

Displaying Dissent: On Faith, Consumerism, and Censorial Discipline in the Israeli Museum

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An unusual violent clash between religious, Christian and Muslim demonstrators and the Haifa Museum of Art took place on Thursday, January 9, 2019. The protesters amassed the entrance of the museum to express their distress against the exhibition Shop It! A handheld firebomb thrown towards the museum was but the first round for the violent reactions of the next several days. These included attacking police forces and attempts to break into the museum featuring works of art considered sacrilegious by the demonstrators. The protest developed into a multi-participant debate in the art scene, involving ordinary citizens, artists and art curators, local church leaders, the city mayor, the minister of culture and other politicians, civil rights organizations and the court, as each part sought to exercise civic, moral, ethical or practical authority to censor the position or the work of the other. The article seeks to analyze the different ways in which mechanisms of regularization, supervision and punishment, which have always been part of the world of art, are used not only by those perceived as apparatuses of the state or as ideological mechanisms of abstract political or institutional entity, but as standard practices in the discourse of creating, trading, curating and presenting art – a discourse which, in the Israeli-Palestinian context, is imbued with the notion of national conflict.

Introduction

Owing to provocative images and the uproar surrounding them, leading to demands to hide or even destroy them, theorist Carl Schmitt contended that the state cannot refrain from involvement in artifacts that have political relevance, domains of which carry implications for the conditions defining political unity. These matters were so pressing in Schmitt's view, that as early as the 1930s, Schmitt suggested that there was a need to monitor cinema and even to censor it. As far as Schmitt was concerned, the state could not allow itself to permit mass media to go unmonitored.¹

Censorship can stem from many motivations: national, institutional, familial, gender, class, sensitivities, and others. It arises whenever there is an action expressing an attempt to cross what is perceived of as an ethical boundary in the culture and society under discussion. This boundary, as Steven C. Dubin believed, is so fluid that the 'diabolical' avant-garde of the past becomes the folklore of the

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1. Carl Schmitt's stance appears in his essay "Weiterentwicklung des totalen Staates in Deutschland," *Europäische Revue* 9 (1933): 65-70.

present.² On occasion, struggles over censorship entail a threat to currently held values. Fraught incidents that the demand for censorship raises often prompt a counter-demand for control and mobility of power.

Censorship and demands therefor are not rare in Israel. For example, the exhibit *Forbidden: Censored Artworks in Israel*, curated by Ami Shteinitz (1997-1998), contained works that have been censored since Israel's establishment. Shteinitz addressed, inter alia, Yosef Zaritzky's abstract painting *Otzma* ["power"] (1958); the cancellation of the catalog of David Rib's solo exhibit at Tel Aviv Museum (1983) due to a series of paintings incorporating the colors of the Palestinian flag into the Israeli flag; and numerous other instances throughout the history of Israeli art.³ In 1997, Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design alumna Tatyana Soskin painted a pig captioned "Muhammad" in English and Hebrew, treading on a book labeled "Quran" in English and Hebrew. Soskin disseminated prints of the painting and hung them in the Palestinian city of Hebron. She served two years in prison for "attempt to offend religious sensitivities by means of racist incitement", as well as attempt to damage property and endangering human life on the roadways.⁴

More recent instances of censorship in the art field in Israel: A Hamsa captioned "*Itbach al yahud*" ["Slaughter the Jews" in Arabic] by Gal Wollintz was destroyed by a student during its display in the exhibit *kochah shel milah* ["the power of a word"] at Sapir College Gallery (2014);⁵ The arrest of artist Natalie Cohen-Waksberg several times for her works, on the grounds of contempt for religious and state symbols and offending public sensitivities (2014);⁶ A white flag stuck into the rear end of artist Ariel Bronze during a performance at the *Haaretz* Conference led to the police investigating Bronze on the grounds of violating the National Flag and Anthem Act (2016);⁷ then-Justice-Minister Ayelet Shaked's face on her naked form in the multi-part work of Yam Amrani was covered and ultimately removed from the Shenkar College Graduates Exhibition (2016) following the directive of Shenkar President and former Education Minister Yuli

2. Steven C. Dubin, *Arresting Images: Impolitic Art and Uncivil Actions* (London: Routledge, 1992).

3. Joshua Simon, *The State of Israel Against Israeli Art* (Globes, April 28, 2004). Joshua Simone's essay, as well as the writings regarding the cases mentioned in the two following paragraphs, were all published in Hebrew.

4. Globes, *The Court Convicted Tatiana Soskin Distributer of the Pig Proclamation in Hebron* (Globes, December 31, 1997).

5. Eliyahu Galil, '*Itbach El Yahud, Not What you Thought* (Kipa, December 31, 2014).

6. Avi Ashkenazi, *The Police Arrested a Young Woman who Was Photographed Defecating on the Israeli Flag* (Walla News, November 2, 2014).

7. Ashkenazi, *The Police Interrogated the Artist Ariel Bronze, who Put a Flag on Our Seats at the Israel Culture Conference* (Haaretz, March 7, 2016).

Tamir to cover it up or remove it);⁸ The *Barbariyut* [“barbarism”] exhibition (2018-9) mounted against the backdrop of an attempt to censor and persecute Jerusalem’s Barbur Gallery⁹ where a “censorship archives” is housed, comprised of dozens of works censored without any intervention by their respective curators. It emerges that the exhibition itself featured self-censorship by the curators, who removed therefrom an online project by artist Meira Asher, wherein Asher invited musicians to set to music Palestinian poet Darin Tatur’s poem *Hitkomem, Ami* [“arise, my people”].¹⁰

Haifa museums – a network of museums based in the city of Haifa, which is inhabited by both Jews and Christian Arabs – in particular have been entangled on more than one occasion in censorship incidents of artworks and consequent dismissals of curators. Two such incidents include: (a) In 1995, Haifa Museum of Art exhibited Nir Hod’s *Hitabdut Ortodoxit* [“Orthodox suicide”]. After the work was declared offensive, it was removed;¹¹ (b) In the exhibit *Arba Prakim al Mayim* [“four sections on water”] (2004), the museum’s administration asked that part of Dganit Brest’s work, based on a picture of a suicide bomber, be covered.¹² Dismissals and resignations of Haifa curators are routine, and include the cases of Ruti Direktor (2011-2014),¹³ Leah Abir (2015),¹⁴ and more recently, Galia Bar-Or, curator of Haifa’s Pyramid Gallery (2017-2019).¹⁵

The most recent such flare-up was over the removal of the sculpture *McJesus* from the *Shop It!* exhibition. *McJesus*, by Finnish artist Jani Leinonen, displays Ronald McDonald nailed to a cross. On Thursday January 9, 2019, a few dozen citizens gathered outside Haifa Museum of Art to protest the *Shop It!* cluster of exhibitions. During the protest, a Molotov cocktail was hurled at the museum building. The next day, hundreds protested against *Shop It!* and clashed with police when opponents of the sculpture, which they considered an affront to Christian values, attempted to break into the museum. When things did not calm

8. Shany Littman, *Yam Amrani Removed Painting of the Controversy with the Naked Portrait of Minister Shaked* (Haaretz, July 24, 2016).

