



## SCIENTIFIC FINAL REPORT – RESEARCH NETWORKS

Registration number, Östersjöstiftelsen: 22-RN-0003

Project manager: Ulrika Björk

Project title: Experimenting with Tradition: Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century East-European Jewish and German Dialogues as a Source of Philosophical Modernity

### 1. Purpose of the research network

The purpose of the research network was to explore how the circle of East-European and German thinkers of Jewish descent from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century forged a “new thinking” (in the words of German philosopher Franz Rosenzweig), by combining the Greek and the Jewish intellectual traditions in new and innovative ways, and how the renaissance of this legacy among the inter-war generation of German-Jewish sought ways to integrate the Eastern European Jewry by enlarging the intellectual space of European self-identity. With the ultimately aim of developing an application for a research project, the network gathered three researches from Södertörn University (Hans Ruin, professor of Philosophy, Lena Roos, professor of History of Religion and Jewish Studies, and Ulrika Björk, ass. professor of Philosophy), and six international scholars with expertise in German Idealism, late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century German-Jewish philosophy and theology, Hebrew biblical and Talmud interpretation: Peter E. Gordon, intellectual historian and professor of History (Harvard University), Agata Bielik-Robson, professor of Jewish Studies, (University of Nottingham/Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences), Elad Lapidot, philosopher and professor of Jewish Studies (Université de Lille), Dana Hollander, philosopher and professor of Jewish Studies (McMaster University), and Pekka Lindqvist (Åbo Academy), professor of Theology and early modern Jewish Studies.

### 2. A description of the research network’s activities funded by Östersjöstiftelsen

The research network has organized two symposia, one workshop, three guest lectures, one conference panel, and initiated one reading group. Members of the network have participated in international conferences, symposia, and workshops, and functioned as commentators of doctoral presentations at Södertörn University.

**Doctoral symposium:** International doctoral symposium with a key-note lecture by Elad Lapidot at Lund University, inviting doctoral students to present ongoing work and get advanced feedback from experts in the field. Co-organized by the research network, Philosophy at Södertörn, and Theology at Lund (Jayne Svenungsson) (June 2022).

**Workshop:** International hybrid workshop at Södertörn University with the aim of discussing topics and tentative research questions for a project application. Participants: Ulrika Björk, Dana Hollander, Elad Lapidot, Pekka Lindqvist, Lena Roos, Hans Ruin, Fanny Söderbäck, and Agata Bielik-Robson (written contribution). (November 11, 2022)

**Symposium:** “Martin Buber and the Dialogical Principle”. International symposium at Södertörn University with a key-note lecture by Silvia Richter (Goethe University Frankfurt) and presentations by MA-students from Södertörn and Åbo Akademi University, inviting students and researchers from the two universities. (March 9, 2023)



**Doctoral seminars:** Elad Lapidot and Agata Bielik-Robson served as commentators of Nicholas Lawrence's doctoral project at the Higher seminar in Philosophy (November 11, 2022, and October 6, 2023). Co-organized by the network and Philosophy at Södertörn.

**Reading group:** Franz Rosenzweig's *Der Stern der Erlösung* (1921), inviting students on advanced and doctoral level, and researchers. Ongoing since October 2023 with introductory lectures by Agata Bielik-Robson, Hans Ruin, and Elad Lapidot.

**Conference presentations, invited guest lectures, panel discussions and moderation:**

- "Text and tradition in Salomon Maimon, Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber" by Nicholas Lawrence (BEEGS/Philosophy), Hans Ruin, and Ulrika Björk. Conference panel at *Christian Contacts, Past and Present. Sweden and Germany Compared*, co-organized by Lena Roos at Södertörn University, Forum for Jewish Studies (Uppsala), The Moses Mendelssohn Institute (Potsdam), and Paideia – The European Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden. (September 12-14, 2022)
- "Weimar in Paris: Arendt on the Spiritual Guidance of Buber" (Ulrika Björk) and "Renegotiating the Jewish-Christian Axis: Hans Jonas and Jacques Derrida as Readers of St Paul" (Hans Ruin). Presentations at the network *Jewish Thought between Germany and France: New Horizons for the Study of Contemporary European Jewish Thought*, University of Lille. (October 17-18, 2022)
- "Benjamin's Politics of Translation". Presentation by Ulrika Björk at the symposium *Talmud and Contemporary Thought*, University of Antwerp. (October 20-23, 2022)
- "Messianic Subjectivity – Levinas' Talmudic Lectures in Light of his Philosophy" by Silvia Richter at the Higher Seminar in Philosophy. (March 10, 2023)
- "Spinoza and the Origins of Jewish Enlightenment". Lectures by Jonathan Israel (Princeton Advanced Institute) and Yizhak Melamed (Johns Hopkins University). Panel discussion led by Hans Ruin with Carin Franzén (Stockholm University), co-organized with Jewish Culture in Sweden. (April 29, 2023)
- Panel moderated by Ulrika Björk at *Weltliteratur: Contemporary Readings of a Contested Concept*. The Berlin Centre for Intellectual Diaspora. (July 10-11, 2023)
- "Franz Rosenzweig on Redemption" by Benjamin Pollock (Hebrew University), moderated by Hans Ruin, with Jewish Culture in Sweden. (September 4, 2023)
- "Translating the Name of God: On the Buber-Rosenzweig German-language Bible Translation" by Benjamin Pollock. Response by Hans Ruin. Forum for Jewish Studies, Uppsala University. (September 6, 2023)
- Book presentation: *Derrida's Marrano Passover: Exile, Survival, Betrayal, and the Metaphysics of Non-Identity* (Bloomsbury, 2022) by Agata Bielik Robson at the Higher seminar in Philosophy. (October 6, 2023)

