



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

**A Finding Aid to the
Richard L. Rubenstein Papers
Manuscript Collection No. 685**



Collection Summary

Title	Richard L. Rubenstein Papers
Dates	1941-1992
Collection Number	MS-685
Repository	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Creator	Rubenstein, Richard L., 1924
Extent	11.2 linear feet (28 Hollinger boxes)
Language of the Material	English, Hebrew, and Korean

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch

Richard L. Rubenstein was born on January 8, 1924 in New York City to Jesse George Rubenstein and Sarah Fine Rubenstein. Rubenstein attended the College of the City, New York, 1940-1942, and was a student at the Hebrew Union College from 1942-1945. In 1946 he received a B.A. from the University of Cincinnati. Disillusioned with Reform Judaism, Rubenstein received his Master's of Hebrew Literature in 1952 from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America where he was also ordained as a rabbi. Desirous of furthering his theological knowledge, Rubenstein attended Harvard Divinity School and received a Master's of Theology in 1955 and a Ph.D. in 1960. His thesis was titled "Psychoanalysis and the Image of Evil in Rabbinic Literature." Psychoanalysis has remained an important topic throughout his career.

Rubenstein's career as a rabbi was short-lived. His first position was at Temple Beth Emunah in Brockton, Massachusetts, 1952-1954. He moved on to Temple Israel in Natick, Massachusetts from 1954-1956. Rubenstein then took on the position of Assistant Director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation and chaplain to the Jewish students at Harvard University, Radcliffe and Wellesley, 1956-1958. From 1958-1970 he was the Director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation and chaplain to the Jewish students at the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie-Mellon University and Duquesne University. After these jobs, Rubenstein remained in academic positions.

After leaving Pittsburgh, Rubenstein went to Churwalden, Switzerland as a visiting lecturer at the Albert Switzer College in the summer of 1963. In 1964 he returned to Pittsburgh as the Charles E. Merrill Lecturer in the Humanities at the University of Pittsburgh until 1969, when he became an Adjunct Professor of the Humanities. While there he taught courses on French Existentialism and Twentieth Century European Literature. In 1970 Rubenstein took a position as professor at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida in the Religion Department. He taught classes on Religion and Society, Freud, Hegel, Modern Judaism and the Holocaust. In 2001 Florida State University's Religion Department created the Richard L. Rubenstein Chair of Religious Studies in his honor.

After many years at Florida State University as a Distinguished Professor of Religion, Rubenstein assumed the presidency of the University of Bridgeport, in Bridgeport, Connecticut in 1995. He stepped down in 1999 and became the director of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, as well as remaining a faculty member.

Throughout his career, Rubenstein has been active in academic and socially conscious organizations. From 1981 to 1992 he was the president of The Washington Institute for Values in Public Policy, a public policy research institute. He was also involved with the Professors World Peace Academy, The New Ecumenical Research Association, and the International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences, among many others. He was also on the Advisory Council to the Unification Church International.

Rubenstein's bibliography is vast, having written countless articles for various journals and magazines such as *The Reconstructionist*, *Conservative Judaism*, and *Christian Century* among many others. Some of his most popular and profound books are *After Auschwitz: Racial Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (1966), *The Age of Triage: Fear and Hope in an Overcrowded World* (1983), *Approaches to Auschwitz* (1987), *The Cunning of History* (1975), *Morality and Eros* (1970), *My Brother Paul* (1972), *Power Struggle* (1974), *The Religious Imagination* (1968), and *Spirit Matters: The Worldwide Impact of Religion on Contemporary Politics* (1987).

Richard Rubenstein is married to Dr. Betty Rubenstein and has three children, Aaron, Hannah, and Jeremy.

Scope and Content

The collection contains the correspondence and writings of Richard Rubenstein, an educator, Holocaust scholar, and theologian. One of the most interesting sections of these papers is Subseries 1. Articles, Drafts, and Speeches in Series B. Writings. These eight boxes contain the correspondence, publicity and drafts of Rubenstein's books. From these files it is possible to follow the life of a manuscript from its infancy to publication. Rubenstein is controversial in both his theological and Holocaust writings. In

fact, the two merge in his writing, such as in *After Auschwitz*. What made Rubenstein's work so questionable to many was his incorporation of many new ideas into old arguments, such as bringing psychoanalysis together with historical research. Rubenstein is also credited with the fusion of Judaism and the "Death of God" theory. The "Death of God" theory was popularized by existentialist philosophers mainly in a Christian context. Rubenstein broke new ground with his writings, and later expanded the context to a more universal paradigm by incorporating Asian religious thought.

The breadth of Rubenstein's academic work can also be gauged from the correspondence files. His interaction with scholars such as Raul Hilberg and John Roth and writers such as William Styron show the fascinating but less dramatic side of academic research and philosophical reasoning. Styron was inspired by Rubenstein's writings and this influence came through in Styron's book *Sophie's Choice*. Other important correspondence includes Rubenstein's work with the Professors World Peace Academy, the International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences, and the Washington Institute. Each of these organizations was socially and academically concerned with the diplomatic and military direction that world leaders were pursuing and its effect on culture and religion. Contained within these files are proof of the influence that Rubenstein had on these organizations, as he climbed to leadership positions in all of the groups, and the influence they had on him.

Rubenstein is associated with the International Unification Church and became one of its most outspoken defenders, giving it legitimacy to the academic and political world through his stature. He has had several meetings with Reverend Sung Myung Moon and is perhaps one of the most coherent and comprehensive writers on the Unification Church. Rubenstein believes that new religions, particularly Asian religions, face the same backlash that all religions face as they confront the status quo. He was adamant that these new movements were not cults any more than established religions are.

