

Peter Boile Nielsen

Religious Humanism: The Philosophy of Andreas Simonsen

[Andreas Simonsen](#) (1923-91) was Jewish on both his fathers's and mother's side of the family. His father, Rudolph Simonsen, was a lawyer and in addition had an excellent ear for music; he was the managing director of the Copenhagen School of Music for a number of years. Although Rudolph Simonsen was a member of the Jewish Community, judaism did not play a significant role in his home, and Andreas Simonsen remained a stranger to any kind of established religion all his life.

From his early youth Andreas Simonsen was drawn to a humanistic view of life, and it was this interest that led him to study the classics, specializing in Socrates.

In time Andreas Simonsen realized that the humanistic tradition is informed by two fundamentally different points of view: religious humanism and rationality. The difference between these two points of views emerges most clearly in their understanding of ethics. Andreas Simonsens, however, argues that the very nature of ethics cannot be justified from a rational point of view, simply because the claim that all human beings have equal worth is not of a rational nature. Ethics then can only be rooted in a religious view of life, and Andreas Simonsen agrees whole-heartedly with Søren Kierkegaard's statement: "To God every human being is equally important, unquestionably equally important." This sentence expresses the quintessence of religious humanism: a recognition of being one human being among other human beings, no more - and yet so much! At the same time humility and exaltation.

Finn Monies

A Danish-Jewish Museum in Copenhagen

In 1991 architect Finn Monies outlined a proposal for a Danish-Jewish museum at the 300 year old and now out of use Jewish cemetery in Møllegade, Copenhagen. His article favors this location rather than the recently proposed location at the Royal Library in Copenhagen.

Aron Neuman

The Jewish Museum in Stochholm, Sweden

The Jewish museum in Stochholm, founded by Aron and Viola Neuman in 1987, has become a successful cultural and educational institution. Its head and founder Aron Neuman argues that four key ingredients are essential for the establishment of a Jewish museum:

1. the quality of its personnel
2. sufficient capital
3. a central and convenient location, and finally
4. the quality of the objects displayed

Hanne Trautner-Kromann

Defining a Culture: International Conference of Jewish Museums, 1994

Hanne Trautner-Kromann discusses her participation in "Defining a Culture: International Conference of Jewish Museums, January 16-18, 1994" in New York. She was particularly struck by two seemingly contradictory approaches to Jewish museums: an "emotional" one characteristic of the American scene and an "academic" one that seems mainly European. The emotional approach emphasizes the strengthening of Jewish identity whereas the academic approach is also concerned with explaining Judaism and Jewish culture to non-Jews and with establishing close ties between the Jewish and non-Jewish world. Finally Trautner-Kromann raises the problem of finding qualified Jewish and non-Jewish personnel for a future Danish-Jewish Museum.

Kaare Bing

The Jewish Museum in Amsterdam

Kaare Bing's impressions upon his visit to the Jewish museum in Amsterdam located in four adjoining buildings that originally were synagogues.

Julie Fryd Johansen

Just Another Museum?

Julie Fryd Johansen questions whether Denmark needs a Danish-Jewish museum but concludes that the relevance of such a museum will depend on the kind of objects that will be displayed and the kind of activities that the museum chooses to engage in. She argues that a Danish-Jewish museum should be a cultural center rather than a traditional museum.

Cilly Kugelman

Jewish Museums in Germany

The educational director of the Jewish museum in Frankfurt discusses three conflicting interests that Jewish museums in Germany have to contend with: the German authorities, the Jewish community and the professional museum staff. Kugelman outlines five phases of changing German-Jewish relations since 1945 and argues that the interpretation of Holocaust is a main point of conflict.

