

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-81312-9 - The Cambridge Companion to Modern Jewish Philosophy

Edited by Michael L. Morgan and Peter Eli Gordon

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO  
MODERN JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

*The Cambridge Companion to Modern Jewish Philosophy* is a collection of original essays that examine the work of some of the most important Jewish thinkers of the modern era – the period extending from the seventeenth century to the late twentieth century.

Editors Michael L. Morgan and Peter Eli Gordon have brought together a group of world-renowned scholars to paint a broad and rich picture of the tradition of modern Jewish philosophy over a period of four hundred years. Beginning with the seventeenth century, modern Jewish philosophy developed among thinkers who responded to the new science and modern philosophy in the course of reflecting on the nature of Judaism and Jewish life.

The essays address themes that are central to the tradition of modern Jewish philosophy – language and revelation, autonomy and authority, the problem of evil, Messianism, the influence of Kant, and feminism – and discuss in depth the work of major thinkers such as Spinoza, Mendelssohn, Cohen, Buber, Rosenzweig, Fackenheim, Soloveitchik, Strauss, Levinas, Maimon, Benjamin, Derrida, Scholem, and Arendt.

Michael L. Morgan is Professor of Philosophy and Jewish Studies at Indiana University. In 2004, he was named a Chancellor's Professor. He has published articles in a variety of journals and has written several books, including *Interim Judaism* (2001); *Beyond Auschwitz: Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought in America* (2001); and *Dilemmas in Modern Jewish Thought: The Dialectics of Revelation and History* (1992).

Peter Eli Gordon is Professor of History at Harvard University. He has published widely on topics in modern European intellectual history, modern Continental philosophy, and modern Jewish thought. His book, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (2003), received several distinguished awards, including the Goldstein-Goren Prize for the best book in Jewish philosophy, the Salo W. Baron Prize for the best first book in Jewish history, and the 2003 Forkosch Prize for the best book in intellectual history.

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO  
MODERN JEWISH  
PHILOSOPHY

Edited by Michael L. Morgan  
*Indiana University*

Peter Eli Gordon  
*Harvard University*



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**Pierre Bouretz** is Professor of Philosophy at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris). Among his recent publications are *La tour de Babel*, with Marc de Launay and Jean-Louis Scheffer (2003); *Témoins du futur: Philosophie et messianisme* (2003); and *Qu'appelle-t-on philosophe?* (2006).

**Richard A. Cohen** is the Isaac Swift Distinguished Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He is the author of *Ethics, Exegesis, and Philosophy: Interpretation after Levinas* (2001) and *Elevations: The Height of the Good in Rosenzweig and Levinas* (1994); the translator of four books by Levinas; the editor of several books in contemporary thought; and the author of numerous articles in contemporary Continental philosophy.

**Paul W. Franks** is Professor of Philosophy and a member of the Jewish Studies Program Faculty at the University of Toronto. He is the author of *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism* (2005) and articles on post-Kantian and Jewish philosophy; co-editor and co-translator (with Michael L. Morgan) of *Franz Rosenzweig: Philosophical and Theological Writings* (2000); and associate editor of *The International Yearbook of German Idealism*.

**Peter Eli Gordon** is Professor of History at Harvard University. He is the author of *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (2003) and *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (forthcoming).

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**Berel Lang** is Visiting Professor of Philosophy and Letters at Wesleyan University. He is the author of, among other books, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide* (1990, 2003); *The Anatomy of Philosophical Style* (1990); *Heidegger's Silence* (1996); and *Post-Holocaust: Interpretation, Misinterpretation, and the Claims of History* (2005).

**Michael L. Morgan** is Chancellor's Professor of Philosophy and Jewish Studies at Indiana University, Bloomington. He is the author of several books, including *Platonic Piety* (1990) and *Beyond Auschwitz* (2001). Together with Paul Franks, he translated and edited *Franz Rosenzweig: Philosophical and Theological Writings* (2000). He edited *Emil Fackenheim: Jewish Philosophers and Jewish Philosophy* (1996) and *Spinoza: Complete Works* (2002). His book, *Discovering Levinas*, will be published in 2007 by Cambridge University Press.

**Steven Nadler** is Professor of Philosophy and Max and Frieda Weinstein/Bascom Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is the author of *Spinoza: A Life* (1999); *Spinoza's Heresy: Immortality and the Jewish Mind* (2002); and the forthcoming *Spinoza's Ethics: An Introduction* (Cambridge) and co-editor of *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy: From Antiquity through the Seventeenth Century*. He also co-edits *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*.

