

# Nexus Conference 2009

## Reflections on Man after the End of History Part 1. Faith, Death, and Freedom



Sunday 6 September 2009

9.15 am — 5.30 pm

Muziektheater Amsterdam

### Speakers

Jonathan Sacks - Zainab Al-Suwaij - John Gray

Yossi Klein Halevi - Anne Applebaum - Ernst Hirsch Ballin

Elisabeth Young-Bruehl - Marc Sageman - Slavoj Žižek - David Modell

Ramin Jahanbegloo - Leon Wieseltier - Eva Hoffman - Pierre Audi

Charles Rosen - Moshe Halbertal - Nina Khrushcheva

Pratap Bhanu Mehta - Tariq Ramadan - John Ralston Saul

Karim Wasfi - Ladan Boroumand

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L A N D S E  
O P E R A

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In cooperation with the Netherlands Opera

## Attendance at Nexus Conference 2009

We would be happy to welcome you as a member of the audience, but advance reservation of an admission ticket is compulsory. Please register online at our website, [www.nexus-instituut.nl](http://www.nexus-instituut.nl), or contact Ms. Ilja Hijink at [hijink@nexus-instituut.nl](mailto:hijink@nexus-instituut.nl).

The conference admission fee is € 75. A reduced rate of € 50 is available for subscribers to the periodical *Nexus*, who may bring up to three guests for the same reduced rate of € 50. A special youth rate of € 25 will be charged to those under the age of 26, provided they enclose a copy of their identity document with their registration form. The conference fee includes lunch and refreshments during the reception and breaks.

Only written cancellations will be accepted. Cancellations received before 21 August 2009 will be free of charge; after that date the full fee will be charged. If you decide to register after 1 September, we would advise you to contact us by telephone to check for availability.

The Nexus Conference will be held at the Muziektheater Amsterdam, Amstel 3, Amsterdam (parking and subway station Waterlooplein; please check details on [www.muziektheater.nl](http://www.muziektheater.nl)). The conference will be conducted in English. The speakers will adapt their presentations into essays, which will be published in *Nexus* 54 in the winter of 2010.

For more information, please contact the Nexus Institute at [info@nexus-instituut.nl](mailto:info@nexus-instituut.nl) or by telephone at +31 (0)13-466 3450, during office hours. We would further invite you to visit our website, [www.nexus-instituut.nl](http://www.nexus-instituut.nl).

# Programme Nexus Conference

Sunday 6 September 2009

9.15 am	Introduction <i>Rob Riemen</i>
9.25 am	Keynote lecture <i>Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks</i>
10.30 am	Break
11.00 am	<b>I. A PASSION FOR FAITH</b> Panel debate with <i>Ladan Boroumand, John Gray, Ernst Hirsch Ballin, Yossi Klein Halevi, Pratap Bahnu Metha, Tariq Ramadan and John Ralston Saul</i> , moderated by <i>Rob Riemen</i>
12.30 pm	Lunch
1.30 pm	Visual presentation 'A Passion for Faith and Death' by <i>David Modell</i>
2.00 pm	<b>II. A PASSION FOR DEATH</b> Panel debate <i>Anne Applebaum, Moshe Halbertal, Ramin Jahanbegloo, Marc Sageman, Zainab Al-Suwaij and Elisabeth Young-Bruehl</i> , moderated by <i>Rob Riemen</i>
3.30 pm	Break
4.00 pm	<b>III. A PASSION FOR FREEDOM</b> Closing debate with <i>Pierre Audi, Eva Hoffman, Nina Khrushcheva, Charles Rosen, Karim Wasfi, Leon Wieseltier and Slavoj Žižek</i> , moderated by <i>Rob Riemen</i>
5.30 pm	Reception

# Reflections on Man after the End of History

## A Passion for Faith, Death, and Freedom

### in the Opera *La Juive*

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The Nexus conference, organised this year in cooperation with the Netherlands Opera, will take place in Amsterdam on Sunday 6 September 2009. Two days earlier, on 4 September, the new DNO production of the opera *La Juive* (1835), directed by Pierre Audi, will receive its premiere.