9. The name of the exhibition is a play on words on the name of the gallery – Barbur, which actually means “swan” in Hebrew.

10. Ronen Idelman and Yonatan Amir, *Government Barbarism, Censorship and Radical Art* (Erev-Rav, December 29, 2018).

11. Naama Riba, *What Designers Have to Say About Rabin’s Murder* (Haaretz, October 29, 2015).

12. Merav Yudilevich, *Haifa Museum: The Picture of the Terrorist Covered* (Ynet, June 23, 2004).

13. Eitan Buganim, *Ruth Director Leaves the Position of Chief Curator of the Haifa Museum of Art* (Haaretz, December 30, 2013).

14. Littman, *The Haifa Museum Has Decided to Stop the Work of Chief Curator Leah Abir*. (Haaretz, January 4, 2015).

15. Riba, *Artists in Haifa Revolt over the Dismissal of Curator Galia Bar-Or* (Haaretz, February 1, 2019).

down, Mayor Einat Kalish-Rotem posted on her Facebook page (January 16, 2019) her decision to remove the sculpture, based on a technicality according to which Haifa Museum's loan contract with the Finnish gallery had expired.

At the same time, the heads of the Church in Haifa asked Haifa District Court to issue an order to remove the artwork, along with two other works that were part of the *Sechora Mekudeshet* ["holy wares"] exhibition, part of the *Shop It!* cluster, on the grounds that they offend public sensitivities. After the aforementioned protests, Culture Minister Miri Regev joined the Church's plea, writing to Haifa Museum Director Nissim Tal that the sculpture "is not protectable by free speech". Regev also declared, "There are regulations, codified in the Budget Foundations Act, according to which state support of cultural institutions can be reduced," to which Tal replied, "Our role is to stand as a barricade against censorship. We will not tell artists how to create."¹⁶

Following negotiations between church representatives, the city, and the museum, it was agreed to leave the sculpture in the exhibition, but to change the conditions of its display such that only those who wished to could view it. In its argument in Haifa District Court, ACRI [Association for Civil Rights in Israel] attorneys stated that the mayor's intervention in the matter was outside her purview. Yet the court backed up the mayor's actions, stating that she not only had the authority, but that she was obligated to prevent Haifa city residents' sensitivities from being offended.

This article seeks to analyze the *McJesus* case through the prism of censorship praxes, alongside addressing the economic, religious, and discursive issues raised therein. Our discussion will address the perception of the alleged legitimate and authoritative position of the elite versus that of the masses. Even if we oppose the demand to censor artworks, this should not be construed as framing the protest of *Shop It!* as a struggle between the forces of light and the forces of ignorance and darkness. This article's underlying assumption is that any prevention of an exhibition of an artwork is a censorial act. The prevention or removal of a work eliminates specific content and seeks to limit the discursive framework so as to conform to the discursive code dictated by the censoring party.

Our line of argument will begin at this point, positioning on one side the artist's own objection to displaying his work in Israel (an objection that was dismissed due to a loan contract between Haifa Museum and Leinonen's gallery), and on the other side, the objection of the Arab-Christian community in Haifa to the same exhibit, on completely different grounds. To place this event within the framework of discourse theory, we first elaborate on Pierre Bourdieu's definition of discourse-censorship (1984), and suggest that any discursive system is inherently censored; we proceed with Michel Foucault's writings on discipline and punishing-practices (1975) in order to theorize current discursive limitations

16. Riba, 'McJesus' *Affair: The Church Has Appealed to the Court, the Artist Wants to Boycott Israel* (Haaretz, January 14, 2019).

and punishing methods. In this section, we focus mainly on the opposition, as a BDS¹⁷ supporter, of Leinonen to exhibiting his work, and we characterize BDS's boycott of Israel as a censorial act. This first part of our essay concludes with a claim concerning the function of public Israeli museums under the current code and its limitations, and particularly under conditions of international boycott and a politicized discourse. The second part of the article addresses another censoring party in the event in question – the masses. Scrutinizing the masses' position and claims, we suggest that while the protestors' motivation stems from an alleged conflict between religious and artistic principles, an economic perception of the artworks might suggest that a limited code of expression characterizes both the religious and the artistic-museal systems – both of which are subordinated to the economic system. We argue that religion and art are intertwined – a condition that “legitimizes” the masses' demand to participate in the censorial process.

The protestors' censorial demand, we claim, can be compared to that of the BDS in terms of human rights, coercion, power, and control relations. This second part progresses through an analogy between religious and economic disciplinarity in museums. We extend censorial practices to include discipline and punishment, which we define as “economic colonialism”. By showcasing the complexity and multi-faceted character of censorship practices, we ultimately argue that each party equally takes part in a critical community that censors in ways that formulate and nurture differing ethical subjectivities.

Boycott and Discourse Censoring

With the outbreak of the *McJesus* flare-up, the call arose from the artist to take down the sculpture in light of his support of BDS, which inter alia, calls for a cultural boycott on Israel. Thus was the path paved to the mayor's office for a complex dilemma that blurred both the boundaries and the power relations between art and politics. A central question that arises therefrom and that will be discussed in this section is: How can we profile the relationship between BDS in the art field, and the discursive role and function of the museum in Israel?

Our fundamental assumption is that the prevention of the exhibition of an artwork constitutes censorship; the prevention or the removal of an exhibit negates any content therein and seeks to limit the discourse according to which appropriate content is determined desirable for the censoring party (even though occasionally, due to intervention, there is a reverberation that broadens the discourse beyond its original dimensions, without any censorship). Every discourse is conducted as per a set of codes whose function it is to preserve the

17. The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement works to end international support for Israel's oppression of Palestinians and pressure Israel to comply with international law.

social order that upholds the interests of those controlling it. The discursive meaning of any discourse rests on a set of conventions that include expressions of the acceptable and the unacceptable, or in other words, expressions that lie within the code, or those that deviate therefrom.

