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From Scepticism to Tolerance of "the Other": The Example of Yeshayahu Leibowitz

Introduction

The European-born Israeli thinker Yeshayahu Leibowitz was as provocative as he was popular among the Israeli public, and he influenced more than one generation of society both in Israel and abroad. Born in Riga in 1903, he studied chemistry in Berlin, medicine in Cologne and Heidelberg, and later took his MD in Basel. After participating in the religious-Zionist *Mizrachi* movement in Germany, he later migrated to Palestine, where he lived from 1934 until his death in Jerusalem in 1994. Leibowitz was widely interpreted as provocative yet highly topical due to his harsh criticism of the Israeli government—particularly after the Six-Day War (1967)—and his interpretation of the Jewish religion, which was "a highly resilient form of Jewish religiosity, capable of enduring the most vigorous philosophical and ethical criticism from the Enlightenment to our time."[1] To this day, there is discussion as to whether Leibowitz can be defined as a philosopher and whether he was part of the tradition of serious Israeli philosophy, as his roots were in natural science. Perhaps this is one reason why his thought has regrettably never gained much popularity outside of Israel. Yet Leibowitz is worth engaging with. At the very least, he was an important thinker in a generation and time that was occupied with asking: "What would be the character of the new Jewish society?"[2] He is worth engaging with because of his vast spectrum and originality of thought about the Israeli state and the role of its religious Jewry, and because of his interesting personal development from a young ambitious religious-Zionist thinker into a near-existentialist.[3] Finally, he is worth engaging with because his interpretation of Jewish religion allows space for a modern form of Jewish religiosity within a mostly secular Jewish democratic state, as he himself said that his approach was not historical, but contemporary, for the "here and now."[4]

This article was intended as part of an ongoing dialogue with Roi Benbassat on how to interpret scepticism in Leibowitz.

1 Roi Benbassat, "Yeshayahu Leibowitz: Jewish Existentialism," *Religious Studies* 51, no. 2 (2015): 141.
2 Ernst Akiva Simon, "Are We Israelis Still Jews? The Search for Judaism in the New Society," in *Arguments and Doctrines: A Reader of Jewish Thinking in the Aftermath of the Holocaust*, ed. Arthur A. Cohen (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 392. Leibowitz was looking for the role of religious Jewry and of faith in general within an autonomous Jewish statehood.
3 See Benbassat, "Jewish Existentialism."
4 Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1953), *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, ed. Eliezer Goldman, trans. Eliezer Goldman, Yoram Navon, Zvi Jacobson, Gershon Levi and Raphael Levy (Cambridge,

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110618839-013

The highly topical nature of Leibowitz's thought can inspire a generation of young religious Israelis who aspire to be both followers of the *Halakhah* and modern citizens of a democratic state.

In 2017, Roi Benbassat published an article that identified scepticism in the thought of the religious thinker.[5] The essential question of this paper will be: If Leibowitz can provide an example of Jewish faith and scepticism, does he also provide an example of tolerance that stems from his sceptical approach? This question is based on the premise that scepticism is a route to tolerance. Inquiries into the roots of toleration[6] have shown that an attitude that doubts or questions the possibility of knowledge opens the possibility of tolerating, for example, differences in religion or culture.[7] The topic raises particular difficulties because Leibowitz, unlike other religious thinkers, never analysed the great phenomenon of tolerance himself. As in the analysis of scepticism, we have to look for implicit evidence in the literary heritage of this great thinker.

I will first give an introduction detailing Leibowitz's definition of the Jewish religion and present his assumption of the co-existence of different value systems which is a crucial element of the analysis of tolerance in his thought. After this, I will present some arguments which have been made in the analysis of scepticism in Leibowitz's thought. As scepticism has been widely discussed as a route to tolerance,[8] I will then look for tolerant approaches in Leibowitz's philosophy. I will then show evidence of errors in Benbassat's approach to scepticism in Leibowitz's thought and will further present a new methodological approach to analysing his sceptical

MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 1. I will always write the essay's date of publication, as there is a wide variety of dates and Leibowitz's early thought differs from his later thought.

5 See Roi Benbassat, "Jewish Faith and Scepticism—The Example of Yeshayahu Leibowitz," in *Yearbook of the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies 2017*, ed. Bill Rebiger (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 161–81.

6 I am using the words "tolerance" and "toleration" as synonyms.

7 See Giuseppe Veltri, "The Limits of Scepticism and Tolerance," *Bollettino della società filosofica italiano* 2 (2017): 49. Referring to, for example, Jean Bodin, John Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), and the *Essais* of Michel de Montaigne (1580–88), Veltri states: "[The] attitude to doubt (starting from the recognition of the human incapacity to discern the truth and based on the admission that humans can err in choosing the right way) or questioning the possibility of knowledge opens up the possibility of recognizing differences in religion, culture, and economy." And further: "Despite differences among them, these texts contributed to the development of the question of tolerance [...]. At their base, they concern liberty of conscience, *libertas philosophandi*, and the possibility of erring from the correct way."

8 See, for example, Sam Black, "Locke and the Skeptical Argument for Toleration," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (2007): 355–75; Bican Sahin, "A Defense of Toleration on the Basis of Scepticism: The Case of Michel de Montaigne," *Hacettepe University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences* 23, no. 2 (2005): 283–304.

attitude. Finally, I will present further important questions regarding the practice and principle of tolerance within Leibowitz's thought.[9]

1 Leibowitz's Definition of Jewish Religion

One essential element which enables us to integrate scepticism and tolerance in Leibowitz's thought was his conception of Jewish faith.[10] This was original when compared with previous Jewish thinkers and quite radical for an Orthodox thinker like Leibowitz. In contrast to the most popular post-*Haskalah* Jewish thinkers, "Leibowitz did not attempt to reconcile Judaism within universal moral values, basically positing it instead as conflicting with all aspects of humanism."[11] He launched a so-called "Leibowitzian" or "Copernican" revolution[12] in Jewish religious thought that was constituted in an absolute removal of theological and metaphysical elements from