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I

It is now already a generation ago, in the summer of 1989, that Francis Fukuyama published his lecture ‘The End of History?’. While its title may have come to symbolise the triumph of liberalism and free, Western democracy, the conclusion of the lecture was surprisingly downbeat: ‘The end of history will be a very sad time.’ Fukuyama substantiated this conclusion in the book that was published subsequently. Certainly, liberal democracy has triumphed over monarchy, theocracy, aristocracy, fascism and totalitarian communism as the most rational form of government. In Europe religion, the source of so much war and intolerance, was finally overcome by liberalism; it has had to learn to be tolerant. Democratic values such as to be ‘participant’, ‘rational’, ‘secular’, ‘mobile’, ‘empathic’ have become second nature to us. We view tolerance as our most defining virtue. We have learned, and that is no coincidence, to put things in perspective. No authority, tradition or value has absolute meaning for us anymore; everything is relative, no more than a point of view, an opinion, even perhaps a prejudice. Fanaticism does not suit us. What do you mean, ‘the end of history will be a very sad time’?! Wasn’t this triumph of liberalism and democracy the ideal we wanted?

4  
Guided by Socrates, Hegel and Nietzsche, Fukuyama also demonstrates the flipside of this history, determined by human nature itself. The human soul, Socrates teaches, houses not only reason and desire but also *thymos*: our feeling of self-recognition and self-worth, the emotion of our human dignity. It is inherent in our essential nature to desire recognition of what we are, *that* we are. Hegel later formulated the understanding that what constitutes man’s identity as man, the most fundamental and unique human characteristic, is man’s ability to risk his own life for such recognition of his own self-worth. Hegel’s idea of freedom ties in with this. The freedom that makes humans human only exists when we are able to transcend our natural, animal existence and the soul creates a new self, acquires an identity of its own. Strong identities such as that of religion and nationalism are

therefore rooted in the *thymos*. And there is literally profound indignation if what the believer or nationalist values, is denied or treated with contempt. It is in those deepest layers of the human soul that fanaticism, hate and obsession can develop when self-worth is aggrieved. Nietzsche, as an expert of the human soul, was convinced of the *superiority* of certain identities (those full of vitality, the masters), but simultaneously announced the advent of their antithesis: the 'last man', the victorious slave who has no interest in self-worth, ideals and principles, let alone know a feeling of superiority. This is the man in whose soul the *thymos* has been subdued and who exhausts himself in the desire for comfort, security, material abundance and happiness. Religiosity, nationalism and ideological drivers have disappeared because he no longer believes, or can believe, in anything. Freedom is no longer the freedom of the human spirit, the drive to be somebody, but only the absence of restrictions, a striving for complete physical satisfaction. That is why Fukuyama concludes at the end of his lecture in 1989: 'The end of history will be a very sad time. The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one's life for a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination and idealism, will be replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands. In the post-historical period there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual caretaking of the museum of human history.' Fukuyama then rightly asked whether we can be satisfied with ourselves, given the emptiness and ennui that physical safety and material abundance produce.

Only those who had forgotten that man has a soul, which can sometimes be extinguished but never subdued for ever, can have been surprised in the past decade at the rise of religions, nationalism, fanaticism and aggression. Macabre as this fact may be, '9/11' symbolises a new spirit of the times. Only some politicians persist in the belief that more safety and more prosperity can contain the discontent in society. It cannot. But if we do not want to be swept along by history, we must at least try to understand it and fathom the tragic secrets and dark desires of the human soul. And because all major art is nothing but a mirror of the soul, it is uniquely able to help us understand what is so difficult to grasp: human being.

11

*La Juive*, a 'grand opéra' by the librettist Eugène Scribe and the composer Fromental Halévy that received its premiere in 1835 in Paris, is a forgotten masterpiece. How could an opera that was admired by both Wagner ('the music comes from the depths of man's soul') and Mahler ('one of the greatest operas ever composed') and whose famous aria 'Rachel, quand du Seigneur' was moreover immortalised in Proust's *Recherche*, come to be buried in oblivion? Perhaps because the opera confronts us with exactly those passions of the soul we had long forgotten: religiosity, absolutism, fanaticism, passion for death in the name of love and truth, the cry for freedom. Written in the age when liberalism started to sweep all before it, written *so that* tolerance and religious and political freedom would prevail, this work was destined to disappear behind the scenes of the world stage at the end of history. That is, until history started again and this opera takes us back in 2009 to the early fifteenth century, to the Council of Constance. Emperor Sigismund has taken the initiative for this ecumenical meeting to restore the unity of a church

that has three popes! They are deposed, a new pope is elected, unity is restored and the absolute authority of the Church is confirmed by the death by burning at the stake of the theologians Jan Hus and Hieronymus van Praag, two church reformers that are condemned as heretics by the princes of the Church.