Pierre Bourdieu claimed that every discourse field is inherently self-censoring, i.e., subject to codes that shape the field itself.¹⁸ In contrast, censorship that is exerted from without, involves another field, which in one way or another dictates the code of its discourse to the first field. The external censorship exerted when the mayor called for removing *McJesus* from *Shop It!* reflects a clash of discourse fields with differing boundaries. In this case, due to power positions, the boundaries of discourse of the Christian community, which is censored from within (inside the field), were imposed upon the “museum group” (the art field), whose discourse was in turn limited and differed from that of the protesters. The result – the removal of several works from the exhibition (an act that on the discursive level is termed “silencing”) – embodies both the praxis of self-censorship, i.e., a limiting of discourse shaped in a given field; and a praxis of external censorship, or a limit imposed upon another field. In this case, the silencing disrupted the discursive code and the activity of the field, as it applies thereto boundaries set as per a set of outside interests.

As aforementioned, while this event began with the protest of Haifa’s Christian community, a turning point took place when the artist himself joined the demand to remove *McJesus* from the exhibit due to his affiliation with BDS. The intervention of Minister Regev was perceived by many as opportunistic, as it did not necessarily reflect solidarity with the Christians or their discourse, but rather expressed opposition to the art field in general and to freedom of speech. In contrast to Regev, Leinonen joined the demand to remove his sculpture without uttering a word of support for the Haifa Christian community, as he was driven by other motivations entirely. In an associative sense, while it is likely that his request for assistance to be extended to the Hadash faction (a pro-Palestinian Israeli political party) was perceived by the Israeli public as linked to Haifa’s Arab community, in fact, it stemmed from opposition to the Israeli occupation, and Hadash’s identification therewith.

Further down, we will delve into the distinction between the discourses from which the protest arose, yet the issue that informs this section of the essay lies in the essence of the silencing, as it was produced by the forms of discourse and the various fields. In other words, at hand are similar ways of expressing identity – silencing/removal – of two differing discourses, in this case the religious one and the political one surrounding the occupation, where this mode of expression is imposed upon a third discourse: that of the art/museum field.

18. Pierre Bourdieu, “Censorship and the Imposition of Form,” in *Language and Symbolic Power* (ed.) John B. Thompson (trans.) Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), 137-159.

When Bourdieu seeks to define the dynamic that creates a discursive system, he proposes that every discourse code is “the product of a *compromise* between an *expressive interest* and a *ensorship* constituted by the very structure of the field in which the discourse is produced and circulates.”¹⁹ This compromise, according to Bourdieu, is achieved through euphemization – a sort of linguistic sublimation, that can go as far as a complete silencing, which is the extreme form of censored expression. This wording seems very relevant in the context of the discursive form that was produced from the code in the field of the Christian community. For the purpose of a rough description of the discursive model, we can state simply that this field rests on sanctification of Christian symbols; Satire and criticism are praxes that are at odds with sanctity, and therefore they cannot be imposed upon Christian symbols in the framework of the discourse within the field. As such, in fact any praxis of satirization or any expression of doubt toward holy symbols is legitimately silenced. In Bourdieu’s terminology, we can define this as extreme euphemization, or total censorship (enabled due to the fact that in this case, the field has no interest in expressing ridicule or criticism).

At this juncture, we ask whether this expression is also valid in the context of silencing that stems from affiliation with BDS, which advocates non-violent resistance to the occupation and to Israel remaining in control of the occupied territories. Within the art and culture field, this resistance is expressed mainly via a boycott of Israel. In the present case, the artist asked that his work be removed from the museum as part of the culture boycott against a political backdrop. In the discursive sense, BDS does not euphemize, but rather seeks to utterly nullify certain content, and accordingly the possibility of discourse thereon that stems from it. If so, although we find ourselves facing two fields of identity that do not necessarily overlap – the field of the Haifa Christians and the field of BDS supporters, who conduct discourses structured as per two codes that ostensibly have no connection between them – in fact, both these fields set themselves the goal of removing the artworks under discussion. And, even though what is at hand are differing motivations for achieving this goal, the result is one and the same: silencing.

In this sense, one can define BDS’s praxes as censoring praxes, as at hand are not political issues or matters only, but rather how censorship shapes nullified content. For such content, a call for its absencing is required, embodied also by the unspoken or the unseen. Yet the visual discourse demands that which is seen; it is not analyzable or interpretable without the visual (and the intention here is not a situation wherein the visual takes on a conceptual or non-material form, but rather a situation where in the form of the discourse itself is nullified). Censorship such as this, which nullifies the very form, diverts the content, and thus neutralizes the possibility of conducting a discourse.

If so, the story of *McJesus* represents a case of an attempt at total silencing via

19. Ibid, 137.

two paths to censorship exerted concomitantly upon the museum: censorship by the field of those consuming art – the audience, in this case identified as the Christian community, and censorship by the art production field, or the artist, who in this case identified as a BDS member. Both these ways of censorship are expressed with identical negation of two content systems in differing fields and bearing differing forms. Both content systems are derived from hierarchical statuses of identity politics: Christians versus Jews; and Israel versus the liberal world. Yet, relocating content from one field to another, changes not only its form, but the content itself. Thus, this dual nullification of form (silencing) steamrolls both content systems into a single, paradoxical discursive stance of nullifying the discourse. In fact, the stronger a factor identity-politics is in organizing the field, the more we can expect power struggles and censorship to become routine tools that shape forms and structures of discourse, at the forefront of which are praxes of prevention.

Censorship as Punishment

What distinguishes between two types of censorial prevention – that of the Christian community and that of BDS – is that in BDS praxis there is no prevention resting on fear of consequences, but rather prevention as a means of discipline. What this means is that the discourse is perceived of as a “privileged space”, and therefore preventing it ought to be perceived of as punishment. To link the concepts “discourse” and “punishment”, I refer to Foucault, who in his book *Discipline and Punish* discusses the history of incarceration and removal from society as a means of punishment.²⁰ Focusing on punishment of individuals, Foucault described the historical transition from physical punishment to incarceration. The former included physical torture and execution, which were used as spectacles for the masses, who identified with the punishing group; incarceration, in contrast, forewent the spectacle in favor of removal from society, a praxis perceived by the punishing society as more humane and enlightened, and seemingly non-violent.