**3. The output from the research network, for example applications for research funding**

The main output from the research network is the grand project "Experimenting with Traditions: The Life and Afterlife of 20th Century Jewish Intellectual Culture in the Baltic Sea Region" (2024-2028), funded by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies. In addition, members of the network have published books, open-access articles, and reviews on topics connecting to the core themes of the research network:



**Bielik-Robson, A.** *Derrida's Marrano Passover: Exile, Survival, Betrayal, and the Metaphysics of Non-Identity*. London: Bloomsbury (2022) (monograph)

**Björk, U.** “Historiens omistliga änglar”, review essay of the Swedish translations of Robert Alter, *Omistliga änglar. Tradition och modernitet hos Kafka, Benjamin och Scholem*, and Stéphan Mosès, *Historiens ängel. Rosenzweig, Benjamin och Scholem*, published by Faethon 2023. *Respons* 1 (2023).

**Lapidot, E.** “Bubers budskap till ett överhettat Israel”, transl. Hans Ruin. *Svd* 2023-11-13.

”Back to Exile: Current Jewish Critiques of the Jewish State”, *Religions* 15(2), 250 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15020250>

**Roos, L.** *Nordisk judaistik/Scandinavian Jewish Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2023), Special Issue: “Christian Contacts, Past and Present. Sweden and Germany Compared” (co-editor).

“Judisk upplysning formade Europa”, review essay of *Vakna, mitt folk! – Det judiska Europa mellan den franska revolutionen och den ryska* by Eva Ekselius. *Respons* 1 (2023).

**Ruin, H.** “Kafka ville inte vara en helt modern människa”, review essay of the Swedish translations of Robert Alter, *Omistliga änglar. Tradition och modernitet hos Kafka, Benjamin och Scholem*, and Stéphan Mosès, *Historiens ängel. Rosenzweig, Benjamin och Scholem*, published by Faethon 2023. *Svd* 2023-09-07.

#### **4. The research network’s contribution to research and/or doctoral studies at Södertörn University**

The network has initiated an interdisciplinary scholarly field that is underexplored at Södertörn University and established contacts between the research environments in Philosophy and The Study of Religions, and with international expertise. Scholarly events have invited doctoral students, and have reenforced the educational collaboration between Philosophy, The Study of Religions, and CBEES. This collaboration will be further strengthened as the research project granted funding is in the process of employing two doctoral students (2024-2028). Through scholarly collaboration with institutions that already research aspects of the Jewish heritage in focus (in Stockholm, Uppsala, Lund, Åbo, Warsaw, Berlin, Frankfurt, and Lille), the network has contributed to establishing Södertörn University as an important hub in the field, nationally and internationally.

#### **5. The contribution of the research network to the knowledge of the Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Europe**

The network has activated a seminal intellectual culture within the core area of the ÖSS region (present-day Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and the Ukraine), and contributed to the knowledge of how the debates, publications, translations, and interactions that took place among Jewish intellectuals of Eastern European origin have been decisive for succeeding generations of philosophers and writers. Publications related to the network by its members add to our knowledge of how the non-academic tradition of Rabbinic learning culture is still a vital intellectual heritage in contemporary critical thought, as leading thinkers in the field draw on the main forms of Talmudic and/or Kabbalistic currents, schools, and authors of the Baltic Rabbinic tradition. The questions that were raised within the research network confirm the lasting importance of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Baltic and Eastern European Jewish intellectual culture.