**Andrea Poma** is Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Turin. He is the author of *The Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen* (1997) and *Yearning for Form and Other Essays on Hermann Cohen's Thought* (2006).

**Tamar Rudavsky** is Professor of Philosophy at Ohio State University. She is the editor of two books: *Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy: Islamic, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives* (1984) and *Gender and Judaism: Tradition and Transformation* (1995). Her book, *Time Matters: Time and Cosmology in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, appeared in 2000. With Steven Nadler, she is co-editor of the forthcoming *The Cambridge History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*.

**Kenneth Seeskin** is a member of the Philosophy Department at Northwestern University, where he has served as Chair for more than 15 years. His publications in Jewish philosophy include *Jewish Philosophy in a Secular Age* (1990); *Maimonides: A Guide for Today's Perplexed* (1991); *No Other Gods: The Modern Struggle Against Idolatry* (1995); *Searching for a Distant God: The Legacy of Maimonides* (2000); *Autonomy in Jewish Philosophy* (2001); *Maimonides on the Origin of the World* (2005), and more than thirty scholarly articles and book



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chapters. In 2001, he won the Koret Jewish Book Award for *Searching for a Distant God*, and in 2005, he edited *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*.

**Steven B. Smith** is Alfred Cowles Professor of Political Science and the Master of Branford College at Yale University. Among his recent publications are *Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity* (1997); *Spinoza's Book of Life: Freedom and Redemption in the Ethics* (2003); and most recently, *Reading Leo Strauss: Philosophy, Politics, Judaism* (2006).

**Tamra Wright** is Director of Academic Studies at the London School of Jewish Studies and a visiting lecturer in the department of Theology and Religious Studies at King's College, London. She is the author of *The Twilight of Jewish Philosophy: Emmanuel Levinas's Ethical Hermeneutics* (1999).

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## Acknowledgments

It was nearly seven years ago that Andy Beck at Cambridge University Press first proposed the idea of a *Cambridge Companion to Modern Jewish Philosophy*. We are very happy indeed that his foresight and patience have been rewarded with the publication of this volume, and we are especially grateful to him for all he has contributed to it.

The book has been conceived as a work in the history of philosophy, but one that appreciates the contribution that an encounter with significant historical works and themes makes to contemporary philosophical thinking. And since the philosophy in question is modern Jewish philosophy, the figures and themes explored are taken to be ones that contribute to contemporary Jewish philosophical thought.

Modern Jewish philosophy, as we understand it, is a phenomenon of the seventeenth century to the late twentieth century. It incorporates many more figures and works than could be easily discussed in a single collection of essays, and it addresses a vast array of concepts and issues. Hence, in designing the book, we have had to be selective. It has nonetheless always been our hope that the various essays, some devoted to major figures and others to central themes, cover sufficient terrain to acquaint the reader with the major features of the field.

Anthologies are by nature the product of compromise and collective effort. The essays collected in this volume were written by some of the most accomplished scholars from around the world – from Europe, Israel, and North America – whose work has helped to transform our understanding of modern Jewish philosophy. And they are a diverse group, distinguished one from the other not only by their interests and choices of emphasis but also by their very style of thought and their conception of what Jewish philosophy signifies. Bringing so wide a range of scholars under a single roof has been an exhilarating but by no means simple task. As editors, we have tried to be ecumenical even while the very selection of essays and themes inevitably imposes a certain perspective. Yet we have tried most often to let the essays speak for themselves,

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and in every case, the results have been far better than had we striven for greater uniformity in vision. It is therefore fitting we begin these acknowledgments by expressing our sincere gratitude to the contributors themselves.

An editorial partnership is itself an act of compromise. The two of us came to this project with different training and our own, unique visions of what a companion to modern Jewish philosophy should look like. No doubt there may have been points about which we disagreed. But from the very start, we found the process of editorial responsibility an enjoyable one. The burdens thereof were lightened considerably by the fact that they were shared. In effect, the two of us became a reading group devoted to the study of modern Jewish philosophy via a scrupulous joint examination of the texts that make up this book; we became conversation partners and indeed friends, a benefit of our collaboration that means a great deal to us both.

Each of us must acknowledge his debts to those who have helped to see this book to completion. What follows are individual statements.

Michael Morgan: For thirty-two years, I have taught modern Jewish philosophy, among my teaching responsibilities, at Indiana University in Bloomington. This volume is a testimony to the hundreds of students who have studied with me and from whom I have learned. It is also a testimony to my wonderful colleagues throughout the university and to the friends of a lifetime that have made my years in Bloomington so rewarding. My thanks to my colleagues, my friends, and to the university are certainly beyond measure.