Against this dark backdrop of ecclesiastical power, inquisition and intolerance, Scribe and Halévy tell the story of the beautiful Rachel, daughter of the Jewish jeweller Eléazar, who lives with her father in Constance. Prince Leopold, a nephew of the emperor and victorious persecutor of the followers of Jan Hus, is in love with Rachel and to win her over, he feigns to be the Jewish painter Samuel. When Rachel finds out that he is a Christian and, contrary to his earlier promises, does not want to share his life with her because he is already engaged to the rich princess Eudoxie, she curses him and publicly announces that this Catholic prince has seduced a Jewish woman. Because this amounts to a betrayal of his faith, the prince, but Rachel and Eléazar as well, are condemned to burn at the stake by Cardinal Brogni. Princess Eudoxie beseeches Rachel to save her fiancé's life, and out of compassion Rachel assumes all blame and sacrifices her life for his. The cardinal, who in turn feels compassion for Rachel and her fate but above all obeys the authority of the Church, asks Eléazar to convert to Christianity with his daughter so that their lives can be spared. The proud man replies however that he would rather die than betray his God, his truth, and thereby give up his own identity. In addition he wants to take revenge on the Cardinal by his death. Before he became a priest, the Cardinal lost his wife and daughter in a fire in Rome. Eléazar tells him that his daughter was saved but refuses to say where she is now. He will take that secret to the grave to which he has been condemned by the Cardinal himself. Eléazar realises that his anger about what the Christians are doing to the Jews, his desire for revenge, will also kill Rachel, whom he loves very dearly. He decides to save her and not to be swayed by the anger of his aggrieved soul — until he hears the mob shouting again that all Jews have to die. Still, when the fire is lit, he calls out to Rachel that she can still save her life by abandoning her faith. But Rachel too is determined to die as a Jewess. The fire already cannot be extinguished anymore when the Cardinal begs Eléazar for the last time to tell him where his daughter is. Eléazar points to the burning Rachel. Because his obedience is greater than his capacity for compassion, the Cardinal lets his own daughter, saved from the fire in the past, burn alive after all. The opera closes with the people rejoicing: 'We have taken revenge on the Jews!' The curtain falls, the lights go up. We turn our eyes from the theatre's stage to the world's with the following questions...

### *A Passion for Faith*

Bored by measureless materialism and a spiritual emptiness the passions of our soul rise from their slumber and we once again experience our *thymos*. We want to know who we are and where we belong. We want to know what really matters, what is holy for us, and we demand that others acknowledge and respect this. The passion for faith is rekindled because we want to believe once more in a truth that extends beyond empiricism and gives us meaning, gives value to the life we lead. It is about our dignity, about our soul.

But do we really have a soul? And do we not serve our human dignity better with knowledge than with faith? And is every faith the same or can we, must we, distinguish good faiths from bad faiths? Do religions feed the discontent in our civilisation or are they an answer to such discontent? In his *Letter to the Galatians* the apostle Paul writes: 'If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed!' (Gal. 1:9) And the Jews certainly found out how this was put into practice. How eternal is anti-Semitism? Why are monotheistic faiths deeply intolerant in respect of each other and does orthodoxy not tolerate this world? Is tolerance really the highest virtue, is truth not more important? But is truth absolute and what is true? From what do we derive our identity and what is the essence of our dignity? Is there a universal truth and does justice originate in it, or is all truth particular and is justice historically determined? Are all laws human creations or do we believe, with Antigone, that fundamental principles exist, unwritten laws of a higher power than that of the secular rulers who happen to be in power? Must we obey or are we free? Do we want to be free? Is Dostoevsky right when in his *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor* he has his cardinal argue that people do not want to be free and that the Church derives its power from its promise of universal happiness? But would we rather live in happiness than in truth, then? And is it not, precisely, reason that shows us truth and teaches us to be tolerant? Is Voltaire not right when he says in his *Treatise on Tolerance*: 'reason is gentle, it is human, it promotes lenience, ends discord, strengthens virtue, makes it attractive to obey laws and maintains them, to an even greater extent than would be possible with violence.' Is this not an important reason for viewing religion only as a private matter? Is it reason that makes for unity and lets us live together? Or do others have to adapt? Because why are we intolerant and is there resentment? Why do we fear what is foreign?

