Modern Orthodoxy in the 21st Century:
Lecture II: External Sources of Knowledge & Inspiration – Culture, Education, and Science
Rabbi Moshe Shulman, Shaarei Shomayim Congregation
Spring 5766

Selected Bibliography
• Rabbi Dr. Aharon Lichtenstein, *Centrist Orthodoxy: A Spiritual Accounting*, *By His Light: Character & Values in the Service of God*, KTAV, 2003

Modern Orthodoxy, Rabbi Moshe Shulman, Shaarei Shomayim Congregation, Spring 5766, Page 8
Nor should we be deterred by the illusion that we can find everything we need within our own tradition. As Arnold insisted, one must seek "the best that has been thought and said in the world," and if, in many areas, much of that best is of foreign origin, we should expand our horizons rather than exclude it. "Accept the truth," the Rambam urged, "from whomever states it." Following the precept and practice of Rabbenu Bahye, he adhered to that course himself, and we would be wise to emulate him.

The explicitly systematic discussions of Gentile thinkers often reveal to us the hidden wealth implicit in our writings. The Gentiles, furthermore, have their own wisdom, even of a moral and philosophic nature. Who can fail to be inspired by the ethical idealism of Plato, the passionate fervor of Augustine, or the visionary grandeur of Milton? Who can remain unenlightened by the lucidity of Aristotle, the profundity of Shakespeare, or the incisiveness of Newman? There is *hokhmah ba-goyim*, and we ignore it at our loss. Many of the issues that concern us have concerned Gentile writers as well. The very problem we are considering has a long Christian history, going back to Tertullian and beyond. To deny that many fields have been better cultivated by non-Jewish than by Jewish writers is to be stubbornly, and unnecessarily, chauvinistic. There is nothing in our medieval poetry to rival Dante, and nothing in our modern literature to compare with Kant, and we would do well to admit it. We have our own genius, and we have bent it to the noblest of pursuits, the development of Torah. But we cannot be expected to do everything.