My life in Jewish philosophy began when I was an undergraduate, but my love for it really first flourished when I was in rabbinical school and then in graduate school. There are teachers and friends who meant a great deal to me then and continue to do so to this day – Sheldon Zimmerman, Michael Cook, Eugene Borowitz, Arnold Wolf, Norbert Samuelson, Michael Stroh, and Kenneth Seeskin. Most of all, as this volume is brought to a conclusion, I think of two people – scholars, friends, and teachers – who have passed away: Emil Fackenheim was my teacher, my friend, and my mentor for nearly forty years; Sam Westfall was my colleague and friend at Indiana for three decades. Both Emil and Sam have always represented for me the ideal combination of scholarship and humanity to which those of us who live both in the university and in the world ought to aspire. Finally, there is no modern Jewish philosophy without modern Jewish life, and mine is so intertwined with my wife Audrey's that they are virtually one.

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Peter E. Gordon: For me, the most fascinating features of Jewish philosophy are those that emerge at its many points of contact with the broader tradition of philosophy as such. In matters intellectual, as in so much of life, creativity and human flourishing come about more readily through symbiosis than purification. This may explain why my first published essay (originally written in a seminar for the late Amos Funkenstein) explored some questions in the epistemology of Maimonides, that paragon of intellectual fusion whose thinking represents a potent combination of Judaism, Islam, and the Hellenistic tradition. The crossing of intellectual and disciplinary boundaries has remained a watchword of my own scholarship ever since.

I would like to thank Harvard University for granting me the year's leave during which I could devote myself without interruption to this project. I must also thank my many friends and colleagues at Harvard for making an otherwise forbidding institution into a permanent home. For their ongoing guidance and conversation relevant to this project, I owe a special thanks to the following: Martin Jay, Hilary Putnam, Leora Batnitzky, Warren Breckman, David Biale, Nina Caputo, Hubert Dreyfus, Mitchell Hart, Mark Lilla, Samuel Moyn, Jerrold Seigel, Tommie Shelby, Eugene Sheppard, Dana Villa, and Steven Wasserstrom. Most of all, I would like to thank my wife, Ludmila, for her unsparing support and equally unsparing intellectual criticism.

Finally I would like to recall the memory of my father, whose death after a long and difficult illness coincided with the beginning phase of my academic leave. The year of editing was also a year of mourning. Yet the combination seems somehow apt: My father, a scientist, who as a young man had abandoned orthodoxy for the study of nature, was a scholar of the most humane temperament. It was from him that I learned to appreciate the virtue of dedication to one's profession. He remains a powerful presence in my memory.

We also thank Faith Black at Cambridge University Press, for her consummate dedication and assistance with numerous logistical tasks at the Press; research assistant Nick Alford, for his skillful work on the index; and Ronald Cohen, who edited the manuscript most professionally and with respect for our contributors' work.

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## Chronology

- 1492 Expulsion of the Jews from Spain.
- 1632 Birth of Baruch (Benedict de) Spinoza, Amsterdam, Dutch Republic.
- 1656 *Cherem* (excommunication) of Spinoza from Amsterdam Jewish community.
- 1665–66 Sabbatian Heresy.
- 1670 Anonymous publication of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.
- 1776 Declaration of Independence and founding of the United States of America. Formal equality of religion for all citizens guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.
- 1781 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Critique of Pure Reason), first edition; second edition published in 1787.
- 1782 Joseph II issues the *Edict of Tolerance*, a step toward Jewish emancipation in Austrian territory.
- 1783 Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem: Or on Religious Power and Judaism*.
- 1790 Sephardic Jews in France granted civil rights; applied to Ashkenazim the following year.
- 1792 Anonymous publication of August Friedrich Crazz's *Search for Light and Right: An Epistle to Moses Mendelssohn*.
- 1807 G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.
- 1808 Birth of Samson Raphael Hirsch, Hamburg, Germany.
- 1819 Founding of the Society for the Culture and Science of Jewry (*Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*), by Joseph Hilmar, Isaac Levin Auerbach, Isaac Marcus Jost, Eduard Gans, Moses Moser, and Leopold Zunz.

