

Where They Sat Down

Remembering Dr. Reines

He sat on a stool in his refuge,
fourth floor, wearing a lumberjack shirt,
he looked like a repairman,
taking a break, his lunchtime.
The owl-eyed Reines behind thick lenses
at his table,
Mrs. Finkelstein behind her desk.
“All you rabbis are !@#%” Reines said,
he said it again,
shook his head and stared at his feet.
Boots, large proletarian boots.
When we worked him up
he began to foam at the edges of his mouth
his voice reaching registers it didn’t belong.

“Maimonides saw clearly the relationship
between epistemology and religion,” Reines said.
“The Pentateuch did also.
Nobody around here did –
until Reines.”

“Does the moral right exist
for one entity to exercise authority
over another entity?”
Reines, voice rising.

“You are your own authority.
Sit down right here,
have a cup of structured freedom.”

“What’s this?”
He picked up a journal from the College.
“A fetus that has never achieved peoplehood.”

“Where is your altar?”
we used to ask.
“Altar?”
“Surely you have a hidden altar
somewhere in your basement
where you make sacrifices
to the mystic gods you worship.
Who are your gods?”

"Hume, Kant, the secret Maimonides. Descartes.
By the way, pour me a cup of coffee.
Before you leave, take my book.
Face your finitude.
Read it and tell me:
How is polydox religion
a response to Hume and Kant?"

"How do you feel?" Reines asked when I was sick.
"I don't know."
"Not knowing is a threat to the soterial state,"
said Reines, on his roost,
behind the table
where he sat.

james stone goodman