'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it' is a well-known statement by the American thinker George Santayana. The opera *La Juive* is a moving memory of our past. But is knowledge of that memory enough not to repeat the past? Or is there more wisdom in Arthur Schopenhauer's assertion that human existence is condemned to alternate eternally between boredom and suffering? Do we have to learn to accept that human existence is essentially tragic? Questions, questions, questions. Variations on that one, very first question: what are human beings?

#### *A Passion for Death*

Rachel sacrifices her life for her lover and out of loyalty to her foster father; Eléazar dies a martyr of his faith; the Cardinal murders his own daughter and the man who saved her life in order to purify a society from sinners in the name of his faith. The passion for death in *La Juive* is exemplary for our culture. Abraham is prepared to sacrifice his son for his faith; Socrates wants to give his life for truth; Antigone would rather die than betray the divine laws; Palinurus is sacrificed in the *Aeneid* 'because it is good that one should give his life for many'; and Jesus of Nazareth suffers the same fate. The list of historical and mythological figures in our culture whose life is marked by 'the ultimate sacrifice' is endless. It is no coincidence that the list of works of art — operas especially — depicting the 'ultimate sacrifice' is likewise virtually endless: *Le Sacre du Printemps*, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, *Idomeneo*, *Alceste*, etcetera.

So we are faced with the secrets of the human soul again. Because why is the sacrifice a core element of our culture? What does a sacrifice mean? Why is it associated with violence? Is it human or is human sacrifice — as Goethe, Gluck and Mozart show — above all primitive, barbarian and inhuman? If faith, love and truth ‘demand’ that you give your life, what does that tell us about the nature of faith, love and truth? What does it tell us about human nature? Is there a relationship between morality and mortality? Is there a relationship between desiring ‘to save the soul, to purify it’ and ‘the purification of society’? What does the statement of Islamic fundamentalists mean: ‘We will win because the West loves life and we love death?’ What do we consider worth dying for? What is worth killing for? And is there still something worth living for?

### *A Passion for Freedom*

In his famous series of letters *On Aesthetic Education* Friedrich Schiller argues that art is the daughter of freedom and that where humanity has lost its dignity, art saves and protects that dignity, and that its beauty is the power that helps people to transform a barbarian natural state into a free, moral being in a free society. This idea of art is cardinal to Halévy and Scribe. *La Juive* too is a bitter condemnation of absolutism, intolerance, spiritual terrorism, and simultaneously a musical embodiment of the desire for freedom. The greatest artists share the idea of art as freedom’s daughter, protestor against human injustice and liberator of man: Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Verdi, Dostoevsky, Picasso. But this is a predominantly *Romantic* ideal. In the ancient world, art served beauty, in the medieval world, God, and in the twentieth century we started asking ourselves what art was good for anyway. Can art liberate us? Does it have an impact on and in society? Is socially engaged art real art? And what kind of freedom will art give us? Schopenhauer too believed that only art could liberate us from the eternal, infernal alternation between pure boredom and great suffering; but that was not to be social freedom at all. And how much truth is there in Nietzsche’s and Thomas Mann’s belief that art, and music in particular, also harbours demonic powers? Is the social importance of art not shamelessly overestimated? And anyway: what is freedom? Do we want to be free? The end of history consists of material freedom in abundance and exactly that freedom does not satisfy our *thymos*. Is Dostoevsky right to argue in his novel *The Demons* that one of the darkest secrets of the human soul is that ultimate freedom, absolute free will, can only manifest itself in voluntarily chosen death? Is that being free? What does freedom have to do with the essence of being human?

## Speakers

ANNE APPLEBAUM (United States, 1964), a journalist and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, has written extensively about communism and the development of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. Applebaum lived in London and Warsaw during the 1990s. From 2002 to 2006 she was a member of the editorial board of the *Washington Post*, for which she is writing nowadays a wide-read and politically influential newspaper column. Applebaum wrote *Between East and West: Across the Borderlands of Europe* (1995) and *Gulag: A History* (2003), which was awarded the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction writing. The Pulitzer committee named *Gulag* a 'landmark work of historical scholarship and an indelible contribution to the complex, ongoing, necessary quest for truth'. Applebaum is married to Radoslaw Sikorski, the acting Foreign Affairs Secretary of Poland.

