

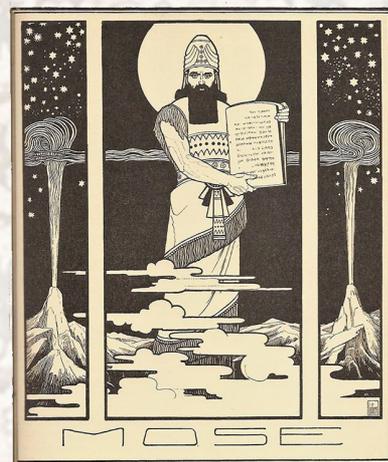
# THEOCRACY

Sunday, November 6 2022 | 10:00-17:00

Jackman Humanities Building, Room 100

170 St. George Street, Toronto, M5R 2M8

In the Bible, when the Israelites asked Gideon to be their king, he replied, “I will not rule over you myself, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD alone shall rule over you” (Judges 8:23). What exactly is the rule of God (or Theocracy)? Is it direct or is it mediated by prophets, like Moses, or the Priests? Why were the Israelites apparently unable to live without a king? Is theocracy still a possible or desirable form of government or is it just a pretext for religious authorities to take over the state? This workshop will consider the modern understanding and critical revival of this ancient theological-political idea.



By Ephraim Moses Lilien (1874-1925)

**Samuel Brody**  
(Kansas) **10:00** “Is Theoeconomics Possible?”

**Julie Cooper**  
(Tel Aviv) **11:15** “Theocracy or *Kahal*? Leo Strauss’ Encounter with Eastern European Jewish Thought”

**12:15** Lunch

**Randi Rashkover**  
(William & Mary) **13:30** “Theocracy, Power and Ideology: A Critique of Buber’s Conception of Theopolitics and History”

**Dylan Shaul**  
(Toronto) **14:45** “Hegel on Jewish Theocracy and the Kingship of God”

**Ori Werdiger**  
(Toronto) **16:00** “When Theocracy Fails: An Exegetical Dispute between Buber and Spinoza”

## Related Events:

### Book Panel

Monday, November 7 2022 | 12:00-13:30

Jackman Humanities Building, Room 100

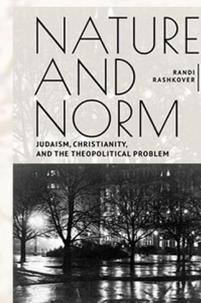
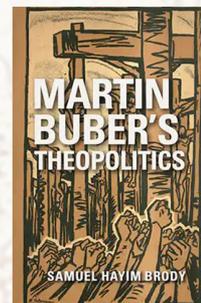
Samuel Hayim Brody, *Martin Buber’s Theopolitics* and Randi Rashkover’s *Nature and Norm: Judaism, Christianity and the Theopolitical Problem*.

### ATCJS Lecture

Monday, November 7 2022 | 16:00

Jackman Humanities Building, Room 100

Julie Cooper, “Spinoza vs. the *Kahal*: The Zionist Critique of Spinoza’s Politics.”



SPONSORS



Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Grafstein Chair in Jewish Philosophy

**Theocracy Workshop**  
**Sunday, November 6, 2022**  
**10:00-17:00**  
**Jackman Humanities Building, Room 100**  
**170 St. George Street, Toronto, M5R 2M8**

**1. Schedule of Talks and Abstracts**

**10:00-11:00**

Samuel Brody (Kansas), “Is Theoeconomics Possible?”

The question “is theoeconomics possible” takes its bearings from the concept of theopolitics, as articulated in Martin Buber’s discussions of ancient Israelite theocracy. For Buber, theocracy was an anti-liberal concept insofar as it denied the separation of the spheres characteristic of modernity; there could be no special, independent political sphere that was not subject to the authority of the divine. Arguably, however, economics has had far greater success than political science in establishing itself as the study of what it presents as just such an autonomous sphere, operating according to rules that are found in human nature and behavior rather than made. For this reason, theocratic economic reasoning frequently limits itself to discussions of proper conduct within markets, eschewing more ambitious horizons. Assuming, however, that Buber would have opposed such limitation, this presentation will begin to think about what material he offers us for both constructive theoeconomics and the study thereof.

**11:15-12:15**

Julie Cooper (Tel Aviv), “Theocracy or *Kahal*? Leo Strauss’ Encounter with Eastern European Jewish Thought”

Recent scholarship on Leo Strauss has tended to situate his work within two different contexts: German political theology (e.g., Carl Schmitt) or Weimar Jewish thought. Although scholars who situate Strauss within these contexts offer divergent accounts of his early ideological commitments, they concur that Strauss’ work is best studied within an exclusively German context. In this paper, I offer an alternative intellectual context, examining Strauss’ engagement with the work of two Eastern European Jewish scholars, Simon Dubnow and Jakob Klatzkin. Dubnow and Klatzkin offer an account of Jewish law which is political, rather than theological. Tracing Strauss’ ambivalent attraction to these Eastern discourses, I challenge the disciplinary hegemony of German-Jewish political theology as a rubric for the study of modern Jewish thought.

