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0521801583 - Ethics, Exegesis and Philosophy: Interpretation after Levinas
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Ethics, Exegesis and Philosophy

The reputation and influence of Emmanuel Levinas (1906–95) have grown powerfully in recent years. Well known in France in his lifetime, he has since his death become widely regarded as a major European moral philosopher profoundly shaped by his Jewish background. A pupil of Husserl and Heidegger, Levinas pioneered new forms of exegesis with his postmodern readings of the Talmud, and as an ethicist brought together religious and non-religious, Jewish and non-Jewish traditions of contemporary thought.

Richard A. Cohen has written a book which uses Levinas's work as its base but goes on to explore broader questions of interpretation in the context of text-based ethical thinking. Levinas's reorientation of philosophy is considered in critical contrast to alternative contemporary approaches such as those found in modern science, psychology, Nietzsche, Freud, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida and Ricoeur. Cohen explores a manner of philosophizing which he terms "ethical exegesis."

RICHARD A. COHEN, trained in philosophy, is Professor of Religious Studies and the Isaac Swift Distinguished Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He is the author of *Elevations: The Height of the Good in Rosenzweig and Levinas* (1994) and editor of *Face to Face with Levinas* (1986). Professor Cohen has translated four books by Emmanuel Levinas and has published many articles on contemporary continental philosophy.

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*Dedicated with love to my parents, Bette Gordon Cohen
and Sidney S. Cohen,
and with gratitude to
Emmanuel Levinas
– my teachers.*

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It was taught on Tannaite authority by Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: “If *you are my witness, says the Lord, then I am God* [Isaiah 43:12], and if you are not my witness, then, as it were, it is as if I am not the Lord.”

Pesikta de Rav Kahana 12:6

I do not ask the wounded person how he feels . . . I myself become the wounded person.

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

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