

# NOAM HOFFER

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## ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

2019-21      Kreitman Post-Doctoral Fellowship, Ben-Gurion University  
2019-20      Levinsky College of Education, lecturer  
2017-19      Post-Doctoral Researcher, Bar-Ilan University (ISF Project: ‘The Life Sciences in Early Modern Philosophy’, PI: Prof. Ohad Nachtomy)

## EDUCATION

2011-2017      Ph.D. in Philosophy, Indiana University Bloomington.  
                    Minor in Germanic Studies  
                    Dissertation: *Kant’s Theoretical Conception of God*  
2009-10      Visiting student, University of Chicago  
2002-6        M.A. in Philosophy. *Summa Cum Laude*, Tel Aviv University  
                    Thesis: “On the Notion of the Interesting: Aspects in Aesthetics”  
                    Advisor: Eli Friedlander  
1998-2002      B.A. in Philosophy. *Magna Cum Laude*, Tel Aviv University

## AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Kant, Early Modern Philosophy

## AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Ethics, Political Philosophy, Aesthetics, Philosophy of Religion, Metaphysics, 19th Century European Philosophy, Existentialism

## DISSERTATION SUMMARY: *KANT’S THEORETICAL CONCEPTION OF GOD*

My dissertation argues for the conceptual unity and historical continuity of Kant’s theoretical conception of God. I show that there is a single concern guiding Kant’s construal of this conception which is traceable early on from the pre-critical writings, that of grounding the unity and necessity of the laws of nature. I examine how Kant’s critical adaptation of the rationalistic positions related to this concern enables him to transform the conception of God from an object of metaphysical inquiry into a regulative idea of reason. My interpretation thus explains the connection, mostly ignored in the literature, between the rationalist metaphysical conception of God and the regulative role it affords in the critical system. Committee: Allen Wood (chair), Sandra Shapshay, Timothy O’Connor, Michel Chaouli

## PUBLICATIONS

“Dialectical Illusion in Kant’s Only Possible Argument” *Kantian Review*, 25:3 (2020)  
“Kant’s Regulative Metaphysics of God and the Lawfulness of Nature” *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 57:2 (2019).  
“The Relation between God and the World in the Pre-Critical Kant: was Kant a Spinozist?” *Kantian Review* 21:2 (2016).  
“Kant’s Religion and the Reflective Judgment” in Margit Ruffing, Claudio La Rocca, Alfredo Ferrarin & Stefano Bacin (eds.), *Kant Und Die Philosophie in Weltbürgerlicher Absicht: Akten des Xi. Kant-Kongresses 2010*. De Gruyter. (2013).

## BOOK REVIEWS

Review of Edward Kanterian, *Kant, God and Metaphysics: The Secret Thorn* (Routledge 2017), *The European Journal of Philosophy*, 27:3 (2019).

## WORK IN PROGRESS

- “Kant’s Teleology as the True Apology to Leibniz’s Pre-Established Harmony” (under review)
- “Mendelssohn’s Unique Modal Proof for the Existence of God”
- “Collective Hope and Political Activism”

