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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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MARTIN KAVKA

*Florida State University*



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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK  
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
 Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain  
 Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa  
<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 2004

Printed in the United States of America

*Typeface* ITC New Baskerville 10/12 pt.    *System* L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X 2<sub>ε</sub> [TB]

*A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Kavka, Martin.

Jewish messianism and the history of philosophy / Martin Kavka.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-521-83103-2

1. Philosophy, Jewish – History.    2. Nonbeing.    3. Philosophy – History.  
 4. Lévinas, Emmanuel – Views on nonbeing.    5. Nonbeing – Religious aspects – Judaism.  
 6. Messiah – Judaism.    I. Title.

B5802.N65K38 2004  
 181'.06–dc22

2003061320

ISBN 0 521 83103 2 hardback

Cambridge University Press  
0521831032 - Jewish Messianism and the History of Philosophy  
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[More information](#)

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

## Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	page ix
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xi
Introduction: From Athens to Jerusalem	1
<i>The Thesis and Two Corollaries</i>	5
<i>A Preliminary Sketch of the Argument</i>	8
<i>A Note on Gender</i>	16
1 The Meontological Conundrum: Emmanuel Levinas and Emil Fackenheim on the Athens–Jerusalem Conflict	18
<i>Critical Meontology: Emmanuel Levinas</i>	20
<i>Dialectical Meontology: Emil Fackenheim</i>	29
2 Beyond “Beyond Being”: Nonbeing in Plato and Husserl	42
<i>The Problems of Middle Platonism</i>	46
<i>The Inadequacy of Unifaceted Definition</i>	49
<i>Nonbeing, Otherness, and the Coherence of Disparate Elements</i>	53
<i>Phenomenology and Meontology</i>	58
3 Nonbeing as Not-Yet-Being: Meontology in Maimonides and Hermann Cohen	66
<i>Return</i>	67
<i>Maimonidean Meontology</i>	70
<i>The Extirpation of the Passions in Maimonides</i>	84
<i>Meontology in Cohen’s Logik der reinen Erkenntnis</i>	94
<i>From Teleology to Messianism: Cohen’s Interpretation of Maimonides</i>	106
<i>The Integration of the Community: Religion of Reason</i>	114
<i>Conclusion</i>	126

Cambridge University Press  
 0521831032 - Jewish Messianism and the History of Philosophy  
 Martin Kavka  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

viii

*Contents*

4	Nonbeing Ensouled, Nonbeing Embodied: Levinas versus Rosenzweig on the Role of the Other in Messianic Anticipation	129
	<i>The Soul, Faithful in Pathos</i>	135
	<i>The Body, Faithful in Eros</i>	157
	Conclusion: Deepening the Roots of the Jewish Meontological Tradition, or contra the Derridean “Messianic”	193
	<i>Mourning Between Introjection and Incorporation</i>	198
	<i>The Mourners of Zion, hadomim lo</i>	207
	<i>Swallowing Tears</i>	217
	<i>Works Cited</i>	222
	<i>Index</i>	233

## Acknowledgments

In the years that I have been working on the issue of negation in Jewish philosophy, I have had the benefit of support from numerous professors, colleagues, and friends. All of these individuals have been my teachers, and it will take me more than a lifetime to demonstrate my worthiness of the attention and care they have shown me.

My passion for this material is rooted in the inspiring pedagogical and intellectual gifts of Robert Gibbs, whom I encountered in a seminar at Princeton University in the fall of 1991. (The passion of the other seminar participants – including Jen Bajorek, Leora Batnitzky, Ruth Gerson, Elise Harris, Ariel Kaminer, and Viv Soni – was infectious.) Later, David Novak guided me toward refining the rigor of my thinking. He has since become a jewel of a conversation partner. And through her enigmatic nature and wily graciousness, Edith Wyschogrod made it possible for my years at Rice University to be challenging, productive, and happy beyond my wildest dreams.