The analogy that I seek to draw here shifts the focus from individuals and the social code to political relations and the international code. BDS's declared objective is to exert non-violent resistance upon Israel, namely resistance that is neither physical nor combative. In Foucault's terms, the Israeli state is analogous in this situation to the body of an individual, and physical warfare over its boundaries and territory (as a reaction of the international community) is analogous to physical torture, which renders the human body an object. Accordingly, the

20. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995). Originally published in French as *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* in 1775.

historical and cultural transition to punishment by removal – in Foucault’s study, incarceration – is analogous to BDS replacing warfare with boycott, which is purportedly non-violent. As in the transition to the praxis of incarceration, the praxis of boycott represents a new economics of power, where it abandons physical resources in favor of isolation under the aegis of justice and humaneness.

BDS is – from a cultural, not an economic standpoint – a means of removal of Israel from the discourse. And accordingly, this is where we go back to Bourdieu and his critique of the censored discourse, in order to understand that the prevention that characterizes BDS in fact functions as censorship of the discourse on the international level: When the international arena removes from its cultural discourse a given sub-field that does not accord with the international code, it in fact carries out censorship. This understanding of prevention of discourse – in this case by preventing a work from being exhibited – as an expression of censorship, imposes on the field an aura of force and violence. The censored discourse, which is the product of prevention by boycott, constitutes at one and the same time censorship and punishment, and rationalizes punishment by means of censorship. In this conceptual space, the theories of Bourdieu and Foucault are linked, and enable us to interpret BDS’s prevention of discourse as punishment by censorship, which uses the tools of secrecy and the autonomy of power.

Secrecy and autonomy are basic concepts that Foucault used to characterize incarceration.²¹ And indeed, in the case of BDS we have a boycott that is not encoded in legislation of the international field, namely, punishment as codified in law, but rather stems from power relations between fields, or as in our case, power relations in the art field itself: the power to punish, which is applied as per criteria that are in no wise subject to a system of oversight (except for the discursive system), and therefore constitutes “secret” punishment as per Foucault’s definition.²² Moreover, the agent of punishment, in this case the artist, exerts full authority that a third party seemingly cannot circumvent, thus creating “autonomous” punishment.²³ He did so in order to “discipline” those punished via use of total force that is under no oversight and cannot be neutralized, similar to Foucault’s perception of incarceration.

As such, boycotting constitutes wielding power in order to punish – by means of coercion, isolation, and secrecy – for the purpose of disciplining (i.e., action taken toward behavioral or policy change, for example, in contrast to action taken

21. Ibid, 129.

22. The secrecy is supposed to be expressed also by use of power in the form of blackmail or threats, in this case on the part of BDS. See, for example: Stop BDS, *BDS Intimidation*. Retrieved from: http://www.stopbds.com/?page_id=1899. [Accessed 29 December 2021]; and Chen Tamir (2015) addresses the situation in: *The Cultural Boycott on Israel. An Account* (Erev Rav, January 4, 2015).

23. In fact, in this case, the work did not belong to Leinonen, but to the gallery from which it was borrowed by Haifa Museum of Art, and therefore was taken down following the end of the loan contract, and not at Leinonen’s demand.

solely for the purpose of labeling). In prisons, pardons or lightening of sentences are the result of good behavior, meaning of obeying those in power. Analogously, the discursive ostracism, which is BDS's means of "retraining" or disciplining, will purportedly end if Israel obeys the international field's code regarding the occupation.

In any event, the Israeli museum, as an institution, in fact faces two complementary expressions of censorship and imposition of a discursive code: One is the activity engaged in by BDS, which includes the praxis of discourse-censorship by prevention and exclusion; and the other in the case of political bowing to the demand that Israel obey the international code, obedience to which means imposing the code of one field upon another field (on the assumption that change will indeed stem from international pressure, and not from internal political pressure, for example). If so, in terms of BDS, the discourse will always be subject to censorship (although not every imposition of discourse constitutes punishment, every imposition of discourse on the part of any external field on a museum equals outside censorship).

While the issue of capital is also one that both Bourdieu and Foucault address, Bourdieu addresses it in terms of symbolic-cultural-intellectual capital versus financial-political capital; Foucault, on the other hand, in his work on incarceration, relates to capital as a resource of power that ought to be carried over into the political and economic realms, but that first and foremost has a physical manifestation and implications. In the transition that Foucault describes from physical violence to incarceration, the figure of the soldier is replaced by that of the prison warden: a public agent, the punisher, the isolator, the hall monitor.

The comparison that I make herein between incarceration and cultural boycott leads me to identify the warden-soldier in this case as a person of culture: the artist. The cultural capital that the artist holds embodies the cultural means of existence, and blocking access to this capital constitutes punishment by the artist. In other words, the artist's works, which according to Bourdieu are defined as symbolic capital, also serve as a type of power, and preventing their exhibition constitutes an expression of wielding power.

An important point here is that the soldier as a concept, or in this case the artist, is an obedient figure in and of himself; as an agent of power, he serves as a political puppet, a disciplined body that is in turn exploited by a sovereign or by power structures in the field wherein he operates. As such, we have a dual picture: Punishment constitutes a way to produce compliance on the parts of bodies or individuals in the field, which is in fact coerced obedience, and so too the soldier – or the agent of punishment, in this case the artist – is himself disciplined covertly.

47Museum Boycott as Discursive Censorship

If our comparison holds, then the boycott of the Israeli museum reflects micro models of power that themselves serve interests of larger power structures. BDS's principles in fact advocate obedience to political correctness, which condemns violence and control over others. Yet despite the attempt to build a non-physical, non-violent model, the result – prevention, exclusion, and censorship – constitutes coercion, which is an essentially violent praxis.

In terms of power positions and the structure of power/capital distribution, the place of the museum in the field is complex: In the *McJesus* case, the Christian audience, together with the City of Haifa, and supported by the Culture Ministry, sought to deprive the museum of its alleged freedom of expression; and concomitantly, so did the artist. Thus, the museum, which was located at an intersection between the producing group and the consuming group, was rendered the weakest entity in terms of authority. The powerful entities in this case are the producers-artists, who in BDS terms choose who will have access to their content – in this case the discourse of the art – and the sectoral consumers, who constitute a political power group that dictated the politically correct code, and thereby themselves impose censorship on the museum as a content or discourse entity. Both these censorial power positions empty the museum's very essence as a discourse platform, as they silence the discourse, which in this case is a critical-artistic one.

