אוניברסיטת חיפה
UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA
جامعة حيفا

The Gerd Bucerius Research Institute
for Contemporary German History and Society
המכון ע"ש גרד בוצריוס לחקר ההיסטוריה והחברה הגרמנית בזמננו
معهد غيرد بوتسريوس لبحث تأريخ ألمانا ومجتمعها المعاصرين
UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA אוניברסיטת חיפה

ZEIT STIFTUNG BUCERIUS

Bucerius Guest Lecture

Reluctant Humanism: (German) Jewish Thought and the Loss of Humankind around 1945

Prof. Asher D. Biemann (University of Virginia)

The watershed year of 1945 was sometimes referred to as "zero hour", a radical end that also represented a radical beginning. Many German thinkers and writers, such as Karl Jaspers and Marie Luise Kaschnitz, called for a new image of humanity in the face of ubiquitous ruins, often referring to a common origin "in Adam". Humanism and the unity of humankind were, as Victor Klemperer recalled, popular and almost trivial themes of the time. But on the fate of European Jews these post-war humanists often kept silent.



How did Jewish thinkers, whether in exile or after their return, understand human "unity" in a time of deep crisis and solitude? The lecture deals with a broad spectrum of sometimes dissonant (German) Jewish voices of this time - from Adorno to Günther Anders and Hannah Arendt; from Leo Baeck to Hermann Broch, Max Brod, and Martin Buber; from Ernst Cassirer to Hermann Levin Goldschmidt, Hans Jonas, and Masha Kaléko; from Arthur Liebert to Karl Löwith and Margarete Susman. What unites these voices is a postulate and, at the same time, a questioning of human unity that critically but emphatically revised the Enlightenment claim to universal brotherhood.

(The Photo: Chim (David Seymour): Children playing in bombed-out Favoriten district, Vienna 1948).

Wednesday, 30.12.2026
16:00-17:45
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