PIERRE AUDI (Lebanon, 1957) is the artistic director of the Netherlands Opera since 1988 and of the Holland Festival since 2005. He was born in Beirut and was raised there and in Paris. He read history at Oxford, and in 1979 he launched the Almeida Theatre, an innovative and international performing arts center in Islington, London. A director of both plays and operas and a recipient of various awards, he has commissioned numerous operas by living composers, including Wolfgang Rihm, Michael Finnissy, Sylvano Bussotti, and Louis Andriessen. His personal repertoire at the Netherlands Opera has ranged from Monteverdi to Feldman (*Neither*), from Mozart to Birtwistle (*Punch and Judy*). One of his most daring and praised projects with the Netherlands Opera was Holland's first complete performance of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. September 4th 2009 will see the Amsterdam première of Fromental Halévy's forgotten opera masterpiece *La Juive*, directed by Pierre Audi.

LADAN BOROUMAND is an Iranian historian and human rights advocate. A former visiting fellow at the International Forum for Democratic Studies in Washington, D.C., she has a Masters degree in political sociology and a PhD in the history of France. Boroumand authored *La Guerre des Principes* (1999), an extensive work that highlights the relationship throughout the French Revolution between human rights and the sovereignty of the nation. She has also written and contributed several articles on the Islamic revolution of Iran, and the nature of Islamic terrorism. She is currently the research director of the Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation, a nongovernmental organization that promotes human rights awareness through education and distribution of information with the goal of establishing a stable democracy in Iran. Boroumand, along with her sister, founded Omid, a website that acts as a tracker for the human rights abuses of the Islamic Republic and a memorial for its victims.

JOHN GRAY (United Kingdom, 1948) is one of the most prominent political philosophers in our time. He contributes regularly to *The Guardian*, *New Statesman*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*, and has written several influential books on political theory, including *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* (2002), *All*

*Qaeda and What It Means To Be Modern* (2003), *Heresies: Against Progress and Other Illusions* (2004), *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* (2007), and *Gray's Anatomy: Selected Writings* (2009). In his writings, he strongly speaks out against any form of fundamentalism, religious or otherwise. John Gray studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford. From 1976-1996 he was Fellow in Politics at Jesus College, Oxford, and in 1996 he became Professor of Politics at Oxford. Between 1998 and 2007 he was School Professor of European Thought at the London School of Economics, where he is now Emeritus Professor.

MOSHE HALBERTAL (Uruguay, 1958) is considered one of the foremost Jewish thinkers of his generation. He is a professor of Jewish Thought and Philosophy at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and a fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute. He received his Ph.D from Hebrew University in 1989, and from 1988-1992 he was a fellow at the Society of Fellows of Harvard University. Moshe Halbertal has also been a visiting professor at Harvard Law School, and at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. Together with Avishai Margalit, he wrote *Idolatry* (1992) and *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority* (1997). In Hebrew, he published *Interpretative Revolutions in the Making* (1997) and *Between Torah and Wisdom: Rabbi Menachem ha-Meiri and The Maimonidean Halakhists of Provence* (2000). His latest work is *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought* (2007). He is now preparing a work on 'sacrifice'.

YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI (United States, 1953) attracted worldwide attention with his *Memoirs of a Jewish Extremist* (1995) and *At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden: A Jew's Search for God with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land* (2001). He is a Senior Fellow of the Adelson Institute for Strategic Studies of the Shalem Center in Jerusalem, and the Israel correspondent of *The New Republic*. He has been a columnist for the *Jerusalem Post*, a regular contributor on Israeli affairs to the *Los Angeles Times*, and a frequent guest on CNN and other national and international broadcast media. The 1983 documentary film *Kaddish*, directed by Steve Brand, focuses on Halevi's relationship with his father, a Holocaust survivor, and was named by the New York-based *Village Voice* as one of the ten best films of the year.

ERNST HIRSCH BALLIN (Netherlands, 1950) is a Dutch politician and minister of Justice in the current Dutch cabinet. A Christian Democrat, he was born to a Catholic mother and a Jewish father, and converted to Catholicism during his law studies at the University of Amsterdam. He received a Ph.D degree there in 1979 and was named Professor of Constitutional and Administrative Law at Tilburg University before embarking upon a successful career in politics. Hirsch Ballin has written a number of texts on law, ethics, religion and philosophy.

EVA HOFFMAN (Poland, 1945) describes in her masterpiece *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (1989) how, as a teenager, she moved to Canada with her parents, who had miraculously survived the Holocaust in the Ukraine. Other works include *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (2004), and the novel *The Secret* (2007). Eva Hoffman holds a Ph.D in English

and American Literature from Harvard and has been a professor of literature and of creative writing at several institutions including Columbia, the University of Minnesota, and Tufts. Her latest novel is called *Illuminations*. As a writer, she currently lives in London.