As Bourdieu contended, the most certain path to silencing is to exclude the silenced party from discursive positions; the praxis of boycott also entails self-exclusion or self-silencing, which the artist imposed on himself in the context of the Israeli museum. Therefore, this self-censoring is multi-layered, as it is in fact violence activated upon the artist himself, toward the museum – which was punished by being excluded from the discourse – and upon the excluded visitors, as they too were denied access to the discourse (as the artwork had been removed). This praxis generates a symbolic incarceration of the Israeli art audience, discursively speaking, as the museum is located somewhere in the expanse between the sovereign, punishing, entity and the incarcerated entity. On the other side, censorship of the discourse by the protesting Christian audience – as it too exerts denial of access and self-exclusion – leaves the museum as nothing more than a puppet that parrots only what the field permits it to.

Protest is a concept that in most cases is perceived of as related to encouraging discourse and expanding it, and to freedom of speech. Yet even though its mission statement proposes non-violent protest, BDS provides an example of a praxis wherein cultural boycott can constitute a coercive act toward the discourse. In such a case, the museum is liable to lose its authoritative power in the discourse, and find itself censored, constrained, or silenced. In discursive terms, the acts of boycotting and censoring incarcerate the museum and its audience in a way that reminds one of civic, economic, and cultural incarceration, which BDS

itself opposes. In this sense, it is likely that boycotting is the most effective response to the occupation, ironically no thanks to its punishing function, but more due to the conceptual analogy, produced by means of censorship of the discourse, between one incarceration and another, i.e., physical occupation, and discursive occupation. It is likely that herein actually lies the possibility of expanding the discourse and linking in its very essence between art and politics, where somewhere therebetween lies the discourse, its boundaries clearly demarcated.

Boundaries and Disciplines

In a 2019 *Haaretz* opinion piece, Mordechai Kremnitzer attacked the Haifa District Court's decision enabling the mayor to intervene in the content and nature of display of art in Haifa Museum of Art, thus granting her censorship authority and violating freedom of speech. Kremnitzer's stance echoes the broad discourse that appeared on social media and in the press, where the impression was that the core of the McJesus dispute was related to freedom of speech and the imposition of values and beliefs on the general public by various other publics. Opposition to the censorship embodied in the court's ruling reflects the assumed dichotomy of supporters of censorship, who are presented as foreign to the world of art (and even to the concept of freedom of speech) – i.e., the religious, the traditional, and the conservative – and the world of the avant garde, the modern, the secular, and the contemporary. Kremnitzer concluded: "Without domains of autonomy, such as art and culture, religion, communication, and higher education, it is difficult, if not impossible, to uphold meaningful democracy."

As far as Kremnitzer was concerned, the basis for defending freedom of speech is the upholding of boundaries and separation between art and other domains, and particularly between art, culture, and religion. On the other side, those opposing the exhibit reject out of hand any separation between the theological and other parameters. The attempt to separate art from theology echoes the principle of separation of church and state, which is based on the view that in modernity, politics should be free of theological "remnants" and should focus on the present and the good of the nation.²⁴ The view of art as an independent, autonomous domain therefore parallels a broader process wherein the modern consciousness is perceived as a system of rules, values, and norms that justify themselves intrinsically. Both in the case of art and in the case of modern consciousness, this process stems from secularists' desire to separate themselves from any organized religion, i.e., art and modern consciousness are apparently "liberated" from the theological.

24. Pini Ifergan, "Cutting to the Chase: Carl Schmitt and Hans Blumenberg on Political Theology and Secularization," *New German Critique* 37, no. 3 (2010): 149-171.

The protest of Haifa's Arab Christians, spearheaded by the Church, is directly at odds with the aforementioned perception. As far as they are concerned, neither artistic nor political discourse can be divorced from their theological underpinnings. Carl Schmitt wrote in *Political Theology*, "all the concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts."²⁵ In other words, the protesters' view of their present as preserving therein the theological – and particularly Christian – dimension, is far from being detached from reality. The angry demonstrations were directed at the nature of the display of the Christian God, and this protest cannot be perceived of as simply an expression of backwardness, of those who "don't know anything about" art. The protestors do not view the artistic space as a sterile one; as far as they are concerned, it is part and parcel of the public space, which is rife with imprints of the theological discourse. In fact, their stance is backed up by the piece that lies at the heart of the dispute, as the McJesus sculpture itself is based on the power and the validity of religious images.

McJesus was part of the *Shop It!* series of exhibits that raised age-old questions about art and the marketplace, consumption and art, the status of art as merchandise, the relationship between the mall and the museum etc. In one of the main spaces in the cluster is the exhibit "Holy Wares", curated by Shaked Shamir. According to Shamir, "Holy Wares" has two objectives: to criticize the culture of consumption and its hold on religion as part of a broader global control; and to criticize how religions use consumption to prosper.²⁶

In *Shop It!* artist Jani Leinonen exhibited McJesus (until it was censored and removed), as well as the video *The Abduction of Ronald McDonald* (2011), produced by the Food Liberation Army, members of which kidnapped a Ronald McDonald statue from a Helsinki McDonald's and demanded ransom for it from the McDonald's Corporation, whose practices they claim are unethical.²⁷ After the demand of its return – in which the police intervened and arrested the abductors – the statue was returned to its owners, but not before Leinonen beheaded a replica thereof it when the Army's demands were not met.²⁸ A few years later, Leinonen produced the statue that depicts Ronald McDonald as the crucified Jesus. The connotations arising from the work are broad, from the godlike status of the culture of consumption, to critique of the religious establishment, the commercialization of the Divine toward increasing organized religion's coffers, to transforming a symbol of religion into an object of amusement that is woven into our postmodern or metamodern world. It is as if the artist is telling us that the

25. Carl Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory*, trans. Jeffrey Seitzer (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 36. Originally published in German in 1928.

26. Shaked Shamir, *Sacred Goods* (Haifa Museum of Art).

27. See *The Abduction of Ronald McDonald* on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcBuRSzCbM8>. [Accessed 29 December 2021]

28. Claire Voon, Learn to Fight Capitalism at the School of Disobedience (Hyperallergic, August 20, 2015).

vacuum created after God's exile from center stage has been filled with merchandise.