9 Regarding the current state of research, allow me to make some general remarks. In Israel, there are numerous discussions about Leibowitz's definition of faith and statehood, comparisons to other philosophers—such as, for example, Kant, Kierkegaard, or Levinas—and analyses of his relationship to individualism, subjectivity, and even feminism. Outside the Israeli state, not much has been published about Leibowitz's thought, and hardly anything in Germany. From his literary legacy, only one large anthology of his essays has been translated into English (Leibowitz, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*). Also translated were an anthology of his commentaries on the weekly Torah portion (Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Accepting the Yoke of Heaven: Commentary on the Weekly Torah Portion*, trans. Shmuel Himelstein [Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2002]) and his monograph about Maimonides's faith (Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *The Faith of Maimonides*, trans. John Glucker [Tel-Aviv: MOD Books, 1989]). There are several translations of his works into French and Spanish, but only two translations into German from his entire literary corpus. See Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Vorträge über die Sprüche der Väter: Auf den Spuren des Maimonides*, trans. Grete Leibowitz (Obertshausen: Context-Verlag, 1984); Yeshayahu Leibowitz and Michael Shashar, *Gespräche über Gott und die Welt*, 3rd edition (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1994). I do not know of any other German text about this Israeli thinker, with the following exceptions: one text about axiology in Leibowitz's thought (Ottfried Fraisse, "Ent-Geisterung der Rheologie. Zur Axiologie von Yeshayahu Leibowitz' Denken," In *Alles Wirkliche Leben ist Begegnung. Festschrift zum vierzigjährigen Bestehen von Studium Israel e.V.*, ed. Johannes Ehmann, Joachim J. Krause, and Bernd Schröder [Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2018], 305–17), one lexical entry (Matthias Morgenstern, "Jeschajahu Leibowitz," in *Metzler Lexikon jüdischer Philosophen: Philosophisches Denken des Judentums von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Andreas B. Kilcher, Ottfried Fraisse, and Yossef Schwartz [Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2003], 403–7), and a contribution to an anthology about religion and democracy (Ines Jaqueline Werkner et al., eds., *Religionen und Demokratie. Beiträge zu Genese, Geltungund Wirkung eines aktuellenpolitischen Spannungsfeldes* [Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2009]).

10 See Benbassat, "Jewish Faith and Scepticism," 163.

11 Benbassat, "Jewish Existentialism," 142.

12 See Avi Sagi, *Jewish Religion after Theology*, trans. Batya Stein (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009), 46; Ronny Miron, "Yeshayahu Leibowitz on the Possibility of Religious Subjectivity: Critique and Defense," in *Watchtower Religionswissenschaft. Standortbestimmung im wissenschaftlichen Feld*, ed. Anne Koch (Marburg: Diagonal-Verlag, 2007), 95.

Jewish religion.[13] For professor of philosophy Avi Sagi, this revolution took place in two steps: "First, in the denial of theology, and second, in the denial of 'religious facts.'"[14] Jewish religion, for Leibowitz, was reduced to nothing but the execution of the *Halakhah:* the service of God. This "revolution" also contains the Jewish religion's shift from a metaphysical and theological realm to a strictly normative realm. That means that Jewish religion was one value system among others, unjustified by any truth claims. It was hence absolutely non-cognitive. However, this radical standpoint was not always the key concept of Leibowitz's thought.

Like so many philosophers, Leibowitz underwent a transformation from an "early" to a "later" thought. Often ignored by people concerned with his thinking, this development is a crucial point within the understanding of his system of thought, because it includes Leibowitz's definition of faith, which is the foundation of reading scepticism and tolerance in his thought. In his earlier thinking, one finds a distinction between faith and belief, in which belief is a cognitive determination of our minds, while faith is a conative determination.[15] In 1953, Leibowitz was still presenting religious praxis as a superstructure rising above the "cognitive and emotional components, or the spiritual and mental worlds of the Jewish religion,"[16] arguing that the categories of religious cognition and sensibility are interpretations of the system of the Torah and its *mitzvot*. In his later writings, Leibowitz makes no such distinction and argues strongly that there are *no* cognitive or emotional elements in the Jewish religion at all: "For Judaism, faith is nothing but its system of *mitzvot*, which was the embodiment of Judaism. [...] Faith, in Judaism, is the religion of *mitzvot*, and apart from this religion Jewish faith does not exist."[17] While in his earlier writings, Leibowitz still makes a vague distinction between faith and *mitzvot*—at least philologically—in his later writings, there is no faith beside, above, or under the *mitzvot*. He accuses people "who contend that one can separate faith from religion" and who think that "adherence to Torah and *mitzvot* is a kind of superstructure built upon faith"[18] of naiveté. This "radicalisation" in his definition of faith is proof of a development in Leibowitz's thought from the "early Leibowitz" to the more radical "later Leibowitz." This transformation is most distinct in Leibowitz's view of the composition of a Jewish state, but it can also be found in his use of terms from or interpretations of the fundaments of Jewish religion. Only within this development can Yeshayahu Leibowitz's thought be understood, as it radically changed between his early and his later expectations, while the resilient turn around happened sometime

13 See Avi Sagi, "Yeshayahu Leibowitz—A Breakthrough in Jewish Philosophy: Religion without Metaphysics," *Religious Studies* 33, no. 2 (1997): 205 f.; Eliezer Goldman, "Introduction," in Leibowitz, *Judaism*, vii–xxxiv, xix.

14 Sagi, "Yeshayahu Leibowitz—A Breakthrough," 206.

15 See Benbassat, "Jewish Faith and Scepticism," 161 f.

16 Leibowitz (1953), *Judaism*, 4 f.

17 Leibowitz (1981), *Judaism*, 38.

18 Leibowitz (1981), *Judaism*, 44.

in the 1950s and 1960s.[19] And it is only within this *clear* definition that scepticism and tolerance can be detected in Leibowitz's thought. Because of this transformation, his texts must be read with sincere attention. Terms like "*Halakhah*," "faith," and "religion" and their meanings change over the course of time, as Hannah Kasher illustrated in 2000.[20] For this analysis, I will concentrate on Leibowitz's later and more popular position.

One of the most important distinctions for Leibowitz was the distinction between the holy and the profane: "There is no holiness outside the sphere of divinity."[21] He stated that nothing is holy in itself, but there is only that which is holy to God, which is the practice of the *Halakhah*, because "God has nothing in his world beyond the four ells of *Halakhah*."[22] The abrogation of the distinctive category of holiness and the imputation of holiness to certain things, persons, locations, institutions, events, military loyalty, or the nation itself is, in Leibowitz's eyes, idolatrous: "By distinguishing the sacred from the profane the *Halakhah* functions as a bulwark against

19 See Moshe Hellinger, "A Clearly Democratic Religious-Zionist Philosophy: The Early Thought of Yeshayahu Leibowitz," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (2008), 270: "As a matter of fact, the late Leibowitz is a radical liberal thinker, whereas the early Leibowitz is a radical democratic thinker. In his early teaching Leibowitz stresses collective principles, such as popular sovereignty and the decision of the majority, and mobilizes them for the purpose of not only shaping the political character of the desirable Hebraic state but also guiding the specific community of the faithful observant. In contrast, his later teaching emphasizes liberal, individualistic elements, such as freedom of thought and speech, human rights (of Israelis and Palestinians alike), and so forth."