Inger Sjørsløv

The Contemporary Museum: A Meditation on Objects as Narrators

Inger Sjørsløv's essay explores the paradoxical role of the contemporary museum; it interacts with continually changing cultural identities, yet the very essence of a museum is immutability. Ideally the museum should be an instrument of cultural awareness where the displayed objects act as narrators. Visitors may then "read" the objects themselves or have the meaning of the objects read to them by experts. Sjørsløv warns against the "museum effect" in the negative sense of sacralisation of objects

through their institutional position. On the other, the other hand, in a positive sense trivial objects may become magical by association with great people or events. In the final analysis a good museum should be both factual and sensuous.

Silvia Planas

The Jewish Museum in Girona, Spain

Silvia Planas is a member of the planning committee for the establishment of a museum and an information center about the medieval Jewish community in Girona. She comments on the proposed project.

Rasmus Bing

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Rasmus Bing's personal impressions upon visiting the recently opened Holocaust museum in Washington, D.C.

Hans Kirchhoff

The Action against the Danish Jews. A Discussion

It is well-known that Denmark occupies a special place in the history of the Holocaust because approximately seven thousand Danish Jews were rescued and brought to safety in Sweden while less than five hundred were arrested and deported to Germany. Since Leni Yahil's authoritative study, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry: Test of Democracy* was published in 1966, her thesis has been the most widely accepted.

She argues that the German failure was due, respectively, to the double-dealings of Werner Best, the German plenipotentiary in Denmark, and the efforts of the Danish population. Similarly the German diplomat Georg Ferdinand Duckwitz has been cast in the role of protagonist and hero because he warned the Jewish community and took an active part in the rescue operation. A "revisionist" thesis has, however, coexisted with the "traditional" view. Based on their understanding of the SS decision process and hierarchy of command, the revisionists posit that the cause of the German failure must be found exclusively in Berlin.

They claim that the SS did not have the necessary police force to carry out an action against Danish Jews. Supposedly, Himmler and Eichmann planned to make Denmark "judenrein" without directly deporting the Jews by leaking plans for an action against them, thus making them flee to Sweden. The revisionists play down the significance of the Danish efforts and instead make the German failure look like a success story.

In the last issue of *RAMBAM* (no.2, 1993), Tatiana Berenstein defended the revisionist thesis. She knocked Duckwitz off his pedestal and portrayed him as a fraud and a puppet of Best. Hans Kirchhoff's article is a critique of this conspiracy theory and, at the same time, elaborates the traditional thesis.

Kirchhoff argues that Werner Best started the action because his intimate knowledge of the workings of the German killing machine meant that he had to know that after cooperation with the Danish government had collapsed on August 29, 1943, the turn of the Danish Jews had come. He probably wanted to show Berlin

that he was in control. Simultaneously Best tried to sabotage the action to minimize unrest in Denmark. Best wanted to avoid that the Danish heads of the civilian administration stepped down in protest. They had replaced the parliamentary government in September 1943 and, in practice, continued to cooperate with the occupying power. Best was completely dependent upon their cooperation if he was to succeed in Denmark.

Duckwitz played an important role in Best's double game. Duckwitz' missions to Germany and Sweden, as well as his decisive warning to several Danish politicians on September 28, 1943, can probably only be interpreted as part of the strategy of Werner Best. But Duckwitz was not merely a puppet. He was also motivated by anti-Nazism. Kirchhoff emphasizes that only Duckwitz enjoyed the confidence of both camps and that made it possible for Danes to take the warning seriously.

Kirchhoff argues that the conspiracy theory is not supported by primary sources. Both Danish and German police sources as well as sources from the Danish Foreign Ministry indicate that there was sufficient German police to carry out an action against Danish Jews. The Danes imagined that the Jews would go underground in Denmark, and this was probably the scenario that Best believed was least likely to provoke Berlin.

On the one hand, Kirchhoff accepts the defense of Best after the war that he only acted on orders from Berlin. Kirchhoff, however, also emphasizes that Best was ideologically equipped to annihilate Jews and that he only refrained for pragmatic reasons in order to maintain relations with his Danish partners.