where Judaism has been suppressed, and in cities with assimilated Jews. But since those labels are doubtful and woolly, we leave them aside, and underline one thing which is clear: Messianism is back to stay!

Appendix

According to Gershom Scholem, based on Maimonides' ideas, we can distinguish different attitudes when it comes to the messianic element in Judaism. 'The conservative attitude. . . is present-oriented, setting the messianic era beyond the realm of human pursuit' (Dan 1999: 199). Moses Maimonides' rational

renunciation of the utopian version of messianism, according to Scholem, was earnest. The messianic era will not fundamentally transform the character of human existence in the physical world. ‘Even more important is Maimonides’ insistence that messianic redemption will bring no change in the nature of religious worship; it will alter neither the ritual and ethical commandment, nor the spiritual and intellectual adherence to God that is the most important part of religion for the rationalist’ (Dan 1999: 200). But the followers of the latest Chabad-Lubavitch Rebbe, Menahem Mendel Schneerson, were convinced that he was the long-awaited King Messiah (Naor 1998: xxxviii). ‘The belief in the Rebbe’s Messianic role was augmented by the fact that he was the seventh generation from Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady. The rabbis, in reference to Moses, had said: “All seventh are beloved”. (Moses was the seventh generation from Abraham—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kehath, Amram, Moses.)’ (Naor 1998: lvi–lvii.) In the beginning of the 1990s, Chabad published announcements in newspapers and with pamphlets followers openly proclaimed the imminent coming of the Messiah. In July 1991 the Rebbe aroused great emotional frenzy, when ‘he spoke of the coming of Messiah in sharp and clear terms, such as had never been heard before’ (Ravitzky 1996: 197). Earlier, the Rebbe said: ‘We already stand upon the threshold of the days of Messiah, at the beginning of redemption’ (Ravitzky 1996: 198). No doubt, many followers were excited, and the Rebbe was not totally happy with the fact, that many ‘were gazing at him during prayer, rather than concentrating their hearts entirely upon their Father in heaven. This notwithstanding, however, the messianic dynamic has a power of its own and a logic of its own.’ (Ravitzky 1996: 198). For Maimonides, man’s fulfilment is not dependent on the coming of the Messiah. ‘Messianism, in fact, is not a postulate of his philosophical thought; regardless of how he may twist it to fit his rationalism, it remains even in this minimal state of utopianism a pure element of the stock of tradition’ (Scholem 1971: 30). But Scholem has been criticized by several *kabbalah* researchers for repeatedly focusing on ancient and medieval Jewish descriptions of the messianic era, when it comes to the redemptive process. In those texts, redemption is often pictured ‘as the intrusion of an external, transcendent force into history, bringing about its end’ (Dan 1999: 201). After 1772, Chassidism presented a new type of mystical leader who could give redemption to anyone who decided to follow him. The *tzaddik*, like the Messiah, moves spiritually between the material world and the divine, and he is supposed to have redemptive powers. According to Conservative Judaism, a cornerstone of Maimonides’ theology is that all of our characterizations of God are metaphors.

In the *Statement of Principles* published by The Rabbinical Assembly, we can read that God is a supreme, supernatural being, ‘a presence and a power that transcends us’ (*Emet ve-Emunah* 1988: 18); in Chabad-Lubavitch, though, God is here through the *tzaddik*. The soul of the mystical leader is supposed to penetrate the followers. In Chassidic Orthodox Judaism the *tzaddik* bridges the gap between man and God, and make redemption an everyday experience (Dan 1999: 84). From Rebbe Schneerson’s discourse delivered 1977: ‘G-d conferred with the souls of *tzaddikim*: God *foresaw* the pleasure that He would receive from the souls performing their divine service *below*’ (Schneerson 2001: 34).

Since the publication of the *Guide for the Perplexed*, scholars have not been sure whether to take Maimonides’ words literally, or whether to take them as clues pointing to a hidden, deeper meaning (cf. Ravitzky 1981, 1990, 2005; Strauss 1988). Of the seven reasons for using contradictions, Maimonides says he will avail himself of two. The first is relatively unproblematic: sometimes it is necessary for a teacher to say one thing to reach a student’s level of understanding, and say something else when the student becomes more advanced. The second is more troublesome: on very obscure matters, it is necessary to launch a discussion that proceeds according to one assumption and later one that proceeds according to another. Maimonides adds: ‘In such cases the vulgar must in no way be aware of the contradiction; the author accordingly uses some device to conceal it by all means’ (Seeskin 1996: 90).

There is a general agreement that Maimonides’ writing is esoteric to the degree that he addresses difficult topics and does not put everything he has to say on a particular topic in any one place. The question is whether his esotericism goes deeper than this. For example, he criticizes Aristotle’s views on the eternity of the world. Does this mean that he believed in creation, or that he was really committed to eternity? ‘For the existence of the world—created from nothing—was and is a miracle. . . [we should] not expect the world to continue to exist. We should expect it to return to its natural state: nonexistence.’ (Schneerson of Lubavitch 2002: 14–15.) Rabbi Shmuel Schneerson of Lubavitch referred to Rambam, that is Maimonides, over and over again in his discourse from 1869. Chabad-Lubavitch encourages all followers to study Maimonides, since he is one of the greatest esoteric philosophers in the eyes of the Lubavitcher Rebbes. In the reading instructions for *Tanya*, the fundamental Chabad text, Maimonides is of huge importance.

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