20 Kasher shows that in his early thought, Leibowitz used the word *emunah* to mean a "mental quality" and "the practical training that may bring the mind closer to *emunah* is the study of Torah and observance of the practical commandments" (Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Torah and Commandments in Our Times* [Hebrew] [Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1954], 55; this article was first given as a lecture in a seminary, see Hannah Kasher, "On Yeshayahu Leibowitz's Use of Religious Terminology," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 10 [2000], 30 f). In his later writings, Leibowitz consistently uses the term *emunah* to mean "practice of the Halakhah," because—as he states—"faith [*emunah*] is identical with its system of commandments, in which it was embodied" (Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Faith, History, and Values* [Hebrew] [Jerusalem: Academon, 1982], 11–12, in Kasher, 34). Kasher described the later meaning of the term *emunah* as a non-lexical "stipulative" meaning, which is probably closer to its biblical meaning of "steadfastness" or "dependability." See Kasher, 59: "As we shall see, in his early works, Leibowitz normally treated such words as *dati* (religious), *emunah* (faith), Torah, 'God,' 'fear and love of God' as concepts which a priori 'well-defined things,' using these words in accordance with their lexical definitions. In time, he came to view them as mere terms and, having constructed his special, personal words of values, endowed them with stipulative meaning in keeping with that world."

21 Leibowitz (1953), *Judaism*, 24.

22 Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Berakhot* 8a: "Once I heard what Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Ami said in the name of Ulla: Since the day the Temple was destroyed, the Holy One, Blessed be He, has only one place in His world, only the four cubits of *halakha* alone, from which I understood the significance of the four cubits of *halakha*, and I pray only where I study" (William Davidson Talmud).

idolatry [...]. For idolatry is simply the representation of things profane as sacred."[23] As an idolatrous act, the prevalent imputation of holiness on unholy categories in the education of young people and the dissemination of public information laid the foundations for dangerous misbehaviour.[24]

Beneath the fact that faith was absolutely non-cognitive, for Leibowitz was the fact that God was absolutely transcendent. In this transcendence, he was in agreement with Maimonides, whom he had frequently discussed.[25] But how does the religious Jew approach a transcendent God? Leibowitz faces this problem by making a distinction between faith *li-šmah* and faith *loʾ li-šmah* and a theory of distinct value systems. This distinction between two "grades" of religiosity did already exist in rabbinic literature.[26] The first grade is the sanctification of God *li-šmah* (for its own sake), which means honouring God without expecting personal benefit, or, vice versa, punishment (in the case of non-tribute). The sanctification of God *loʾ li-šmah* (not for its own sake) means honouring God because one expects a personal benefit.[27] This includes spiritual needs such as "'happiness,' 'perfection,' 'morality,'"[28] or material needs such as "'life, children, nutriment,' or the redemption of Israel."[29] This assumption of faith *li-šmah* and faith *loʾ li-šmah* is imbedded in Leibowitz's definition of the plurality of value systems. Hence, Judaism is one normative system of values which co-exists among a plurality of other value systems. This theory of parallelism is crucial, because it is only within this system of plurality that faith *li-šmah* is possible. Only in a world that provides different systems that satisfy

23 Leibowitz (1953), *Judaism*, 25. This also applies to mysticism, which he calls incompatible with *halakhic* Judaism; Leibowitz (1953), *Judaism*, 24 ff. See also Leibowitz (1981), *Judaism*, 46.

24 One notable example was the reprisal attack on Kibiyeh on October 13, 1953, where Israeli forces attacked Kibiyeh in retaliation for the murder of a Jewish mother and two of her children. In this kickback, more than fifty inhabitants of the village were killed. Leibowitz strongly criticised this attack, calling it unjustified, not because a certain kind of traditional "Jewish morality" forbade Jews to retaliate, but because retaliation was forbidden *per se* (see Leibowitz [1953–54], *Judaism*, 189). For Leibowitz, this action, executed by young Israeli soldiers, was only possible through the imputation of holiness on profane categories such as the nation and its security, because for the sake of that which is holy, "man is capable of acting without any restraint," see Leibowitz (1953–54), *Judaism*, 190.

25 "For Maimonides, God is 'true Being' by Himself and for Himself, and not for the sake of the world. [...] Maimonides posits a pure concept of a transcendental God whose link with the world is not naturalistic causation." Yeshayahu Leibowitz, "Maimonides: The Abrahamic Man," *Judaism* 6, no. 2 (1957): 151 f.

26 See, for example, Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Taʿanit* 7a: "It is taught in a baraita that Rabbi Bena'a would say: Anyone who engages in Torah for its own sake, his Torah study will be an elixir of life for him, as it is stated: 'It is a tree of life to them who lay hold upon it' (Prov. 3:18) [...]. And anyone who engages in Torah not for its own sake, e. g., for self-aggrandizement, his Torah will be an elixir of death for him, as it is stated: 'My doctrine shall drop as the rain' (William Davidson Talmud). See Goldman, "Introduction," xviii.

27 See Goldman, xviii.

28 Leibowitz (1977), *Judaism*, 63.

29 Leibowitz (1972), *Judaism*, 55.

human needs does the Jewish religion stay unaffected for itself, and only when religion stays unaffected and it is not idolatrously used to satisfy human needs is the "pure" faith, faith *li-šmah*, for its own sake, possible. Let me introduce you to Leibowitz's example of the religious father which describes life within different value systems:

> Throughout his life, he [the religious Jew] rises early in the morning to observe the Mitzvah of prayer with the congregation even when he feels no need to "pour out his complaint before God," and perhaps has never felt this need in his life. [...] He prays, it may be, contrary to his perception that there is no relation between his prayer and the events which befall him or occur in the history of Israel. If one day he or one of his children falls ill, he consults the physician and resorts to the science of medicine as would any atheist [...]. To provide for his livelihood he makes use of all the means employed to this end by the atheist [...]. The Jew who regularly prays his daily prayer does so in recognition of the obligation to pray, as an aspect of his obligation to serve God.[30]

In different realms of life, the religious practitioner can choose between different value systems and because he believes in the doctor's knowledge in a moment of illness and despair, his faith stays unaffected (he does not, for example, do service to God or pray in the expectation of good health = *loʾ li-šmah*). Faith *li-šmah* and *loʾ li-šmah* exist side by side due to religious opportunism. Because not all humans can reach the faith *li-šmah*, only those who follow *Halakhah* can reach this level. As real faith is nothing but the practice of the *Halakhah*, Leibowitz assigns the human interpretation of the Torah and the tradition to the area of *loʾ li-šmah*. Also, the messianic vision of salvation is *loʾ li-šmah* and is merely a construct to fulfil a psychological need.

Leibowitz's definition of faith as purely the service of God, the distinction between faith *li-šmah* and faith *loʾ li-šmah*, and the assumption of co-existing value systems laid the foundations for introducing scepticism and tolerance into his thought. Within Leibowitz's definition of value systems, his axiology will play an important role later in this paper.