I owe thanks also to Kamila Kavka, Misha Kavka and Stephen Turner, Cornel West, Victor Preller, Elaine Pagels, Malcolm Diamond ז"ל, Dmitry Gorenburg, Arun Sannuti, Mun Hou Lo, Robert Scharlemann, Michael Swartz, Larry Bouchard, Jamie Ferreira, Michael Satlow, Jennifer Geddes, Kyle Fedler, Clayton Crockett, Trent Pomplun, Willie Young, Laura Levitt, Susan Shapiro, Dave and Susannah Nix, Eric and Julie Boynton, Stephen Hood and Sdenka Aguilar-Hood, Shaul Magid, my big brother Zachary Braiterman, Brian Riedel, Andrea Frolic and Sheldon Smart, Steven Galt Crowell, Cynthia Freeland, Michael Weingrad, Diana Lobel, Gerald McKenny, Werner Kelber, David Nirenberg, Oona Ajzenstat, Willis Johnson, Judith Brown, Ann and Nicholas Willis, Caroline Willis, Misty Willis, Steve Kepnes, Claire Katz, Dana Hollander, Marc Lee Raphael, Gregory Kaplan, and Matthew LaGrone. Peter Ochs has shown me that my conversation partners are my family.

The friendship of Gene Rogers, Derek Krueger, Claire Kaplan, Leah Zahler ז"ל, Ned Brinkley, Bernard Mayes, and Mark Jordan has given me much-needed support at difficult times.

I owe special thanks to four women who have forever altered the categories of my understanding. Randi Rashkover has shown me that a life spent reading and writing Jewish theology is a life of great pleasure. Beth McManus has shown me how to live the patience and generosity that I admire on the page. Nancy Levene has shown me that brokenness need not be loneliness. Laurel Fulkerson has shown me how to be professional and fabulous at the same time. They have taught me to live and love more fully, and in so doing they have improved my thinking.

My wonderful friends and colleagues in Tallahassee are the most delightful of rewards: Shannon Burkes, John Corrigan and Sheila Curran, Bryan and Amanda Cuevas, Kathleen Erndl and Yakini Kemp, Aline Kalbian and Bob Cross, David Kangas and Inese Radzins, Nicole Kelley and Matt Day, John and Rita Kelsay, Amy Koehlinger and Charles Robinson, David and Cathy Levenson, Leo and Marvel Lou Sandon, and Barney and Pat Twiss. In the brief time I knew her, Tessa Bartholomeusz taught me many things. I miss her a great deal.

A draft of what eventually became Chapter 4 was read in 1999 at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, and a preliminary version of the Conclusion was read in 2001 at the annual conference of the International Association of Philosophy and Literature. My thanks to those who gave me helpful criticisms, including Robert Gibbs, Peter Ochs, Zachary Braiterman, Barbara Galli, Dana Hollander, and Ferit Güven. Rewriting a previous draft of the Introduction as a letter to Dirk von der Horst was enormously helpful; I am grateful for the generosity of his response. Rewriting the Conclusion in its epistolary form was therapeutic; I hope its primary addressee knows who he is. Some of my previously published articles contain interpolations of this material into very different contexts. A small part of the Introduction appeared in "Recollection, *Zakhor*, *Anamnesis*," *Cross Currents* 49, no. 4 (2000); part of Chapter 4 appeared in "Saying Kaddish for Gillian Rose," in *Secular Theology*, edited by Clayton Crockett (New York: Routledge, 2001), and part of the Conclusion appeared in "Textual Reasoning and Cultural Memory," in *Textual Reasonings*, edited by Nancy Levene and Peter Ochs (London: SCM Press, 2002).

In preparing this manuscript for publication, I had the good fortune to respond to comments and questions from Robert Gibbs, Oliver Davies, and Diana Lobel, all of whom read the manuscript with keen eyes and a warmth that invited me to push the limits of my ability to think through these issues. This book is far clearer as a result; the responsibility for its weaknesses and faults is mine alone. At Cambridge University Press, Andy Beck has been an exemplar of patient cool; he, Helen Wheeler, and Susan Greenberg make work fun. Bob Erlewine has provided an excellent index.

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, *Spectres 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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0521831032 - Jewish Messianism and the History of Philosophy  
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Frontmatter  
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*Abbreviations*

xiii

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.