Through an examination of the files in the collection, it is apparent that Rubenstein had a wide diversity of interests and concerns. He is respected as a major scholar in several fields, though his ideas have remained vital to American Jews. The intersection of the Judaism of his youth and his later academic and personal insights make for an interesting reconciliation of the old world and the new. His article, "Studying at Hebrew Union College," and his book *Power Struggle* relate these experiences and thoughts (23/5, 22/1).

Arrangement	The collection is divided into four (4) series: A. Correspondence; B. Writings; C. Personal; D. Audiovisual Recordings.
Terms of Access	The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.
Preferred Citation	Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Richard L. Rubenstein Papers and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows: [Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-685. Richard L. Rubenstein Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.
Provenance	Received from Richard L. Rubenstein, Bridgeport, Conn., 1995.
Processing Information	Processed by Christine A. Crandall, July 2002.

Index Terms

Subjects	Biblical scholars / Holocaust (Jewish theology)
Personal Names	Rubenstein, Richard L.
Corporate Names	Florida State University / Unification Church
Media	Photographs

Series A. Correspondence, 1941-1994, undated

Extent 6.4 linear feet (16 Hollinger boxes)

Arrangement The series is arranged alphabetically.

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- Box 16. Folder 7. Washington Institute. Ethics Panel. Planning Committee meeting, 1988 June 13
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Series B. Writings, 1950-1991

Extent 4.4 linear feet (11 Hollinger boxes)

Arrangement

The series is divided into two (2) subseries: 1. Articles, Drafts, Speeches; 2. Notes.

Subseries 1. Articles, Drafts, Speeches, 1963-1991

Extent 3.2 linear feet (8 Hollinger boxes)

Arrangement The subseries is arranged alphabetically.

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Box 23. Folder 2. The Religious Imagination: A Study in Psychoanalysis and Jewish Theology draft.

Box 23. Folder 3. The Religious Imagination: A Study in Psychoanalysis and Jewish Theology publicity and reviews.

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Box 24. Folder 3. Speeches, untitled, undated

Box 24. Folder 4. T, General.

Box 24. Folder 5. Transcripts. Stanley Kellman interview [San Francisco, Calif.], early 1970s
Box 24. Folder 6. Transcripts. Stanley Kellman interview [San Francisco, Calif.], early 1970s
Box 24. Folder 7. Transcripts. Stanley Kellman interview [San Francisco, Calif.], early 1970s
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Subseries 2. Notes, 1950-1979

Extent 1.2 linear feet (3 Hollinger boxes)

Arrangement The subseries is arranged alphabetically.

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Box 25. Folder 4. Education papers. Jewish Theological Seminary of America.
Box 25. Folder 5. Epistle to Romans. Harvard University.
Box 25. Folder 6. Ethics. Harvard University.
Box 25. Folder 7. Exams. Florida State University.
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Box 25. Folder 9. Harvard thesis material.
Box 25. Folder 10. Hegel, George Wilhelm Friedrich. Harvard University, 1957
Box 25. Folder 11. Hegel, George Wilhelm Friedrich. Harvard University.
Box 25. Folder 12. Hegel Phenomenology. Harvard University.
Box 25. Folder 13. History of Philosophy. University of Cincinnati.
Box 25. Folder 14. History of Political Theory. University of Cincinnati.
Box 25. Folder 15. Jewish Theological Seminary qualification test.
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Box 25. Folder 17. Luther, Martin.
Box 25. Folder 18. Medieval Jewish Philosophy. Isaac Husik.
Box 25. Folder 19. Medieval Philosophy.
Box 26. Folder 1. Metaphysics. Heidegger, Martin. Harvard University.
Box 26. Folder 2. National Endowment for the Humanities. Holocaust course syllabus.
Box 26. Folder 3. National Endowment for the Humanities. Holocaust course, 1979 January 9-February 1
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Box 26. Folder 5. Notes on the Worldwide Impact of Religion on Contemporary Politics.

Box 26. Folder 6. Old Testament. Harvard University, 1952

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Box 27. Folder 16. Talmud - Medieval Jewish Philosophy.

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Series C. Personal, 1950-1988

Extent 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

Arrangement The series is arranged alphabetically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 28. Folder 1. Appointment book, 1964-1965

Box 28. Folder 2. Awards.

Box 28. Folder 3. Biographical information.

Box 28. Folder 4. Photographs.

Box 28. Folder 5. Publicity. Articles.

Box 28. Folder 6. Publicity.

Box 28. Folder 7. Rubenstein, Betty, 1988

Box 28. Folder 8. Rubenstein Family.

Box 28. Folder 9. Rubenstein, Nathaniel Ephraim, 1950

Series D. Audiovisual Recordings, 1983-1991

Box and Folder Listing

Item VT-607. Age of Triage, 1983 March 3

Item VT-608. "Can We Comprehend the Holocaust?" Symposia in Judaica, 1984 February 19

Item VT-609. "Holocaust."

Item VT-610. "The Holocaust and the Human Future: Lessons to be Learned."

Item VT-611. Rubenstein, Richard. Interview. Professors World Peace Academy [Japan], 1987 July 7

Item VT-612. Rubenstein, Richard. Japan lecture, 1985

Item VT-613. Rubenstein, Richard, 1988 June 21

Item VT-614. Rubenstein, Richard, undated

Item VT-615. "Wars of Religion of the Twenty-first Century.", 1991 January 11