2 Jewish Faith and Scepticism

Benbassat presented Leibowitz as a representative of a religious approach "that not only accepts scepticism as an essential feature of religious development, but also regards a lack of scepticism as corruptive for a genuinely faithful position."[31] The comparison to scepticism already creates a problem, as scepticism has been defined differently in different periods and from different groups of people: "If, on the one hand, scepticism makes a forceful case for our knowledge being limited, on the

30 Leibowitz (1977), *Judaism*, 64 f.

31 Benbassat, "Jewish Faith and Scepticism," 161.

other, it refuses every delimitation of 'reality' and implication of authority."[32] In his analysis, Benbassat considered scepticism to be the ancient form of *epochē*. In the ancient interpretation of Sextus Empiricus—to whom he refers—*epochē* is "the state of mind in which one neither denies nor affirms any belief or knowledge—as leading to the most perfect tranquillity of the mind":[33] *ataraxia*. In the context of Yeshayahu Leibowitz, Benbassat reinterprets *epochē* not as the traditional means of achieving *ataraxia*,[34] but as a means "of achieving purified, genuine religious faith,"[35] which he translates, in Leibowitz's case, to the achievement of the highest form of Jewish faith, faith for its own sake (*li-šmah*). A sceptical form of *epochē* hence leads to faith *li-šmah*. The essential element which enables the integration of scepticism in Leibowitz's thought, Benbassat claims, is his religious conception of the Jewish faith as a pure conative determination.[36]

For this analysis, Benbassat uses the *later* definition of Jewish faith in Leibowitz's thought. In his later thought, as described above, Leibowitz does not draw any distinction between faith as a "superstructure rising above the *mitzvot*"[37] and the practice of the *mitzvot* itself. He states that faith is this very engagement, or, as Benbassat notes, "one's commitment to live under the constraints of religious practice."[38] This definition, Benbassat claims, does not even depend on prior acknowledgement of God's existence, because religious practice is "prior to any cognitive and emotional aspect of Jewish religiosity."[39] That means that faith in Judaism "does not rely on the cognitive determination (belief or knowledge) of God's existence."[40] Benbassat concludes with the assumption "that a religious practitioner is allowed (in Judaism) to be sceptical with regard to God's existence."[41] He continues that "in Leibowitz's view, it is the *Halakhah* that posits God as its source and not vice versa."[42] In this interpretation, a Jewish practitioner is allowed to avoid affirming or denying the existence of God and other assumptions with regard to God's nature and deeds. He is also allowed to avoid affirming or denying God's creation of the

32 Giuseppe Veltri, *Alienated Wisdom: Enquiry into Jewish Philosophy and Scepticism* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 286 f.

33 Benbassat, "Jewish Faith and Scepticism," 161. He is referring to Sextus Empiricus, *The Skeptic Way: Sextus Empiricus's Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, trans. Benson Mates (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3.

34 See Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 3.

35 Benbassat, "Jewish Faith and Scepticism," 161.

36 See Benbassat, 163.

37 Leibowitz (1953), *Judaism*, 6.

38 Benbassat, "Jewish Faith and Scepticism," 164.

39 Leibowitz (1953), *Judaism*, 4, in Benbassat, "Jewish Faith and Scepticism," 164.

40 Benbassat, 165.

41 Benbassat.

42 Benbassat.

world as written in the Bible.[43] For *epochē*—as the chosen sceptical approach—means "neither to affirm nor to deny it—as long as it is a matter of mere cognition."[44] Because this form of *epochē* is a means "of achieving purified, genuine religious faith,"[45] this sceptical approach, Benbassat states, might not only be valid, but may even be necessary for reaching faith *li-šmah*.[46] Ultimately, even if a person trusts the words written in the Bible, this belief would not have any religious significance within Jewish faith, because the only *essential* feature of the Jewish faith is the adherence to its practice, which does not rely on any cognition at all. Thus, "faith remains indifferent to any cognitive data"[47] and therefore, the Jewish religion tolerates several viewpoints.[48] The same attitude counts in regard to the origin of the Scripture or "religious" events such as the Israelites' reception of the law from God on Mount Sinai or divine providence, because "the world and all it contains are insignificant before God."[49] Within this interpretation, a man of faith can—and must—be sceptical.

In his analysis, Benbassat stresses Leibowitz's assumption of truth. The truth value of the proclamation of the laws is not affirmed as a sheer fact, but as a matter of individual will: "That the *law* is rendered divine by one's willingness to accept it as such."[50] And for Leibowitz, this feature generally applies to the realm of any moral imperatives or duties: the validity is established only by one's subjective choice. "Truth" in the realm of values is a matter of personal intention. The truth of science is not a value, and "[v]alues are not anchored in reality. They are what man aspires to impose upon reality."[51] Benbassat states:

> A man of faith can be sceptical with regard to the assumption of the Halakhah as a divine command, considered as a matter of cognition, but he can still affirm this assumption within the realm of values, in which assumptions do not determine whether something is objectively true, or whether something is "real," but rather reflect one's subjective determination to impose his or her values upon reality. In the realm of values, the truth value of our assumptions does not refer to the state of affairs in reality, but to one's will and intention.[52]

As the Jewish faith is a consequence of a subjective irrational value determination and is independent of any knowledge or truth claim, scepticism can be seen as a natural companion of faith and therefore fights fundamentalism regarding the belief

43 Also, he claims that we are in any case unable to understand the real meaning of the first section of the Bible. Therefore, as a matter of cognition, there is nothing to affirm or to deny.
44 Benbassat, "Jewish Faith and Scepticism," 165.
45 Benbassat, 161.
46 See Benbassat, 165.
47 Benbassat, 169.
48 See Benbassat.
49 Leibowitz (1988), *Judaism*, 45.
50 Benbassat, "Jewish Faith and Scepticism," 174.
51 Leibowitz (1976), *Judaism*, 139; see Benbassat, "Jewish Faith and Scepticism," 174.
52 Benbassat, 175.

in God's creation of the world or the perception of the Torah as a divine command. By accepting fundamental truth claims as true, one renders religion a service to oneself, and in Leibowitz's definition, any end besides the worship of God is idolatry. Therefore, scepticism towards general beliefs in Judaism "is not only possible, but also crucial for the maintenance of a genuine religious position,"[53] which means a "pure" Jewish faith for the sake of itself (*li-šmah*).