One can view McJesus, and by extension, all of the *Shop It!* works, as reproducing the culture of consumption and "serving it up as" art. As such, *Shop It!* erased the distinction between a utilitarian object and an aesthetic object. Thus Ronald McDonald is rendered holy by virtue of his function as a product consumed over and over, by an insatiable appetite, even in its aesthetic narrative. Moreover, one can see in McJesus conceptual reflexivity, part of social activism that seeks to address an artwork as an object that contains within it the potential for criticism, and that can challenge the consumption-oriented and institutional framework of the art world. Therein, McJesus exposes the godlike status of the object; and raises awareness of commercialization and the manipulation of consumption in which McDonald's engages. Moreover, the work invites us to examine the status of the museum and its activity, and to ask whether it can, or indeed whether it is possible to, dismantle the dependency between art and consumption. Is it possible or desirable to view a symmetry between a museum and a mall?

Shop It! is designed as a store window into the world of goods. This is not surprising, as the gallery space contains within it the potential to be a place for reflection upon goods and their place in our society. Curator Yehoshua Simon wrote: "The exhibit is a form of looking that enables an encounter with the art object as merchandise." According to Simon, "Even when artists, curators, critics, and spectators opt for an intimate, narrative, symbolic, critical, or any other understanding of objects, in an exhibition objects nevertheless converse in the language of commodities."²⁹

To our mind, perceiving the exhibition space as one of reflection on and exposure of each art object or other object as merchandise is too much of a reach. A more focused question would be whether the curation strategies undertaken by Haifa Museum of Art indeed produce such a process of exposure. According to Simon, the exhibit space therein could have been a critical space wherein one could encounter merchandise as such in all its starkness. Indeed, the discomfort in viewing *Shop It!* stems from its being unclear how critical it actually is. With shopping bags emblazoned with the exhibit's title scattered throughout it, the answer is ambiguous: Does *Shop It!* actually expose commercialization? How critical is it? What is the artists' and the curators' responsibility in this regard? To what extent does *Shop It!* sanctify – or expose – the logic of the marketplace? Is it possible that all that it does is replicate existing power relations of capitalism, and by doing so in fact give these forces a stamp of aesthetic approval by the art field? Does *Shop It!* challenge the laws of the marketplace or its activity and the esteem in which it is held? To what extent does it hold up a mirror to commodified

29. Joshua Simon, "Neo-Materialism: Part I: The Commodity and the Exhibition," *e-flux* 20 (2010).

objects? To what extent does it render the artists active agents in the economic field wherein they frequently are supporting actors?³⁰

The Christian and Muslim public's positioning itself as opposing the exhibition of wares is not surprising. Marx devoted an extensive portion of his foreword to *Das Kapital* to a discussion of merchandise, as in the chapter titled "The fetishism of goods" he presents goods' mystique. According to Marx, goods are shrouded in a metaphysical and theological aura³¹ that well manifests the definition of fetishism. In his words, goods represent social value, and have no natural or intrinsic value. In other words, goods do not represent the amount of work invested in them, but rather their exchange value in society. They necessarily bear the imprint of the transformation of human labor into something of objective value, and in turn labor becomes equal in value to goods. As such, goods acquire a mystique; their exchange value infuses them with a magical, religious aura whereon the object acquires an abstract, non-material identity, imbued with symbolism and acting in religious realms. Against this backdrop, it becomes clear why there is a symmetry between the religious icon, imbued with mystical properties in the eyes of believers, and goods qua goods, thereby arousing fraught reactions.

The Haifa Museum protesters refused to link the cross to the world of goods, and in fact, in postmodern theological discourse, we find a description that elucidates how society transfigures religious experience and practices to those of consumption and trade. Graham Ward described how we constantly consume substitutions for something that is lacking that we can't quite grasp, and which we crave repeatedly.³² The acts of purchasing and consuming is one that produces pleasure, and it echoes the experience of the religious person searching for the presence of God. In other words, via goods, we seek to reproduce or to represent the divine over and over via consumption of substitutes. Our consumption fetish has turned the goods to the new idol against which the religious struggle. Ward explained: "The death of God led to the flourishing of reification and commodification (or what the theologians call "idol worship"), not only of all objects, but of all values (ethical, aesthetic, and spiritual). We have produced a culture of fetishism or virtual objects."³³

In fact, the protesters demanded the rescue of the cross from its status as

30. Boaz Levin, "What Do Commodities Say: On Neomaterialism and the Phenomenon of 'The Return to the Object?'" *Bezalel, Journal for Visual and Material Culture* 4 (2014).

31. Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* (Hamburg: Verlag von Otto Meisner, 1867); Note that already in 1759, Adam Smith wrote *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, an analogy between capitalism and religion in the context of "the invisible hand".

32. Graham Ward, *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

33. Ibid, xiv; William Franke, "The Deaths of God in Hegel and Nietzsche and the Crisis of Values in Secular Modernity and Post-secular Postmodernity," *Religion and the Arts* 11, no. 2 (2007): 236.

merchandise. The demand to censor an icon, or an object defined as holy, from the neoliberal marketplace, reflects opposition to the view according to which everything is tradeable, and every object has a price tag. Where the neoliberal view measures and values every item according to its market value, the protesters insisted that there are objects whose value is invisible or that cannot be measured by strictly economic parameters. Such objects always preserve a dimension that is inaccessible to us, that is beyond our understanding.³⁴

The dictate to abstain from measurement, from simplistic interpretation, from the status of commodity, is an attempt to preserve the cross's power, to confer upon it the status of a secret. Like a secret, the cross derives its power from its inaccessibility. Conferring upon it an extra-economic status in fact equals the requirement to keep it in a discrete, secret space; to enable it actions that cannot be calculable by simple economics; to locate it in the realm of the secret, and thereby to deny any challenge to its legitimacy, as we can neither know nor explain it fully.

