

Meeting Schedule

San Jose Doubletree January 7-10, 2010

Friday, January 8

9:00 – 10:30 a.m.

Society of Christian Ethics/Society of Jewish Ethics Plenary Session
"Ethics Brewed in an African Pot"

- Speaker: Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator, S.J., Jesuit School of Theology, Nairobi, Kenya
- Respondent: Teresia Hinga, Santa Clara University
- Convener: Linda Hogan, Trinity College Dublin

Location: *Gateway Ballroom*

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Concurrent I: The Ethics of Torture: Perspectives from Judaism, Islam, and Christianity

Participants: David Gushee, Mercer University, SCE; Jonathan Crane, University of Toronto, SJE;

Rumee Ahmed, Colgate University, SSME; Christine E. Gudorf, Florida International University, SCE

Moderator: Simeon Ilesanmi, SSME

National and international debate rages about the moral legitimacy of torture. Recent practices in American national security, including extraordinary rendition and “enhanced interrogation techniques” at US military installations, reflect the urgency to examine the moral morass surrounding torture. Public discourse about the ethics of torture and torture ethics has thus far failed to provide sustained, reasoned and religiously-grounded arguments. This innovative panel is intended not just to offer religious reflections on torture, but also to pioneer conversations between the three cooperating societies now meeting together.

Location: *Oak*

12:45 – 1:45 p.m.

Lunch – on your own

2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Concurrent II: Paper

"Jewish Ethics in a New Key: Romancing the Text"

- SJE Presenter: **Moses L. Pava, Yeshiva University**
- SJE Convener: Jonathan Crane, University of Toronto
- SCE Commentator: Christine Firer Hinze, Fordham University

How does one relate to one's religious values in the contemporary world? Do we hold onto them like one desperately holds on to an anchor in a rough sea? Or, do we hold on to them more like an experienced sailor who knows that in holding the sail too tightly she will stall the sail power and in holding it too loosely she will lose the wind altogether?

Given the depth and magnitude of the several ethical crises erupting in our local and global communities, Jewish ethics in a new key is a call not only for a change in behavior, but a change in consciousness. It asks for a re-evaluation of values, and a playful opening up of our beliefs, our ways of relating to self and to others, and to set habits. As Aviva Zornberg puts it in her new book, **The Murmuring Deep**, "Having a defined self is sanity; too densely packed, it becomes madness..."

Specifically, this paper explores each of the following topics: playing with ethics, asking provocative questions, romancing the text, loving the stranger, tolerating complexity, living in the moment, and sustaining dialogues. The paper explores these building blocks for Jewish ethics in a new key through an examination of traditional Jewish texts, modern and postmodern Jewish thought, and the use of contemporary examples, in the hope of contributing to the ongoing conversations about how to improve the ethical climate in which we live.

Location: *San Carlos*

4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Concurrent III: Paper

Halley S. Faust, M.D., M.A., Clinical Associate Professor of Family and Community Medicine, University of New Mexico, and Rabbi Michael Graetz, Rabbi Emeritus of Magen Avraham, Omer, Israel

"What is the Relative Value of Enhanced Moral Predisposition in Judaism? The Moralkinder (MK+) Haplotype and Jewish Thought"

In his 2008 paper "Should We Select for Genetic Moral Enhancement? A Thought Experiment Using the MoralKinder (MK+) Haplotype" (Theo. Med. Bioeth. 29:397-416) Faust hypothesizes a MoralKinder haplotype that predisposes individuals to a higher level of morality than average and asks if it is permissible or obligatory to select for the haplotype using preimplantation genetic diagnosis. On p 406 Faust briefly interjects that "God (or evolution, depending on your emphasis) has already ordained the desirability of this haplotype; as posited it is already naturally occurring..." In a footnote to this brief discussion he says, "Depending on one's view of God's interaction with human genetics, this comment may be debatable, but turns more on theology than moral philosophy." In this discussion, Faust and Graetz ask whether Judaism would support the selection for the MK+ haplotype, and if so, on what basis. Some preliminary thought on the Jewish view will be given from aggadic texts and halachah, mostly from Maimonides. Participants will then be asked to discuss their own thoughts on and analysis of the question.

- PRESENTER: Philip Taraska, Duquesne University
- SJE Convener: Hillel Gray, Emory University

Location: *San Jose*

5:45 – 6:45 p.m.
Society of Christian Ethics Presidential Address

Location: *Gateway Ballroom*

7:00 – 7:45 p.m.
Kabbalat Shabbat Services & Kiddush and Hamotzi – optional

Location: *Silicon Valley*

8:00 – 9:30 p.m.
Shabbat Dinner (Pre-registration required.)
Birkat Hamazon & Shirim – optional

Location: *San Simeon*

Saturday January 9

7:15 – 8:45 a.m.
SJE/SCE Breakfast with an Author (Pre-registration required.)