3 From Scepticism to Tolerance

Just as "religious faith is generally perceived as being in contrast with sceptical approaches," so it is the same with tolerance. The question is therefore how to determine tolerance for someone who has absolute faith and for whom the possibility of being mistaken in this faith does not arise. Gabriel Marcel states that for someone who has absolute faith, it is insufficient "to determine the principle on which we can base a tolerance which is really a counter-intolerance, but which is not, at the same time, the expression or mark of a complete skepticism, but rather the living incarnation of a faith."[54] The root of tolerance in a believer's stance, he states, is "an expression of love's mediation of the 'blinded consciousness' of unbelief and God's salvific end."[55] For a believer, serving the divine will means "to act as a mediator between it and the other consciousness whom I assume is blinded."[56] With this definition, Gabriel charts a course into the understanding of tolerance as a theological virtue.[57] Alan Udoff introduces another theological concept of tolerance as an active "waiting for the other": "In this reception, the other is received as (potentially) en route to the point that has already been attained by the one who receives."[58] As fullness and power lie in faith, the faithful are waiting for the enrouted, who belongs to the future, and therefore tolerance is placed into the realm of hope.[59] These may be two valid and plausible definitions of religious tolerance. However, as we already stated, the theological and metaphysical elements of the Jewish religion have been entirely removed from Yeshayahu Leibowitz's thought. Hence, for Leibowitz, theological concepts of tolerance will not work and tolerance cannot be considered a theological virtue; therefore, it seems to be a logical consequence to consider that Leibowitz's

53 Benbassat, 180.

54 Gabriel Marcel, "The Phenomenology and Dialectic of Tolerance," in *Creative Fidelity*, trans. Robert Rosthal (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1970), 216.

55 Alan Udoff, "Tolerance," in *20th Century Jewish Religious Thought: Original Essays on Critical Concepts, Movements, and Beliefs*, ed. Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr (Philadelphia: First JPS edition, 2009; originally published as *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought: Original Essays on Critical Concepts, Movements, and Beliefs* [New York: Scribner, 1987]), 992.

56 Marcel, "Phenomenology and Dialectic of Tolerance," 216.

57 See Udoff, "Tolerance," 993.

58 Udoff, 993.

59 Udoff.

concept of tolerance originated in the sceptical elements of his thought. This is especially reasonable because some religious thinkers have already been discussed within the framework of scepticism and tolerance, such as, for example, Montaigne.[60]

Now, introducing the term "tolerance" is another difficulty, as tolerance—like scepticism—is *not* clearly defined. Orienting myself using the distinction between "concept" and "conceptions of justice" by John Rawls,[61] I distinguish between the *concept* of tolerance in general and different *conceptions* in particular. The concept of tolerance therefore constitutes an umbrella term rising above a vast spectrum of conceptions, which existed in different places and times and which can exist in the same place and time all at once. The scale of conceptions of toleration[62] reaches from a very pragmatic or negative standpoint (bearing, suffering) at one end of the scale to an almost utopian or positive standpoint (welcoming and support) on the other.[63] While this paper gives no room for a deeper analysis of the specific conception (or conceptions) of tolerance in Leibowitz's thought, I will examine general indications of tolerance. Researchers sometimes recognise the distinction between a

60 See Alan Levine, "Skepticism, Self and Toleration in Montaigne's Political Thought," in *Early Modern Skepticism and the Origins of Toleration*, ed. Alan Levine (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1999), 51–76.

61 See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1971).

62 Some people differentiate between "tolerance" as theory and "toleration" as the distinct act of tolerance, but I see no benefit in this.

63 This paper has no room to explain all the historical definitions of the term and the meaning of tolerance, and there is no history or "encyclopaedia of tolerance" to which I can refer, but I will give a very short insight into its current trends in this footnote. The spectrum of the modern definitions of tolerance stretches from sheer "bearing" (see John Horton, "Why the Traditional Conception of Toleration Still Matters," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 14, no. 3 [2011]: 289–305), through a "respect concept" of tolerance (see Rainer Forst, ed. *Toleranz: Philosophische Grundlagen und gesellschaftliche Praxis einer umstrittenen Tugend* [Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2000]; Rainer Forst, *Toleranz im Konflikt: Geschichte, Gehalt und Gegenwart eines umstrittenen Begriffs* [Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2003]; Matthias Kaufmann, "Einleitung," in *Integration oder Toleranz? Minderheiten als philosophisches Problem*, ed. Matthias Kaufmann [Freiburg and Munich: Karl Alber, 2001]: 11–30), to the point of "recognition" (see Anna Elisabetta Galeotti, *Toleration as Recognition* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002]; David Heyd, "What Toleration Is Not," paper presented at the "Tolerance and Intolerance as Challenge in Past and Present" conference, Universität Hamburg, March 27, 2019, https://lecture2go.uni-hamburg.de/l2go/-/get/v/24408) and even "welcoming and support" (see Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach, *Toleranz im interkulturellen Kontext* [Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz, 2005]; Susan Mendus, "The Changing Face of Toleration," *Reset DOC*, June 26, 2014, https://www.resetdoc.org/story/the-changing-face-of-toleration/). As an all-encompassing concept, tolerance is an object of concern in very different fields of research including sociology, politics, theology, philosophy, philology, and religious or migration studies and therefore the definitions differ radically. Cary J. Nederman points out that "the myth of liberal 'uniqueness'" should be broken and complains about the "historical and geographical rigidity of the main stream of toleration scholarship." For this reason, he gives some "alternative theoretical approaches to the rights-laden, modern, Western discourse of liberalism": Cary J. Nederman, "Toleration in a New Key: Historical and Global Perspectives," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 14, no. 3 (2011): 351.

"public" or "political" and an "individual" agency of tolerance, although they often ignore it. Although Leibowitz gives enough material to support an examination of the degree of public or political tolerance in his descriptions of a modern democratic Jewish state, in this analysis, I will look at the individual degree of tolerance of "the other" within the context of a liberal democratic state. Before I begin, I state that tolerance is not a value determination itself, but a strategy of agency, and the degree of tolerance is *dependent* on other value determinations, such as, for example, faith, ethics, or any other value determination a person is willing to follow.[64] As mentioned before, there exists a long tradition of connecting between scepticism and tolerance, defining tolerance as the "child of doubt."[65] However, the history of this connection will not be the topic of this paper.[66]

The Creative Halakhah

As Leibowitz himself never examined the issue of tolerance himself (unlike, for example, Montaigne), we have to look for "implicit" indications of tolerance in his thought. In my earlier research, I discovered some interesting features of Leibowitz's philosophy that leave room for a tolerant attitude. One of these indications is his stance concerning the flexibility of the *Halakhah*. In his opinion—and against an orthodox point of view—the *Halakhah* has to be "creative" in order to adjust to contemporary society.[67] Because the "'Torah state' is not a reality—neither in the historical past, nor in the present or in any foreseeable future,"[68] the principles of the *Halakhah* required restatement. But Leibowitz was sceptical about whether the religious elite was capable of prescribing ways of life for the new politically independent community. He criticised them for being narrow-minded and strongly called on them to seek new rules for Jewish religion. He denied the ideas of the Reform movement and called on the *halakhic* community to invent new answers to upcoming questions when the religious elites failed to do so. The reason for this "creative" *halakhic* approach might come from Leibowitz's unbroken desire for the Jewish religion to survive in the modern world. One example of the "creative *Halakhah*" is his attitude regarding the rights of women:

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64 See, for example, Hamid Reza Yousefi, "Tolerance und Individuum," in *Toleranz im Weltkontext: Geschichten—Erscheinungsforme—Neue Entwicklungen*, ed. Hamid Reza Yousefi and Harald Seubert (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2013), 221; Nederman, "Toleration in a New Key."