RAMIN JAHANBEGLOO (Iran, 1956), a professor in political science at the University of Toronto, has a doctorate from Sorbonne University in Paris. He was a post-doc at Harvard, headed the department for contemporary studies at the Iranian Cultural Research Bureau, and was professor of democracy at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi. A prominent intellectual, he tries to establish a dialogue between cultures. He wrote more than twenty books on Western thought and modernity, in English, French, and Persian. Works like *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin* (2000) and *Iran: Between Tradition and Modernity* (2004) were greeted with critical acclaim. In 2006, Ramin Jahanbegloo was imprisoned for four months by the Iranian authorities, thus personally experiencing the consequences of intolerance he warns against in his works — notably, in *The Clash of Intolerances* (2007). Recently, he published *The Spirit of India* (2008).

NINA KHRUSHCHEVA (Russia), great-granddaughter of former Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, is associate professor in the Graduate Program of International Affairs at the New School and senior fellow of the World Policy Institute. She is also an editor of and a contributor to Project Syndicate: Association of Newspapers Around the World. After receiving her Ph.D from Princeton University, she had a two-year appointment as a research fellow at the School of Historical Studies of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and then served as Deputy Editor of the East European Constitutional Review at the NYU School of Law. Her articles have appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Financial Times* and other international publications. She is the author of *Imagining Nabokov: Russia Between Art and Politics* (2007), and is currently working on a new book project, called *Russia's Gulag of the Mind*.

PRATAP BHANU MEHTA (India, 1967) is president of the prestigious Center for Policy Research, a New Delhi think tank. He is also a participant in the Global Faculty Program of NYU Law School. Previously, he was Associate Professor of Government and of Social Studies at Harvard and Professor of Philosophy and of Law and Governance at Jawaharlal Nehru University. His areas of expertise include political theory, constitutional law, society and politics in India, governance and political economy and international affairs. Mehta has a BA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics from Oxford University, and a Ph.D in Politics from Princeton University. He is a prolific columnist and editorial consultant to the *Indian Express*. His columns have also appeared in a number of national and international dailies including the *Financial Times*, *International Herald Tribune*, *The Hindu*, and *Outlook*. He is also on the Editorial Board of numerous journals, including the *American Political Science Review*, *Journal of Democracy* and *India and Global Affairs*.

DAVID MODELL (United Kingdom, 1969) divides his time between photography and documentary filmmaking. As a photographer, he has worked with most of the major UK magazines. He published a photo book on the Conservative Party (*Tory Story*, 2001) and shot many major advertising campaigns. Modell directed his first full-length documentary, *Young, Nazi and Proud*, an exploration of the motivation and mind-set of a leading British National Party activist, in 2002; this film achieved remarkable critical acclaim and won three major awards, including a BAFTA. His 2004 *Keep Them Out*, on a community's response to the prospect of an accommodation centre for asylum seekers being built in their town, was equally well received. He also made *Being Pamela* (2005), on Multiple Personality Disorder, and *Mad About Animals* (2006), about the animal rights movement. For *War Torn*, a series of short films exploring loss suffered by the families of British soldiers who had fought in Iraq, he received an RTS journalism award and was nominated for two BAFTAs. For *In God's Name* (2008), a Channel 4 documentary, David Modell investigated the world of fundamentalist Christians in Britain.

TARIQ RAMADAN (Switzerland, 1962) has become recently one of the world's most prominent and influential Muslim academics. He advocates the study and interpretation of Islamic texts within the context of a reformist 'European Islam', and he emphasizes the heterogeneous nature of Western Muslims and the necessity of their contribution to European society. Two leading magazines in the USA, *Prospect* and *Foreign Policy*, rank him at number 8 in a list of the world's top 100 contemporary intellectuals. His works include *Islam, the West, and the Challenge of Modernity* (2001), *Western Muslims and the future of Islam* (2004), *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad* (2007) and *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation* (2009). Tariq Ramadan teaches Islamic Studies at the University of Oxford and is currently Visiting Professor of Citizenship and Identity at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, where he is asked by the city officials to act as an authoritative mediator in ongoing discussions on ethnic integration.