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- 1822 Immanuel Wolf, "On the Concept of a Science of Judaism," a programmatic essay laying out the basic principles of the "Science of Judaism," published in the inaugural issue of the *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, volume 1, number 1.
- 1835 Pale of Settlement established by Tsar Nicholas I, demarcating boundaries of Jewish residence in specified areas of Eastern Europe from the Baltic to the Black Sea.
- 1836 Samson Raphael Hirsch, in *Nineteen Letters on Judaism*, establishes the theoretical foundations for "neo-Orthodox" Judaism.
- 1842 Birth of Hermann Cohen in Coswig (Anhalt), Germany.
- 1843 Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*.
- 1844 Karl Marx (1818–83), *Zur Judenfrage* (On the Jewish Question).
- 1862 Moses Hess (1812–75), *Rome and Jerusalem*.
- 1871 Hermann Cohen, *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* (Kant's Theory of Experience).
- 1872 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*.
- 1878 Birth of Martin (Mordechai) Buber, Vienna, Austria-Hungary.
- 1880 Hermann Cohen publishes "*Ein Bekenntnis in der Judenfrage*" in response to anti-Semitic provocation by German-nationalist historian Heinrich von Treitschke.
- 1881 First wave of pogroms against Eastern European Jews breaks out in the Ukraine, followed by others through 1884; a second wave begins in 1903 in Kishinev, lasting until 1906; a third follows, 1917–21.
- 1886 Birth of Franz Rosenzweig, Kassel, Germany.
- 1892 Birth of Walter Benjamin, Berlin, Germany.
- 1896 Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State), Vienna.
- 1897 Meeting of the First Zionist Congress convened by Theodor Herzl in Basel, Switzerland, declares the aim of Zionism "to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law."
- 1897 Birth of Gershom Scholem, Berlin, Germany.
- 1899 Birth of Leo Strauss, Kirchhain (Hesse), Germany.

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- 1904 Hermann Cohen, *Ethik des reinen Willens* (Ethics of Pure Will).
- 1906 Birth of Hannah Arendt, Hanover, Germany.
- 1906 Birth of Emmanuel Levinas, Kovno, Lithuania.
- 1906 Martin Buber, *Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman* (The Tales of Rabbi Nachman; English, 1956).
- 1907 Henri Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice* (Creative Evolution).
- 1908 Martin Buber, *Die Legende des Baalschem* (The Legend of the Baal Shem; English, 1955).
- 1911 Martin Buber, *Drei Reden über das Judentum* (Three Speeches on Judaism).
- 1914–18 World War I.
- 1916 Birth of Emil Fackenheim, Halle, Germany.
- 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.
- 1918 Official declaration of the Weimar Republic in Germany, November 9. Death of Hermann Cohen. Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, first edition.
- 1919 Hermann Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums* (Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism), posthumous.
- 1921 Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (The Star of Redemption).
- 1923 Martin Buber, *Ich und Du* (I and Thou; English, 1937).
- 1925 Franz Rosenzweig, "The New Thinking."
- 1927 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*.
- 1929 Death of Franz Rosenzweig.
- 1930 Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*.
- 1930 Leo Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (German; English edition with Preface, 1962).
- 1930 Birth of Jacques (Jackie) Derrida, in El-Bair, Algeria.
- 1930 Theodor Lessing (1872–1933), *Der jüdische Selbsthaß* (Jewish Self-Hatred).
- 1933 End of the Weimar Republic; beginning of Nazi dictatorship in Germany.
- 1935 Leo Strauss, *Philosophie und Gesetz* (Philosophy and Law).
- 1937 Lev Shestov, *Athens and Jerusalem*.

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- 1939 Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*.
- 1939 World War II begins.
- 1940 Suicide of Walter Benjamin during his flight from France through the Pyrenees.
- 1941 Leo Strauss, "Persecution and the Art of Writing."
- 1941 Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*.
- 1942 Nazi Germany launches the "Final Solution," leading to the murder of six million Jews throughout Europe.
- 1945 World War II ends.
- 1947 Emmanuel Levinas, *Le temps et l'autre* (Time and the Other).
- 1948 Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel.
- 1951 Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (composition begun during WWII).
- 1958 Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewish Woman* (first draft, 1933).
- 1958 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*.
- 1961 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et l'infini* (Totality and Infinity).
- 1963 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.
- 1963 Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficile liberté: Essais sur le judaïsme* (Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism).
- 1965 Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*.
- 1968 Emmanuel Levinas, *Quatre lectures talmudiques* (Four Talmudic Readings).
- 1973 Death of Leo Strauss.
- 1973 Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Zevi, the Mystical Messiah*.
- 1974 Emmanuel Levinas, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (Otherwise than Being, or, Beyond Essence).
- 1975 Death of Hannah Arendt.
- 1982 Death of Gershom Scholem.
- 1982 Emil Fackenheim, *To Mend the World*.
- 1983 Susannah Heschel, *On Being a Jewish Feminist*.
- 1995 Death of Emmanuel Levinas.
- 2003 Death of Emil Fackenheim.
- 2004 Death of Jacques Derrida.