65 Susan Mendus, "Introduction," in *Justifying Toleration: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Susan Mendus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 6.

66 For the evident connection between scepticism and tolerance, see, for example, Levine, ed., *Early Modern Skepticism and the Origins of Toleration*.

67 See Goldman, "Introduction," xxiv.

68 Yeshayahu Leibowitz, "People, Religion and the State" [Hebrew], 154, in Hellinger, "A Clearly Democratic Religious-Zionist Philosophy," 278.

> Nowadays even our religious society is part of a world in which all political and public issues are shared by men and women. Thus it is "the way of women" to participate in public affairs. Jewish religious society will not be able to survive if, for pseudo-religious reasons, we continue to deprive women of their due rights. This is the point at which we—those of us resolved to practice Torah—cannot perpetuate the halakhic decisions of our fathers dating from a social reality which differed radically from our own.[69]

Leibowitz also follows this sceptical stance concerning the study of the Torah and the Talmud. He states that the Jewish religious community cannot refuse to allow women to study Torah and Talmud, although women's studies are of no religious significance:

> The perpetuation of this attitude within Judaism and the Jewish religion is intolerable in the Jewish world of today. The religious Jewish public to whom these remarks are addressed belongs to a society whose culture is common to both men and women. Such is our mode of Jewish existence as well. Therefore, barring women today from Talmud Torah segregates Judaism from the spiritual reality shared by Jews of both sexes. [...] What is really important is that Talmud Torah should be available to the entire religious community, the duty and privilege of both men and women.[70]

To summarise, Leibowitz is sceptical concerning the fathers' *halakhic* decisions, which date from a social reality that is radically different from his own, and calls for a more tolerant up-to-date approach and the restatement of the *Halakhah*. Leibowitz's tolerant approach concerning homosexuality was also well-known. He declared that "homosexuals were members of the Jewish community like all other Jews, and should strive to follow the commandments, even if there were some that they could not abide by."[71]

Co-existence of Valid Value Systems

Rejecting the roots of a sceptical approach, Avi Sagi nevertheless found evidence for a so-called pluralism in Leibowitz's thought. He raises the question of whether the Jewish religion can develop tolerance for non-religious Jews without sacrificing fun-

69 Leibowitz (1980), *Judaism*, 130 f.

70 Leibowitz (1980), *Judaism*, 129–30; see also Leibowitz and Michael Shashar, *Gespräche über Gott und die Welt*, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1994), 163 f. It is necessary to note Tamar Ross's criticism of the distinctions and limits that Leibowitz makes in this argumentation: see Tamar Ross, "The Status of Woman in Judaism: Several Reflections on Leibowitz's Conception of the Mechanism by Which *Halakha* Adjusts to Reality" [Hebrew], in *Yeshayahu Leibowitz: His World and Philosophy*, ed. Avi Sager (Jerusalem: Keter, 1995), 148–62.

71 Yaakov Ariel, "Gay, Orthodox, and Trembling: The Rise of Jewish Orthodox Gay Consciousness, 1970s – 2000s," *Journal of Homosexuality* 52, no. 3/4 (2006/7): 96–97.

damental traditions.[72] In Sagi's interpretation, tolerance is *not* a product of relativism or scepticism, since man can only tolerate what he rejects.[73] Instead, he recognises two other reasons for tolerance: a *utilitarian* reason and a *value-based* reason. According to Sagi, Leibowitz offers the answer of tolerance through his separation between a normative religious value system and co-existent non-religious value systems, as mentioned before. Leibowitz's acceptance of a pluralistic Israeli society containing religious practitioners and non-religious Jews hence arises from two assumptions. First, he assumes that cultures are always subject to dynamic processes. Thus, Jewish society is always developing and a culture is not only defined by its religious members. Secondly, Leibowitz develops a form of tolerance that is not based on excluding others as "alien," but rather exclusively transfers the "foreignness" to the religious realm, while all other realms are shared:

> Our commitment to our values is not measured by the extent of our rejection of the other's worlds but by the willingness to endorse these values consistently in our life and by our unwavering commitment to them. Loyalty to our values is related to our disposition toward them and not necessarily to their cognitive superiority.[74]

Sagi can take this stance because Leibowitz formulates a co-existence of parallel value systems that have no general hierarchy and are only ordered through individual preference. The choice of one value system is not the negation of another, for the other value system may indeed be void for the selecting subject, but important for another individual who, because of another tradition or cultural identity, would opt for it in this very situation. This approach is underpinned through Leibowitz's axiology. Leibowitz conveys a non-cognitive approach to the adoption of values. He claims that values cannot be rationally anchored; they are instead the result of subjective irrational decisions.[75] Because the choice of one value system is absolutely non-cognitive, all value systems have to be held as valid. Yonatan Brafman calls this parallelism of value systems the "relativistic 'polytheism' of competing values."[76] Through this theory of genuine value conflict and the subjectivity of axiological decisions, Leibowitz leaves room for tolerance. Let us look at an example where Leibowitz adapts the theory of genuine value conflict. In an interview with the *Journal of Palestine Studies* in 1989, he stated: "We have the fact of two peoples, each of them believing in their heart that this country is theirs. Therefore, it's either partition or

72 See Sagi, *Jewish Religion after Theology*, 4.

73 See Sagi, 8.

74 Sagi, 63.

75 See Yonatan Brafman, "Yeshayahu Leibowitz's Axiology. A 'Polytheism of Values' and the 'Most Valuable Value,'" *Journal of Religious Ethics* 43, no. 1 (2015): 146–68.

76 Brafman, 165. However, Brafman reveals a paradox in Leibowitz's axiology: while affirming a relativistic polytheism of competing values, Leibowitz nonetheless implies that the religious value is the "most valuable value."

war to the finish."[77] This stance comes from the assumption that values cannot be rationally adjudicated and this leads to a tolerance of others' value decisions. Further: "The existence of the 'other' cannot be denied"[78] and when "Palestine consider themselves to be a people, [...] that is the decisive point."[79] This tendency shows more tolerance for "the other" embodied in the Muslim society of Israel and Palestine than is found in most Jewish Orthodox thinkers.[80]

Avi Sagi recognises Leibowitz as not only a tolerant thinker, but perhaps even a pluralistic one.[81] In contrast to Sagi's distinction between scepticism and tolerance, there are clear correlations between the sceptical approach and the "value-based reason" that Avi Sagi wants to separate from scepticism. Nonetheless, it is important to stress here that his assumption of a plurality of value systems allows for tolerance among different value orientations, but does not allow for pluralism *within* value orientations. Though Leibowitz strongly suggests changes within the *halakhic* system, he does however condemn non-Orthodox *halakhic* change as inauthentic.[82] As the religious elites failed to answer the questions of statehood, it was the *halakhic* community's task to provide these answers. Leibowitz was against the changes of Reform Judaism, which "regards the Halakhah as a husk hiding the essential core of religion."[83] Though Leibowitz is an axiological pluralist, an individual can only have one absolute value.