Location: *Gateway Ballroom*

9:00 – 10:30 a.m.
 Concurrent IV: Paper
Joel Gereboff, Arizona State University
 “Shaming and Being Shame Faced: the Role of Shame in Jewish Moral, Legal, and Pedagogical Thought”

This paper traces Jewish thinking that on the one hand condemns shaming others while also encouraging a sense of personal shame (*boshet*) for the religious and moral lives of children and adults. It examines 1. Halakhic writings which categorize "*boshet*," as a fine for embarrassing someone, 2. Early rabbinic aggadic comments that both condemn actions leading to "*bushah*," shaming of others, but also advocate "*boshet panim*," shamefacedness as a positive virtue, 3. medieval sifrei musar and 4. contemporary Jewish writings. The overall goal is to argue that having a sense of personal shame is a healthy moral character trait.

- Presenter: Joel Gereboff, Arizona State University
- SJE Convener: Laurie Zoloth, Northwestern University
- SCE Respondent: Darlene Fozard Weaver, Villanova University

Location: *San Martin*

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Shabbat Service (Parashat Shemot – Exodus 1:1 - 6:1) – optional
(Please bring your own *siddur*)

Location: *Silicon Valley*

12:30 – 2:00 p.m.

Shabbat Lunch (Pre-registration required)

Location: *Boardroom*

2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Concurrent V: Paper

Geoffrey Claussen, Jewish Theological Seminary of America

"Sharing the Burden: Rabbi Simhah Zissel Ziv on Love and Empathy"

Rabbi Simhah Zissel Ziv of Kelm, Lithuania was one of the early leaders of the Musar Movement, a pietistic religious movement in 19th century Europe which attempted to place concerns with moral character at the center of Jewish life. This paper will introduce Simhah Zissel's virtue-centered approach to the Torah's central commandment, that one "love one's fellow as oneself," and it will analyze the moral quality which Simhah Zissel singled out as the highest of virtues: "sharing the burden of one's fellow" (Mishnah Pirkei Avot 6:6), a form of love characterized by empathy and responsiveness.

- SJE Convener: Louis Newman, Carleton College
- SCE Respondent: Diana Fritz Cates, University of Iowa

Location: *Riesling*

4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

SCE Plenary

"A Typology of Christian Ethics: A Brief Conversation Between Chinese and American Christians"

- Speaker: Jian-Guo Wang, Rockville Evangelical Mission Church, Rockville, MD
- Respondent: Regina W. Wolfe, Institute for Business and Professional Ethics, DePaul University
- Convener: Irene Oh, The George Washington University

Location: *Gateway Ballroom*

5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Dinner – on your own

Sunday January 10

7:45 – 8:45 a.m.

SJE Business Meeting (bagels provided - bring your own coffee)

Location: *Zinfandel*

9:00 - 10:30 a.m.

Concurrent VI: **Charlotte Fonrobert, Stanford University**

"The Making of Jewish Gender: Normative Gender Roles versus Diverse Sexual Identities"

Jewish legal traditions have predominantly been committed to shaping what can be identified as a dual gender-grid. The social vision that halakhah or Jewish normative thinking projects aims to assign different and mostly complementary social roles to men and women. It is, of course, this difference that has been the subject of negotiation since the onset of second wave feminism in the US.

What is, however, further remarkable is the attention that Jewish legal discourse devotes to the recognition that humanity is not simply divided into two sexes that could easily slip into the social roles envisioned by halakhah. From early on, rabbinic law designs categories to refer to people who bear dual sexual markers (Hebr. androgynos) or alternately no recognizable sexual markers (Hebr. tumtum), or whose physiology does not function in accordance with the recognized sexual identity as man or woman. Indeed, in recent years, these texts and their explicit recognition of different sexual identities have begun to find a new and creative reception in the Jewish intersex and transgender community/ies especially in the US.

Hence, traditional Jewish legal discourse offers both a challenge and an enormous opportunity for the shaping of a Jewish ethical perspective on these gender issues: the opportunity lies in the fact that Jewish tradition has a language and a long term historical perspective to offer for dealing with the issue of sexual diversity, particularly in the context of the contemporary debate over intersex issues. The challenge is posed by the gendered norms that halakhah has traditionally sought to enforce. In the address I hope to lay out the stakes of this tension for Jewish ethics.

- Convener: Jonathan Schofer, Harvard University Divinity School
- SCE Respondent: Kathryn Blanchard, Alma College