**Minerva School 2022**

A proposal by the Humboldt University of Berlin and the University of Haifa.

**What do we mean when we talk about Jewish-Christian dialogue?**

Jewish-Christian dialogue has thrived over the last few decades, gaining both public and scholarly attention. In most cases, this dialogue has taken place between representatives of more open branches of Christianity and Judaism, involving participants whose religious attitude is typically termed “liberal”, in the sense that both parties are united by a similar political and cultural vision that transcends their differences. Dialogue seems to be an outcome of the weakening of radical voices, which allegedly express hostility towards other religions, and of the growth of moderate religious approaches, which has enabled rational and pragmatic interfaith discussion. Jewish-Christian dialogue, in other words, can be seen as a phenomenon pertaining to the secular/liberal setting of the postwar Western world, and it happens through a modernized and moderated universal religious language.

However, this common understanding of the nature and scope of Jewish-Christian dialogue is limited in two respects. First, it does not cover the entire range of dialogical phenomena. As the studies discussed at the workshop suggest, several dialogical initiatives do not adhere to liberal criteria, which assume a rational agreement about the place of religious commitment and its contribution to a diverse society. In fact, one can find dialogical inclinations in surprisingly illiberal settings. Second, the liberal narrative of Jewish-Christian dialogue focuses mainly on the geographical and political settings of Europe and North America; it omits other types of dialogue that stem from other landscapes and their unique concerns. These non-western initiatives are grounded in alternative religious grammars and oriented towards other sets of political agendas, which often explicitly reject the liberal program.

In order to overcome a narrow approach to religious dialogue, our workshop shall focus on two topics. First, there will be an empirical examination of various projects that have been pursued in contexts that are not normally deemed amenable to dialogical logic (as it is narrowly understood). Shedding light on such initiatives, often neglected by the liberal framework of dialogue, contributes in itself to an understanding of Jewish-Christian dialogue in all its variety. Second, a critical analysis of these dialogical initiatives enables us to question the logic behind the very concept of dialogue itself. The workshop attempts to formulate a grammar suitable for dialogical variety, and to consider the issues from fresh perspectives, with a theoretical language appropriate to this multiplicity, even including phenomena that up until now have been narrowly understood through the liberal grammar of dialogue.

The workshop shall focus on dialogical initiatives that have received relatively less attention in scholarly literature. The case studies in our workshop focus on voices emerging from marginalized and non-Western landscapes and mediated under circumstances of poverty and emergency; they have been conducted in conflictual situations in which dialogue between two parties facilitates discrimination against a third party; adopting hermeneutical logic that does not presuppose secularism but rather fosters religious radicalism; and arising from groups typically called “fundamental” that do not share a liberal vision. The workshop will explore cases of direct dialogue between parties, as well as cases that are not conventionally described as dialogical, which on investigation enlarge the scope of meanings typically ascribed to the concept of “dialogue.”

Among these cases, one may consider interactions where mutual influence is enacted not through proper dialogical encounters, but through conflict and enmity, conversion, and dialogical monologues. Examples include the ways in which Catholic communities in the Middle East challenge European post-Holocaust assumptions underlying the Vatican’s dialogue with the Jews; the subtle Jewish-Christian intertextuality that can be discovered within Latin American liberation theology; the interplay between French Christian intellectuals and Jewish settlers on the West Bank; dialogue initiatives on the part of Orthodox Christians, which challenge the classical perception of Orthodox Christianity as holding onto an anti-Jewish tradition; messianic Jews and Jews for Jesus, and dialogue between Jewish and Christian fundamentalists. These cases may reveal that two different prototypes of Jewish-Christian exchange have been taking place over the last decades.

The workshop will bring together scholars from the disciplines of history, theology, philosophy, cultural studies, political science, postcolonial studies, and sociology, whose research is relevant for understanding the mutual relations and dialogue between Jews and Christians in their current plural form.

**Future impact** of the School for the corresponding field of research

This interdisciplinary workshop, which examines Jewish-Christian dialogue in all its variety, aims to: shed light on the current concept of dialogue, pinpoint its limitations, offer an alternative dialogical language, and examine the hitherto underresearched phenomena of non- or post-liberal dialogical initiatives. It brings to the fore voices from the Middle East and Latin America whose significance for dialogue has not been properly acknowledged. Additionally, by focusing on dialogue as a site of conflict, as well as its usage in conflictual situations, it provides an innovative contribution to our understanding of the scope of the meeting points between religion and politics, along with the opportunities these afford. Finally, the workshop offers new perspectives on interreligious dialogue in ways that strengthen such initiatives in their diversity.