Concerning my definitions of negative and positive conceptions of tolerance, I place Leibowitz within the tradition of tolerance as a positive and even supportive conception. The negative or pragmatic conceptions of tolerance stem from the premise that one can only tolerate what one rejects and that toleration is "an only grudging acceptance of [...] difference," which means an "acceptance of it only as a practical expedient."[84] This pragmatic conception of tolerance was often associated with the politically instituted toleration during the French religious wars of the sixteenth century.[85] Leibowitz, in contrast, even supported "the difference" in different religious and social paths. Because of his sceptical approach, Leibowitz was open "to

77 Yeshayahu Leibowitz and John P. Egan, "Yeshayahu Leibowitz: Liberating Israel from the Occupied Territories," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 15, no. 2 (1986): 105.

78 Leibowitz and Egan, 107.

79 Leibowitz and Egan, 105.

80 This tendency towards tolerance should be further examined because it seems to me that this tolerance stems from a more pragmatic conception of tolerating others in order not to be punished for these events later. See Goldman, "Introduction," xxxf.

81 See Sagi, *Jewish Religion After Theology*, 52f.

82 I thank Yonathan Brafman for this remark.

83 Goldman, "Introduction," xvii.

84 Alan Levine, "Introduction: The Prehistory of Toleration and Varieties of Skepticism," in *Early Modern Skepticism and the Origins of Toleration*, 6.

85 See Levine.

the possibility that the thing in question, whether it be an idea or practice, may represent some truth or good."[86] With this stance, he actually defends a liberal attitude.

4 Another Approach to Scepticism in Leibowitz's Thought

In this analysis so far, we have asserted that scholars have already identified Leibowitz as a sceptical thinker. We also asserted that scepticism is a route to tolerance and that this approach is suitable for finding arguments in support of tolerance in Leibowitz's thought. Afterwards, we looked at examples of tolerance of "the other" in Leibowitz's thought. However, we have not revealed which sceptical approach leads to which conception of tolerance, as "toleration cannot be founded on pure scepticism, [and] all the paths which flow from scepticism do not necessarily lead to toleration."[87] In his monograph *Alienated Wisdom*, Giuseppe Veltri states: "There are two possible political consequences of a sceptical attitude: either it aims to avoid every constriction of society and to adopt a completely *ataraxic* attitude, or it accepts every possible and plausible solution without precluding anything."[88] Clearly, Veltri is here referring to the distinction between the different schools of scepticism made by Sextus Empiricus in book 1 of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*.[89] Veltri further states: "I would call the first radical Pyrrhonism which does not support any kind of social life; the second is the basis of tolerance as the limit of behaviour in a multifarious cultural society."[90] With this assumption in mind, I want to revoke Benbassat's conclusion that Leibowitz was a Pyrrhonian sceptic. I want to show that the claim of Pyrrhonian scepticism, compared to the ancient attitude of *epochē* and the "suspension of judgement," should be replaced by the more plausible attitude that Leibowitz was someone who "accepts every possible and plausible solution without precluding anything."[91] I do not think that Leibowitz's objective was a "state of mind in which one neither denies nor affirms any belief or knowledge," aiming at faith *li-šmah*. I think that Leibowitz indeed supported people *believing* or *not believing* in things and individual truth and that he did not advocate "suspension of judgement." As Benbassat states: "Whether one believes in the cosmological meaning of the opening passage of the Bible or prefers scientific theories

86 Levine, 7. Levine associated a positive sceptical approach with "openness" and contrasts "openness" to "toleration in a strict sense." I define an open approach as the positive conception of toleration/tolerance.

87 Levine, 2.

88 Veltri, *Alienated Wisdom*, 287; see also Veltri, "The Limits of Scepticism and Tolerance," 41.

89 See, for example, Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, especially chapters 1–12 and 29–34.

90 Veltri, "The Limits of Scepticism and Tolerance," 41.

91 Veltri, 41.

in this respect, the Jewish religion, in principle, tolerates both viewpoints."[92] And further: "This tolerant characteristic with regard to cognitive assumptions is rendered possible by acknowledging that the only essential feature of the Jewish religion is the adherence to its practice, which, as stated, does not rely on any cognition."[93] Faith, in Leibowitz's thought, is hence *not dependent* on the "suspension of judgement," but fully independent of any individual judgement, even individual or collective truth claims, for the Jewish faith is nothing but the practice of the *Halakhah* and has no cognitive meaning at all. One may "conduct [oneself] in accord with the plausible [and] employ it in everyday life" and one does not have to "live without belief, following the laws, customs, and [...] natural pathé."[94] Hence, neither scepticism nor one's judgments and beliefs "jeopardise faith,"[95] as faith is isolated from any cognition.

Leibowitz is not a Pyrrhonist. He does indeed note the multiplicity of views on the subject under consideration, as the Pyrrhonists do, and he likewise seeks to keep an open mind. But unlike the Pyrrhonists, who do not know whether they can know anything or not and ultimately suspend judgement, Leibowitz had true concerns and beliefs about human problems such as the responsibility of religious Jewry, the duty of education, or the ideal politics of an Israeli state. In Leibowitz's thought, *we*, the people, know: "But the little we know, we know."[96] And even in the realm of Jewish faith, which is independent of every cognition and meaning in the world, the religious practitioner at least *knows* that God is "the giver of the Torah."[97] As a scientist and a philosopher, Leibowitz himself had true beliefs outside Jewish faith and could not ignore or suspend prevailing problems such as what the character of the new Jewish society would be. Leibowitz even supported individuals having their own beliefs and values in different realms of life and accepting "every possible plausible solution without precluding anything."