The protesters imbued the cross with the status of secret in that they sought to locate it outside the realm of control and of dispute, non-negotiable, in a discrete space that enables it actions that do not have to be held accountable to earthly authorities. Blocking the possibility of interpreting the icon of the cross fully, and the understanding that at hand is an image related to secrecy, "cancels out" the need to justify the crucifixion or to struggle to prove its legitimacy.³⁵ Their demands are part of the religious context that preserves the dimension of the unknown and unknowable, the religious or ritual secret embedded in the mystery of God. It is the natural continuation of the concept of *corpus mysticum* according to which the holy sovereign is supernatural and immortal. According to the definition, *corpus mysticum* is an invisible entity, and as such is unknowable and impossible to measure, quantify, or commodify.

This view of the crucifixion as located in the grid of theological understandings stems from the opposition to what believers identify as the possibility of transforming the crucifixion into a commodifiable entity whose purpose is to maximize profits. Their protest constitutes a resounding "No!" to submitting to the neoliberal economy that commands us to "*Shop It!*"

Note that despite the aforementioned, and particularly in the context of McJesus, the Haifa protesters did not accept the anti-capitalist interpretation of the work as universal; they demanded viewing it in the local context. This is the deep meaning embedded in the statement of Father Agapios Abu-Saada, head of

34. In other words, even if a cross as an object bears an economic value, for the believer, it can never be reduced thereto; The cross, or sacred object will always have "added value" or excessiveness that extricates it from the status of a commodity, that prevents it from being transformed into capital.

35. Eva Horn, "Logics of Political Secrecy," *Theory, Culture & Society* 28, no. 7-8 (2011): 103-122.

Haifa's Catholic community: "What is appropriate to Europe and to Christians in Finland is not appropriate to our community, and cannot be accepted with understanding."³⁶

Economic Colonialism

Economics and religion are intertwined in American evangelistic and northern European Protestant circles, which support the Israeli occupation. Economics and religion are also linked in the struggle of various Christian denominations for control over certain properties in Jerusalem, and are inseparable from constraints on movement imposed both on farmers and believing Christians, and on Muslims from the occupied territories trying to make their way to holy sites. Hence, for the protesters, capitalism is an inseparable part of colonialism, as it works to maintain an economic, geographic, ethnic, civic, and human hierarchy.

If we accept the aforementioned relationship between capitalism and colonialism, then for Palestinians – both Christians and Muslims – who came to protest McJesus, the economic framework is not in the form of globalist capitalism, but rather the more immediate and painful phenomenon of Israeli colonialism. Economics is inseparable from and even central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both inside Israel proper, and in Judaea and Samaria, the West Bank, and Gaza. The 2015 five-year plan to integrate the Arab sector into the Israeli economy puts to rest any doubt of how over decades, a policy of discrimination against Arab Israelis was implemented in many areas. The Treasury and the Prime Minister's Bureau are both signatories to the "System-wide plan to integrate Arab society into the Israeli economy", a document that exposes the fact that methods used to allot budgets are not equitable and reflect preference for strong Jewish populations.³⁷

According to data publicized by the Central Bureau of Statistics in its 2016 social survey, gaps between Arabs and the rest of Israel's population in education, labor, infrastructure, individual and household income, standard of living, among others, are glaring. For example, Nasreen Haddad Hajj Yehiya (2017) explained that the rate of poverty among Arab children and families continued to climb in 2015, and the household incomes of Arabs are lower than those of Jews across the board.³⁸

36. Jackie Khoury and Noa Spiegel, *The Head of the Catholic Community in Haifa on the Statue of McJesus: What Suits Europe Does Not Suit Us* (Haaretz, January 13, 2019).

37. Ilan Shahar, *The Ongoing Discrimination of the Arab Sector is Dragging the Entire Economy Back* (Calcalist, October 11, 2016).

38. Nasreen Haddad Haj-Yahya, *The Arab Society in Israel* (Jerusalem: The Israeli Democracy Institute, 2017).

As far as the protesters are concerned, Israel is responsible for this unconscionable disparity, and certainly for the economic straits of those Palestinians living under Israel's occupation. The opposition aroused by *Shop It!* through this prism elucidates how the Haifa protests against the imposition of vulgar capitalism upon a holy image is just one expression (of many) of opposing the capitalist regime that Israel dictates. The protests called for opposing the capitalist reality of discrimination and occupation, and shined a light on Israel's deliberate hobbling of economic development of the Palestinian population inside Israel and outside it.

Shop It! as a whole sought to offer a sobering look at reality in the economic context, but ultimately it exposed a blind spot of Israel that has ignored and offended the marginalized populations against a backdrop of colonialism, economic and otherwise. The protests constituted a call for opposition to the economics of Western art – which necessarily includes Israeli art – which suppresses what these groups perceive to be spiritual, religious, and Christian, and in a broader sense, Arab and Muslim.

On January 31, in the wake of the protests, the museum hosted a panel on Freedom of Worship in Israel, at which Raja Zaatra, one of the protesters, said, "I can't blame a 25-year-old who has never enjoyed any cultural offerings [...] this work [McJesus] is one of a series, one of which is a statue of Lenin. Lenin said that democracy in a class society means slave ownership. This applies to Arabs and Jews alike. The phenomenon of liberal elites, people who have the luxury of visiting a museum on a weekday morning [...] alienation is being felt."³⁹ Thus according to my understanding, the gap between those who patronize the museum and the museum's geographic, ethnic, and national environs is the fuel driving the protests, in addition to the perceived offense to religious sentiments.

The case of Zaatra himself reflects the tensions in Haifa in particular, and in northern Israel in general. In the 2018 municipal elections, Zaatra was elected to city council on the Haifa Front ticket. As per the coalition agreements, he was supposed to serve as deputy mayor for the first half of the term, then be replaced by Rabbi Dov Hayun, who ran on the Meretz ticket.⁴⁰ The appointment of Zaatra, who represented 40,000 voters, most of them Palestinian, as deputy mayor, raised an uproar in the Israeli establishment.⁴¹ Zaatra's consequent non-appointment is

39. Zaatra's words herein, as well as those of Abed Abadi below, are directly quoted by us from a symposium on the exhibition, held in Haifa Museum of Art, on January 8, 2019.

40. Noa Spiegel, *Following the Criticism, Kalish-Rotem Asked a Hadash Representative to Renounce What he Said* (Haaretz, December 11, 2018).