## REFEREED AND INVITED PRESENTATIONS (\* indicates invited)

- “Kant’s Regulative Essentialism and the Unknowability of Real Essences”
  - 5<sup>th</sup> Biennial Meeting of the North American Kant Society, Binghamton University, 5-8 June 2020 (online)
- “Mendelssohn’s Original Modal Proof for the Existence of God”
  - Israeli Philosophical Association Conference, Bar-Ilan, 13 Feb 2019
  - 2020 APA Pacific Division Meeting, San-Francisco 8-11 Apr 2020 (cancelled)
- “Kantian Hope and Political Activism”
  - European Consortium for Political Research General Conference, Kantian Political Thought standing group, Universität Hamburg, Aug 22-25 2018
- “The Critique of the Power of Judgment as the ‘True Apology’ to Leibniz”
  - North American Kant Society Eastern Study Group, Columbia University NYC, May 4-5 2018
  - Leuven Kant Conference, KU Leuven, May 31-Jun 1 2018
  - (\*) Jerusalem, ‘Teleological Explanations between Leibniz and Kant’, June 25-27 2018
  - 2019 APA Eastern Division Meeting, New York, 7-10 January 2019
- “Dialectical Illusion in the Only Possible Argument”
  - North American Kant Society Mid-west Study Group, McGill University Montreal, Oct 21-23 2016
- “Kant’s Regulative Metaphysics of God”
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Meeting of the North American Kant Society, Emory University, 27-29 May 2016
  - 2017 APA Central Division Meeting, Kansas City MO, 1-4 March 2017
  - Bar-Ilan Philosophy Department Colloquium, April 2018
- “Kant on the Idea of God – A Case for Metaphysical Imagination” (\*)
  - Tel Aviv University, ‘Moral Imagination’ Conference, 3-4 June 2015
- “Systematicity in Kant’s Moral and Theoretical Ideas of God”
  - London, Annual UK Kant Society Conference, 28-30 August 2013
- “The Systematicity of Nature, Ideas of Reason and Reflective Judgment”
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Biennial Meeting of the North American Kant Society, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2-4 June 2011
- “Kant’s Religion and the Reflective Judgment”
  - Pisa, 11<sup>th</sup> International Kant Congress, 22-26 May 2010
- “The Aesthetics of the Interesting”
  - Seoul, The XXII World Congress of Philosophy, 25 July – 1 August 2008

## COMMENTS PRESENTED

- Matthew McAndrew, "Healthy Understanding and *Urtheilskraft*", 2<sup>nd</sup> Biennial Meeting of the North American Kant Society, Cornell University, 31 May – 2 June 2013
- Justin Shaddock, “Kant’s Idealism and his Hylomorphism”, APA Central Division meeting, Chicago, 26-29 Feb 2020

## FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

- 2019-20 – Lady Davis Post-Doctoral Fellowship, The Hebrew University (declined)
- 2017-18 - Kreitman Post-Doctoral Fellowship, Ben-Gurion University (declined)
- 2016 - Conference Travel Award, IUB College Arts & Humanities Institute

2015-16 - Nelson Dissertation Year Fellowship, Indiana University  
2014-15 - Indiana University / Freie Universität Berlin Direct Exchange Fellowship  
2011-12 - Indiana University First Year Departmental Fellowship  
2010-11 - Stipend from ISF Grant 702/10 run by Ido Geiger, Ben-Gurion University  
2009-10 - Tel-Aviv University Philosophy School Scholarship for doctoral students  
2008-9 - Israel-Switzerland Philosophy Fund Scholarship for doctoral students

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

### LEVINSKY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

*Philosophical Aspects in Education* / undergraduate, Fall 2019, Spring, Summer 2020

### BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

*Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*: Advanced undergraduate / graduate seminar, Spring 2019

*Conceptions of God in Early Modern Philosophy*: Advanced undergraduate / graduate seminar,  
Yearly 2017-18

### INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Instructor (full course responsibilities):

*Introduction to Social/Political Philosophy*, Fall 2016

*Introduction to Ethics*, Spring 2014

Associate Instructor (leading discussion sections and grading):

*Introduction to Philosophy*, Spring 2017 (Frederick Schmitt)

*Introduction to Existentialism*, Fall 2013 (Allen Wood)

Grader:

*Introduction to Symbolic Logic*, Fall 2012 (Leah Savion), Spring 2013 (Mark Kaplan)

### TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

Instructor (full course responsibilities):

*Bounds of Hope – Kant's Philosophy of Religion*: Fall 2008

*Intermediate Aesthetics* (Kant & Schopenhauer): Fall 2006

Teaching Assistant (leading discussion sections, designing assignments and grading):

*Guided Reading B (Hume's Treatise)*: Fall 2010

*Guided Reading A (Descartes' Meditations)*: Fall 2004, Fall 2005

*Introduction to Logic*: Fall 2002, Fall 2003

Grader:

*19<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophy*: Spring 2008 (Eli Friedlander)

## TEACHING DEVELOPMENT

Summer 2016 - Course Development Institute Workshop (IUB Center for Innovative Teaching & Learning)