For this assertion, I will repeat the example of the religious father:

> If one day he or one of his children falls ill, he consults the physician and resorts to the science of medicine as would any atheist [...]. To provide for his livelihood he makes use of all the means employed to this end by the atheist [...]. The Jew who regularly prays his daily prayer does so in recognition of the obligation to pray, as an aspect of his obligation to serve God.[98]

To provide for his livelihood and that of his children, the religious practitioner uses all the means that the atheist employs to this end. He believes in the doctor's abilities, and because life gives him the choice between several value systems, he

92 Benbassat, "Jewish Faith and Scepticism," 169.
93 Benbassat, 169.
94 Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 33.
95 Benbassat, "Jewish Faith and Scepticism," 180.
96 Leibowitz, *Judaism* (1976), 137.
97 See Leibowitz, *Judaism* (1953), 5. This is a known paradox in Leibowitz's philosophy.
98 Leibowitz, *Judaism* (1977), 64 f.

does not fall into idolatry by sanctifying the religious realm. Within this very division between the religious realm and all other realms of life, only the "purified, genuine religious faith,"[99] aiming at faith *li-šmah*, is possible. Leibowitz hence believed in scientific knowledge and individual truth claims, but for him, religion regards this knowledge with indifference.[100]

For the sake of God as an absolute value, "anything in the world might be renounced, for anything else is only relatively, conditionally valuable"[101]—for which Abraham and the *ʿAqedah* serve as the best example. This attitude does not negate evaluability (nihilism), but strengthens an individualistic perspective of truth. Besides the "instrumental truth," the truth of science, which is "a datum within science,"[102] "truth" in the realm of values—as stated before—is a matter of personal intention. A value determination is hence an individual decision. "A person's understanding and feeling derive from his own subjectivity, which differs from anyone else's,"[103] and this counts for "the set of beliefs and the religious experience"[104] as much as for "consciousness, sensibility, and valuation [as] radically private."[105] Leibowitz hence does not claim, as the Pyrrhonists do, that we do not know that we know, but rather that every person holds his "truth" for himself. Leibowitz does not negate truth, nor does he ascribe truth to faith. As Goldman states, for Leibowitz, it is "absurd to regard revelation as a surrogate or supplement for natural knowledge."[106]

Conclusion

By shifting the Jewish religion from a metaphysical theological realm to a strictly normative realm, defining the Jewish faith as a closed normative realm co-existing with other closed normative realms, and his definition of individual truth, Leibowitz laid the foundation of a plausible form of scepticism and tolerance. The key concept is the premise that there is no universal hierarchy between value systems, but that

99 Benbassat, "Jewish Faith and Scepticism," 161.

100 See Judaism (1976), 141. Here, Leibowitz is referring to Maimonides's writings, particularly the *Guide of the Perplexed* and the *Codex Maimoni*.

101 Benbassat, "Jewish Faith and Scepticism," 170.

102 Leibowitz, *Judaism* (1976), 139.

103 Leibowitz, *Judaism* (1953), 9.

104 Leibowitz, *Judaism* (1953), 10; see also Goldman, "Introduction," xv.

105 Leibowitz, *Judaism* (1953), 9.

106 Goldman, "Introduction," xiv. Religious thinkers have often been discussed as sceptic fideists. Fideists believe that the only truth available to us can be revealed by foregoing rational inquiry and relying solely on faith. Leibowitz is no fideist either. See Levine, "Scepticism, Self and Toleration," 54; Richard Amesbury "Fideism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/fideism/.

the human prioritisation of the value system is time-, place-, and need-bound.[107] As the value determinations cannot be rationally adjudicated, all of them are *valid*. The choice of a value system in one particular situation does not negate the other value systems, but allows them to exist in parallel, for "truth" in the realm of values is a matter of personal intention. There is a constant and genuine conflict of values, which the individual faces in every new decision in his life. Leibowitz's pluralistic definition is understandable, for he found himself in the difficult situation of filling his *own* value system with inherent value and of giving legitimacy to this value system within a modern society and politics.[108] Thereby, he not only followed his aim of strengthening Jewish faith within a modern Israeli state, but he also left room for a positive and supportive form of tolerance as a form of "accepting the other."

This paper has shown that scepticism may be found in Leibowitz's thought and that this sceptical attitude can be considered as a route that leads to tolerance. But while Benbassat concentrated on the so-called Pyrrhonian tradition of scepticism (*epochē* and "suspension of judgement"), I assume that, rather, the clearly sceptical methodology of Yeshayahu Leibowitz's thought requires further analysis. We should examine the object of "methodical doubt at the beginning of every philosophical debate and treatise concerning all aspects of human life or, alternatively, an epistemological attitude which doubts the possibility of knowledge."[109] In the analysis of tolerance in Leibowitz's thought, there are further questions to be dealt with. Where there has been a development from the "earlier Leibowitz" to the "later Leibowitz," there might also be a development within his sceptical and tolerant attitude. At the very least, the "target audience" of scepticism and tolerance could have shifted from one group to another. In the history of tolerance, its blind spots have already been emphasised by Christian Laursen in his paper "Blind Spots in the Toleration Literature," in which he posits John Milton, Benedict Spinoza, Denis Veiras, John Locke, and Pierre Bayle as examples of the limitations of tolerant thinking.[110] Tolerance, in his interpretation, always goes hand in hand with intolerance. Clearly, one will find blind spots (for example, Christianity externally, Reform Judaism internally) in Leibowitz's thinking too, which should further be examined. Ultimately, Yeshayahu Leibowitz was popular for his harsh criticism of the Israeli government. Regarding the room for tolerance and individual truth in his thought, one may examine the political consequences that Leibowitz suggested for the state of Israel and investigate his ideas of an ideal Israeli state.

In "The Limits of Scepticism and Tolerance," Giuseppe Veltri refers to a BBC broadcast given by Bertrand Russell in which he defines scepticism as a powerful means of combating fanaticism, stating that the alternative to fanaticism is a rational

107 See Sagi, *Jewish Religion after Theology*, 49 f.

108 See Sagi, 46.

109 Veltri, *Alienated Wisdom*, 287.

110 John Christian Laursen, "Blind Spots in the Toleration Literature," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 14, no. 3 (2011): 307–22.

scepticism that is open to scientific discovery: "Fanatics are unwilling to accept scientific discoveries made by their enemies, and therefore soon fall behind those whose outlook is more cosmopolitan."[111] Scepticism is therefore considered as a strategy which leads to a form of success. In this methodology, Leibowitz's definition of faith leads to a sceptical attitude that can be seen as a strategy for developing a tolerant attitude towards "the other." The statement that "fanatics are unwilling to accept scientific discoveries [...] and therefore soon fall behind" could also have been made by Yeshayahu Leibowitz, whose aim was to examine a new role of religious Jewry in the modern Israeli state in order to avoid "falling behind." He defines this new role as a flexibility, which—for example—shows itself in the modification of a "creative" *Halakhah* to strengthen Jewish faith in a modern secular society.[112]

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111 Bertrand Arthur William Russell, "Why Fanaticism Brings Defeat," *The Listener* 40 (September 23, 1948): 452–53, in Veltri, "The Limits of Scepticism and Tolerance," 39. This text is a transcript from a BBC broadcast.

112 I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers as well as Yonatan Brafman and Yoav Meyrav for their helpful suggestions in refining this essay.

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