**12:15-13:30**

Lunch

**13:30-14:30**

Randi Rashkover (William & Mary), "Theocracy, Power and Ideology: A Critique of Buber's Conception of Theopolitics and History"

In the *Kingship of God*, Martin Buber asserts that, "there is no political sphere outside the theopolitical" (Buber, 1932). No doubt, Buber's account of theopolitics contributes mightily to contemporary analyses of the Jewish political tradition. Nonetheless, Buber's theopolitics is not only a theologically grounded political theory, but an argument that direct theocracy is the only adequate critique of illegitimate human power. History, in Buber's account, is the often, tragic battlefield between the proponents of the divine critique of power and those who resist it. Nonetheless, Buber never waives in his confidence that it is only through direct theocracy and human faithfulness to it that illegitimate power is challenged. By contrast, this essay argues that Buber's account of direct theocracy not only fails to ground a sustained program of political resistance but creates the very conditions necessary for the success of tyrannical regimes and the ideological worldviews they use to maintain their power.

**14:45-15:45**

Dylan Shaul (Toronto), "Hegel on Jewish Theocracy and the Kingship of God"

In this paper, I reconstruct and evaluate Hegel's criticisms of Jewish views on theocracy and the kingship of God. First, I present Hegel's criticism of the ancient Jewish monarchy for its purported subservience to an external law, and Hegel's criticism of the Jewish conception of the kingship of God for its purported relegation of humanity to slavish obedience. Second, I offer possible Jewish responses to Hegel's criticisms, both centered on an alternative affirmative non-Hegelian interpretation of Jewish law. Third, I consider grounds internal to Hegel's own philosophical position for challenging his criticisms of Judaism: Hegel's own endorsement of constitutional monarchy, and his own analogy between the constitutional monarch and God. Finally, I propose criticisms of Hegel's positions based on the Jewish tradition, arising from the function of both the monarch and God as ethical exemplars.

**16:00-17:00**

Ori Werdiger (Toronto), "When theocracy fails: an exegetical dispute between Buber and Spinoza"

In the *Theological Political Treatise* Spinoza blames the creation of a Levite priesthood as bringing on the eventual demise of the otherwise politically sound Hebrew theocracy. In *Kingship of God* Martin Buber identifies the Israelites' distortion of the true political-theological meaning of God's kingship as a main cause of the same theocratic failure. This paper considers Spinoza and Buber's divergent readings of Ezekiel 20, and their related explanations for the collapse of the Hebrew polity. Through analyzing their treatments of this key biblical passage, I will examine the role played by this text within these thinkers' respective hermeneutical and political projects.

## 2. Presenters

**Samuel Hayim Brody** is Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Kansas. He is author of *Martin Buber's Theopolitics* (2018), which received the Jordan Schnitzer Book Award from the Association of Jewish Studies and was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award. He is also editor or co-editor of two volumes of the *Martin Buber Werkausgabe*. Since 2018, he has been studying connections between Jewish thought and political economy. Results of these studies have been published or are forthcoming in journals such as *Religions*, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, *The Journal of Jewish Ethics*, *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, and *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*.

**Julie E. Cooper** is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science at Tel Aviv University. Her research interests include the history of political theory, early modern political theory, secularism and secularization, modern Jewish thought, and Jewish political thought. She is the author of *Secular Powers: Humility in Modern Political Thought* (Chicago 2013). She is currently a fellow at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies.

**Randi Rashkover** is the Nathan and Sofia Gumenick Professor of Judaic Studies and Professor of Religious Studies at William & Mary. She is the author of several monographs including *Revelation and Theopolitics: Barth, Rosenzweig and the Politics of Praise* (T&T, 2005), *Freedom and Law: A Jewish-Christian Apologetics* (Fordham, 2011) and most recently, *Nature and Norm: Judaism, Christianity and the Theopolitical Problem* (Academic Studies Press, 2020). She has edited and co-edited several volumes including *Judaism, Liberalism and Political Theology*, co-edited with Martin Kavka (Indiana University Press, 2014). She is a frequent contributor to the journal *Modern Theology*, the *Journal of Jewish Ethics*, and the *Journal of Religious Ethics*. She sits on the board of the *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* and is former senior editor of the Stanford University Press series, *Encountering Traditions*.

**Dylan Shaul** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Toronto. He is writing a dissertation titled *Hegel's Concept of Reconciliation: On Absolute Spirit*. His interests include 19th Century Philosophy (especially German Idealism), 20th Century Continental Philosophy, and Jewish philosophy.

**Ori Werdiger** is a postdoctoral fellow in Jewish Philosophy at the Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto. Prior to Toronto, he was a postdoctoral fellow at the Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Center at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Ori completed his PhD at the University of Chicago in 2021, with a dissertation examining the postwar thought of Jacob Gordin (1896-1947), a Russian-Jewish Neo-Kantian philosopher, and Gordin's disciple, Léon Askenazi (1922-1996), a North-African kabbalist and prominent spiritual leader of Francophone Jewry. His research revolves around the intersections of philosophy and kabbalah in modern Europe, with a focus on twentieth century France and questions of reception, translation, and interpretation.