Spring 2016 – Associate Instructors workshop for diversity and inclusion in the classroom (IUB Center for Innovative Teaching & Learning)

## PUBLIC OUTREACH

Lectures at Eretz Israel Museum:

Environmental ethics and aesthetics (related to a wildlife photography exhibit)

Immigration and global justice (related to a press photo exhibit)

## PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

North American Kant Society webmaster and technology consultant

Co-organizer, 'Teleological Explanations between Leibniz and Kant' conference

Referee for *Kantian Review*, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*  
Referee for *The Hebrew University Magnes Press*  
Graduate Student Organization Representative, IU, 2013-2014

## LANGUAGES

Hebrew (native speaker), English (native speaker level), German (reading and speaking – C1 / very good command)

## NON-ACADEMIC WORK EXPERIENCE

1998 – 2009 - Software Programmer, Team Manager and IT Consultant

## REFERENCES

Allen W. Wood  
Ruth Norman Halls Professor of Philosophy,  
Indiana University Bloomington  
[awwood@indiana.edu](mailto:awwood@indiana.edu)

Michel Chaouli  
Associate Professor of Germanic Studies,  
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Sandra Shapshay  
Professor of Philosophy,  
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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT: KANT'S THEORETICAL CONCEPTION OF GOD

Kant is famous for his criticism of all theoretical proofs for the existence of God. Yet he regarded the theoretical conception of God as highly significant, stemming from the very nature of rationality. My dissertation explains this significance by arguing for the conceptual unity and historical continuity of Kant's theoretical conception of God. I maintain that the core idea that guided Kant in construing the theoretical conception of God is the grounding of the unity and necessity of the laws of nature. I show that this conception is traceable early on from the pre-critical writing, and explain how it is transformed from an objective metaphysical claim into a regulative idea directing scientific inquiry in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

The first part expounds the role of the conception of God in the pre-critical writings (1755-1770, before the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781). While criticizing the prevailing proofs, Kant developed his own a priori proof for the existence of God (the *possibility proof*). In the first chapter, I survey the background of Kant's possibility proof in the rationalist tradition and offer a reconstruction and assessment of it. In chapter 2, I present the metaphysical picture entailed by Kant's argument. I argue that it is a development of the Leibnizian conception of God, a mind comprehending all essences (often described as Platonic ideas), rather than a Spinozistic conception as argued by some recent scholars. This interpretation is further vindicated by considering the role God plays in the pre-critical theories of teleology and causality as an explanatory ground for the lawfulness of nature. In chapter 3 I discuss Kant's refutations of the other theistic proofs, the ontological and the cosmological, to show how they stem from the conception advanced by the possibility proof.

In the second part, I discuss Kant's conception of God in the *Critique of Pure Reason* by focusing on the fate of the pre-critical possibility proof. I explain why on the one hand its objective status as a proof for the existence of God is denied, while on the other hand, the conception underlying it receives a positive regulative role. In chapter 4 I present background key concepts of Kant's *Transcendental Idealism* and argue that there is a certain conception of a thing-in-itself which correlates with the demands of reason and is best represented in the idea of God. In chapter 5 I present the metaphysical content of the conception of God through its construal as the *Ideal of Reason*, a metaphysical ground for the conceptual individuation of all things. In continuity with the pre-critical conception, God fulfills this role in virtue of grounding the content of all possibility, the essences of things. I use this account to explain Kant's opaque refutation of the objective status of the pre-critical possibility proof.

In chapter 6 I explain the regulative role of the idea of God in theoretical inquiry. I argue that an adequate understanding of the regulative role depends on the specific metaphysical content presented in the previous chapters, rather than an expression of mere systematic unity, or a hypothesis of an intelligent designer. The theoretical conception of God expresses the regulative principles of scientific inquiry because it represents a metaphysical ground for the content, unity, and necessity of the laws of nature. I conclude by deriving from my interpretation of regulative ideas an account of the epistemic justification of metaphysical pictures in general, an account I dub as *regulative metaphysics*.