CHARLES ROSEN (United States, 1927) is a world famous pianist and music theorist. As a virtuoso, Rosen has appeared in numerous recitals and orchestral engagements around the world, and recorded a number of twentieth-century works at the invitation of their legendary composers, including works by Igor Stravinsky, Elliott Carter, and Pierre Boulez. He is the author of a great number of important books on music, such as his famous *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (1971) and *Piano Notes: The World of the Pianist* (2002). Rosen has also dealt with other areas of the humanities, which resulted in works like *Romantic Poets, Critics, and Other Madmen* (1998). He holds a Ph.D in French Literature from Princeton University and has taught at Harvard University, the University of Chicago, the University of Oxford and the Royal Northern College of Music. He is a regular contributor to *The New York Review of Books*.

JONATHAN SACKS (United Kingdom, 1948) has been Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth since 1991. He is widely recognised as one of the world's leading contemporary exponents of Judaism. Prior to becoming Chief Rabbi, he was Principal of Jews' College, London, the world's oldest rabbinical

seminary, as well as rabbi of the Golders Green and Marble Arch synagogues in London. Educated at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he obtained first class honours in Philosophy, he pursued postgraduate studies at New College, Oxford, and King's College, London, and held various appointments at universities such as Oxford, Edinburgh, and Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He is currently Visiting Professor of Theology at Kings' College London and holds honorary doctorates from Yeshiva University, New York University, Leeds Metropolitan University and the universities of Bar Ilan, Cambridge, Glasgow, Haifa, Middlesex, Liverpool, and St. Andrews. Rabbi Sacks received numerous awards and other tokens of recognition, and he was awarded a Knighthood in 2005. A notably gifted communicator, the Chief Rabbi is a frequent contributor to radio, television and the national press. He has written several highly influential books, including *The Politics of Hope* (1997), *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (2002) and *To Heal a Fractured World — The Ethics of Responsibility* (2005).

JOHN RALSTON SAUL (Canada, 1947), an award-winning essayist and novelist, studied at McGill University and the University of London, where he obtained his Ph.D in 1972. Declared a 'prophet' by *Time* magazine, he is included in the prestigious Utne Reader's list of the world's 100 leading thinkers and visionaries. His works have been translated into more than a dozen languages and include the trilogy made up of the bestselling *Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West* (1992), the polemic philosophical dictionary *The Doubter's Companion: A Dictionary of Aggressive Common Sense* (1994), and *The Unconscious Civilization* (1995). A year ago he published *A Fair Country. Telling Truths about Canada*. His works deal with themes such as the nature of individualism, citizenship and the public good, and the role of freedom of speech. A prominent public intellectual, he founded and is now co-chairing the New Institute for Canadian Citizenship.

MARC SAGEMAN (United States) is a forensic psychiatrist and one of the world's leading experts on terrorism. He was employed by the CIA from 1984 to 1991. Between 1987 and 1989, he was based in Islamabad, where he worked closely with Afghanistan's mujahedin. An expert on Al Qaeda and related terrorist organizations, Sageman has advised the u.s. government in the War on Terror. His influential books *Understanding Terror Networks* (2004) and *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (2008) have drawn worldwide attention and have fuelled extensive debates on terrorism today. These days, Sageman, who holds a PhD in sociology from New York University, is Professor at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. He is also the founder of Sageman Consulting LLC.

ZAINAB AL-SUWAIJ (Iraq, 1971) is the co-founder and president of the American Islamic Congress in Washington, and granddaughter of a Iraqi Grand Ayatollah. Al-Suwaij was one of the few women to join the failed 1991 intifada uprising against Saddam Hussein. She fled Iraq and eventually became an American citizen. Following the shock of the September 11 terror attacks, she left her teaching position at Yale to co-found the AIC. An outspoken advocate for women's equality and interfaith understanding, Zainab has published editorials in the three largest

American newspapers: *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*. She has appeared on *NPR*, *BBC*, *Al-Jazeera*, *CBS*, *ABC*, *MSNBC*, *CNN*, and *Fox*. Over the past several years, Al-Suwaij has directed AIC's women's empowerment programs in southern Iraq, leading a grassroots team that operates without international security. She has testified to Congress, lectured at Harvard, and participated in interfaith events around the world. Zainab al-Suwaij currently serves on the board of the *Oxford International Review*. Named an 'Ambassador of Peace' by the Interreligious and International Peace Council, she has received Dialogue on Diversity's Liberty Award and was recognized as '2006 International Person of the Year' by the National Liberty Museum.