41. In the past, Zaatra had condemned Zionism. According to him, Hamas and Hezbollah are not terror organizations, and their actions are legitimate. Zaatra also said that ISIL activity is identical to certain IDF actions in Israel's War of Independence. As Meiron Rapoport pointed, Zaatra's opinions are held by many if not most Palestinians in Israel, even if they themselves refrain from harming anyone. Rapoport suggested that

yet another manifestation of repression and the unequal and unaccepting class-based reality that defines Israeli society and its relationship with the Arab minority in Israel. As far as the Arab protesters were concerned, this reality had a glaring light shined on it with the Haifa Museum affair in the form of debasing what many in the Israeli Arab community hold sacred.

In Israeli society, it is usual to view Palestinians residing in Israel as Arab Israelis, a label that is aimed at dividing the Palestinian nation. Even among Arabs, distinctions between “inside” Arabs, or those who reside in Israel proper, and “outside” Arabs, or those under occupation in the West Bank and Gaza, are used. But the attempt to erase the family and intra-national ties will never succeed. The economic narrative that the Haifa protesters opposed is not only an intra-Israeli narrative, but also an Israeli-Palestinian narrative.

In the aforementioned panel, Palestinian artist Abed Abbadi said that the demand for censorship can be viewed against the backdrop of the issue of freedom of speech and how, in fact, for years Palestinians lived under Israeli military rule (from 1949 until 1966) that subjugated them, mainly suppressing their freedom of speech. According to Abbadi, this subjugation did not cease with the end of military rule, but rather continues to this day in the form of Palestinian invisibility and absence of representation.

The seven-year martial law to which Abbadi referred took the form of military and government actions intended to divide various Palestinian minorities and communities, alongside confiscation of property, demolition of buildings, pushing residents out of their homes, appropriating lands, constraining movement, and censorship. These policies formed the basis for the subsequent administration of the territories conquered in the Six-Day War. In other words, the socio-economic subjugation of Arabs inside Israel simply mirrors the economic colonialism exerted upon the Palestinians residing in the occupied territories.

Allotting land, building housing, utilities, and paving roads for settlers in addition to maintenance, development, and services; as well as establishing Israeli businesses and farms on occupied land all come at the expense of Palestinian settlement, commercial, and economic activity. Alongside these are violence committed by settlers upon Palestinians, which not only blocks Palestinian local initiatives, but destroys Palestinian property, mainly by arson and uprooting of crops such as centuries-old olive trees and grain. Moreover, the separation barrier has even more extensive economic implications for agriculture,

Zaatra's not ultimately serving his term as deputy mayor stemmed from his having viewed himself as a Palestinian national leader, and not merely a citizen focused on municipal matters in Haifa. Moreover, the demand of Mayor Kalish-Rotem to rescind Zaatra's appointment was accompanied by threats that if Zaatra was appointed, Treasury funds would be withheld from Haifa. See: Meiron Rapoport, *Why Is Rajaa Zaatra a Threat to the Right?* (Sicha Mekomit, December 20, 2018).

trade, housing, employment, access to services, and access to natural resources that are supposed to be freely accessible to all.

The UN Committee for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has stated that Israeli military activity on Palestinian territory suppresses economic development. For example, losses to the Palestinian economy caused by the IDF 2008 Cast Lead incursion into Gaza is estimated at \$4 billion; the Protective Edge incursion of 2014 left tens of thousands of Gazan homes damaged or demolished, and tens of thousands of Palestinians homeless. The Israeli occupation and military regime impede production in all sectors – industry, trade, and agriculture – both by controlling land use and by imposing various constraints on production as well as movement. Since the occupation in 1967, Palestinians have lost access to over 60% of their land in the West Bank, including over two thirds of their pasture. Moreover, half of the agriculture land in the Gaza Strip is not accessible by Palestinians, as well as 85% of Gaza's fishing zone.

Israel limits Palestinian manufacturing and imports of raw materials needed therefor by controlling the borders, and consequently Palestinian industry is hobbled. Israel also controls natural resources, as Israeli companies lease quarries in the occupied territories and operate them for profit. Israel issues gas drilling permits on the Gaza coast, but not to Gazans; therefore Palestinians are prohibited from developing the Gaza Yamit ["marine Gaza"] gas field. This policy prohibits Gazans from developing natural gas deposits that in 1990 were discovered off of the Mediterranean coast, including in the waters off of Gaza, where there is at least one high-quality gas deposit. Moreover, Israel confiscates 82% of Palestinian groundwater and diverts it for use in Jewish settlements or to inside the Green Line/1967 borders, while Palestinians are compelled to import over half of their water from Israel. Meanwhile, only 35% of Palestinian agriculture land, which is constantly being appropriated by Israel, is irrigated by human-made means.

In light of the aforementioned, it is clear that viewing the uproar in Haifa surrounding the art exhibit as nothing more than a religious dispute is both partial and limited. Religion has always played a central role among the poor and the oppressed, both on an individual and a community level. Muslims and Christians uniting around this issue is a product of the political repression within which these two populations operate. The protests against Haifa Art Museum are a manifestation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict inside Israel as well as in the occupied territories.

When Abed Abaddi or Raja Zaatra speak of inadequate or absence of representation of the Arab minority in the cultural, economic, faith, and communication domains, they testify clearly to the fact that viewing trade and economics through the prism of global capitalism as detached from the local manifestations of occupation, leads to a distorted picture of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By connecting the dots between globalism, capitalism, colonialism, and local religious sensitivities, we can arrive at a strong, focused explanation for the main drivers of the Haifa demonstrations.

The economic conflict is an inseparable part of the overall conflict, at whose core is a lack of solidarity and loss of cultural, ethnic, and national identity. The Arab minority in Israel is discriminated against in employment, land ownership, and budgetary allotments, and is at the bottom of the socioeconomic rankings.⁴² Against the backdrop of Jamal Khader's (2019) words, it can be said that for Christians and Muslims, it is impossible to imagine capitalism as solely a cultural and a global ideology, and to ignore how it is inextricably linked to the Israeli colonial endeavor.

Conclusion

The discussion of the demonstrations in the matter of *McJesus'* exhibition at the Haifa Museum demonstrates that the field of art as part of culture, is a field of cross-censorship perspectives. The discussion we conducted reveals not only that censorship is a relevant framework for understanding the creative, interpretive, critical, and communicative practices, but also how the various agents operating in the field suffer from self-blindness relating to their practice being an act of censorship. The curators, the artists, the audience, the BDS, each in turn participates in a critical community that censors out of various motivations – aesthetic, national, theological, economic, etc. – as a way of formulating, representing and producing ethical subjectivities, which leads to the “Othering” or rejection of the censored party.

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