**Minerva School 2022**

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

**What are We Talking about when We Talk about Jewish-Christian Dialogue?**

The Christian-Jewish dialogue has been thriving in the last few decades, gaining both public and scholarly attention. In most cases, this dialogue has taken place between representatives of more open flanks of both Christianity and Judaism, and involved participants who have a religious attitude typically termed “liberal”, in a sense that both parties are united by a similar political and cultural vision that transcends the differences between them. Dialogue seems to be an outcome of the weakening of radical voices, who allegedly regard relations with another religion with hostility, and to the growth of moderate religious approaches, which enables rational and pragmatic inter-faith discussions. Jewish-Christian dialogue, in other words, is judged to be a phenomenon pertaining to the secular/liberal setting of the postwar Western world, and is carried out through the means of 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 the 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 on alternative religious grammars and are oriented towards other sets of political agendas, which often explicitly rejects the liberal program.

In order to overcome a narrow approach to religious dialogue, our workshop shall focus on two topics. First, an empirical examination of a variety of projects that have been performed in contexts that are normally not deemed amenable to the dialogical logic (narrowly understood). Shedding light on such initiatives, often neglected by the liberal framework of dialogue, contributes in and of itself to the understanding of the Christian-Jewish dialogue in its variety. Second, a critical inquiry of the variety of dialogical initiatives enables us to interrogate the logic behind the very concept of dialogue itself. The workshop attempts to formulate a grammar suitable for the dialogical variety, and to think anew, with a theoretical language befitting of this multiplicity, even 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; done 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 the liberal vision. The workshop will explore both cases of direct dialogue between the parties, and cases that are not conventionally described as dialogical, whose investigation enables to enlarge the scope of meanings typically ascribed to the concept “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 are the ways in which Catholic communities in the middle East challenge the European Post Holocaust assumptions underlying the Vatican’s dialog 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 in 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 dialog between Jewish and Christian fundamentalists. These cases could unfold that two different prototypes of Jewish-Christian exchange have been taking place in the last decades.

The workshop will convene scholars from the disciplines of history, theology, philosophy, cultural studies, political science, postcolonial studies, and sociology, whose studies are 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 proposes to examine Christian-Jewish dialogue in its variety, enables to shed light on the current concept of dialogue and to pinpoint its limitations, to offer an alternative dialogical language, and to examine the hitherto under-researched phenomena of non- or post-liberal dialogical initiatives. It brings into the fore voices from the Middle East and Latin America whose significance for dialogue has not been properly acknowledged. Additionally, focusing on a dialogue as a site of conflict, as well as its usage in conflictual situations, provide an innovative contribution to the understanding of the scope and possibilities of the meeting points between religion and politics. Finally, the workshop offers new perspectives on the interreligious dialogue in ways that enable to strengthen such initiatives in their variety.