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Jewish Messianism and the History of Philosophy

Jewish Messianism and the History of Philosophy contests the ancient opposition between Athens and Jerusalem by retrieving the concept of meontology – the doctrine of nonbeing – from the Jewish philosophical and theological tradition. For Emmanuel Levinas, as well as for Franz Rosenzweig, Hermann Cohen, and Moses Maimonides, the Greek concept of nonbeing (understood as both lack and possibility) clarifies the meaning of Jewish life. These thinkers of “Jerusalem” use “Athens” for Jewish ends, justifying Jewish anticipation of a future messianic era, as well as portraying the subject’s intellectual and ethical acts as central in accomplishing redemption. In addition, Kavka argues that this formal structure of messianic subjectivity is not simply an acculturating move of Judaism to modern or medieval philosophical values, but it can also be found in an earlier stratum of the Jewish tradition, particularly in an ancient midrashic text discussing a group that refers to itself as the Mourners of Zion.

This book envisions modern Jewish thought as an expression of the intimate relationship between Athens and Jerusalem. It also offers new readings of important figures in contemporary Continental philosophy, critiquing previous arguments about the role of lived religion in the thought of Jacques Derrida, the role of Plato in the thought of Emmanuel Levinas, and the centrality of ethics in the thought of Franz Rosenzweig.

Martin Kavka is an assistant professor of religion at Florida State University. He is the author of articles on philosophy of religion and modern Jewish thought appearing in *Religious Studies Review*, *Journal of Religious Ethics*, *Cross Currents*, and other leading journals.

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To Dan Casey, my *Maβiah*,
the measure which reflects the highest good
and thereby makes salvation possible

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Finally, the man to whom this book is dedicated is the *sine qua non* of these words seeing print. The debt I owe him is the greatest of all.

Abbreviations

- AE Emmanuel Levinas, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974.
 Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991.
- CEM Hermann Cohen, "Charakteristik der Ethik Maimunis." In *Jüdische Schriften*, vol. 3. Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke & Sohn, 1924: 221–89.
- EE Emmanuel Levinas, *De l'existence à l'existent*. 2nd ed. Paris: Vrin, 1978.
 Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978.
- EN Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *L'écorce et le noyau*. 2nd ed. Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1987.
 Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Nicholas Rand. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- EY Moses Maimonides, *The Epistle to Yemen*. Trans. Joel Kraemer. In *Maimonides' Empire of Light*. Ed. Ralph Lerner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- G Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Trans. Shlomo Pines. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.
- I2 Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*. Ed. Marly Biemel. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952.

- Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*. Trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989.
- LRE Hermann Cohen, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*. 3rd ed. Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1922.
- LU Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen*. 4th ed. Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1928.
 Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*. Trans. J. N. Findlay. New York: Humanities Press, 1970.
- MH Emil Fackenheim, "Metaphysics and Historicity." In *The God Within: Kant, Schelling and Historicity*. Ed. John Burbidge. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996: 122–47, 215–27.
- PIZ Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins (1893–1917)*. Ed. Rudolf Boehm. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969.
 Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893–1917)*. Trans. John Barrett Brough. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991.
- RV Hermann Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*. 2nd ed. Köln: Joseph Melzer, 1928.
 Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism*. Trans. Simon Kaplan. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1972.
- S Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*. 4th ed. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976.
 Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*. Trans. Rudolf Hallo. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
- SM Jacques Derrida, *Spéctres de Marx*. Paris: Galilée, 1993.
 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- TI Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et l'infini*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961.
 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969.
- W F. W. J. Schelling, *Die Weltalter*. In *Sämmtliche Werke*. Stuttgart and Augsburg: J. G. Cotta, 1856–61: vol. 8, 195–344. Reprinted with original pagination in *Schellings Werke*, vol. 4. Ed. Manfred Schröter. Munich: C. H. Beck, 1958.
 F. W. J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World*. Trans. Jason Wirth. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000.

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On occasion, I have emended certain published translations. In dual citations, for example, AE 210/165, the first page reference is to the original-language edition and the second is to the English translation.