KARIM WASFI (Egypt, 1972) is the director, soloist, and artistic advisor of the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra. Born in Cairo to an artistic family, he studied the cello at the Music and Ballet School in Baghdad. After teaching at Cairo Conservatory, he went to the United States to study the cello with his childhood idol, Janos Starker, at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music in Bloomington. He also studied electronic music technology and conducting, as well as political studies. Wasfi has served as the principal cellist of several ensembles, including the Cairo Symphony Orchestra and the Egyptian Chamber Group. He has held faculty positions at the Music and Ballet School of Baghdad, the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, and the Cairo Academy of Arts, and has given solo concerts in the United States, Europe, Egypt, and Iraq. Wasfi returned to Iraq to lead the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra after the US invasion, and has said that the Orchestra 'can show people in Iraq why they should love life, not death'.

LEON WIESELTIER (United States, 1952), a thinker, writer and critic, is the renowned literary editor of *The New Republic*. He attended the Yeshivah of Flatbush, Columbia University, Oxford University, and Harvard University, and was a member of Harvard's Society of Fellows from 1979 to 1982. In 1998, he published *Kaddish*, a widely acclaimed and genre-blending work on loss, mourning, tradition, freedom and religion. *Against Identity* (1996) is a collection of thoughts about the modern notion of identity.

ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL (United States, 1946), an American scholar and a psychotherapist with a practice in New York City, is on the faculty of the Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research. In 1974, Young-Bruehl received a Ph.D in Philosophy at New York's New School, with Hannah Arendt as her mentor and supervisor. Subsequently, Young-Bruehl gained international renown as the author of the biography of Hannah Arendt (1982), which won the first Harcourt Award, as well as that of Anna Freud in 1988. Other works include *Creative Characters* (1991), *The Anatomy of Prejudices* (1996), and *Where Do We Fall When We Fall In Love?* (2003). Her most recent book is *Why Arendt Matters* (2007).

SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK (Slovenia, 1949) is a Marxist sociologist, philosopher, and cultural critic. He received a Ph.D in Philosophy from the University of Ljubljana and studied psychoanalysis at the University of Paris VIII with Jacques-Alain Miller and François Regnault. Since 2005, Žižek has been a member of the Slovenian

Academy of Sciences and Arts. Žižek is well known for his use of the works of twentieth-century French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan in a new reading of popular culture. He writes on subjects as varied as Iraq War, fundamentalism, capitalism, tolerance, political correctness, globalization, subjectivity, human rights, Lenin, myth, cyberspace, postmodernism, multiculturalism, post-Marxism, David Lynch, and Alfred Hitchcock. He is professor at the European Graduate School and International Director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities at the University of London.

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## *La Juive* at the Netherlands Opera

The opera *La Juive*, whose conflict between Judaism and Christianity remains a ticklish subject to this day, was a major musical sensation when it was first performed at the Parisian Opéra in 1835. Fromental Halévy (1799–1862) had managed to endow Eugène Scribe's libretto with such an amount of dramatic tableaux and sensitive arias that the audience immediately embraced *La Juive* as a high point of French *grand opéra*. After its resounding success in Paris in 2007, Pierre Audi now stages his production of *La Juive* with the Netherlands Opera, at the Muziektheater in Amsterdam, in September 2009. Italian conductor Carlo Rizzi leads the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as the choir of the Netherlands Opera, with principal roles for Angeles Blancas Gulin (Rachel), Dennis O'Neill (Eléazer), John Osborn (Léopold), Annick Massis (princess Eudoxie), and Alastair Miles (cardinal Brogni). The set was designed by George Tsypin. Tickets for this opera can be ordered through [www.dno.nl](http://www.dno.nl).

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16

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The Nexus Institute studies Europe's cultural heritage in its artistic, philosophical and social context, to provide insight into contemporary issues and to create a provocative forum for the ongoing debate on the philosophy of culture. As a cultural think-tank, the Nexus Institute strives to cultivate a style marked by quality, erudition, and tolerance. In this way it positions itself within the European humanist tradition; its activities are aimed at all who take a broad intellectual interest in culture and society. It publishes an essayistic journal in book form three times a year (*Nexus*) and special editions in the Nexus Library, besides which it organizes annual conferences, lectures, symposiums and masterclasses. The Nexus Institute is an independent institute located at Tilburg University, and is financially dependent on public subsidies and private donations.

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# Nexus Institute

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