

# *The Star* for Beginners

Introductions to the Magnum Opus  
of Franz Rosenzweig

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Edited by Martin Brassler, Petar Bojanić  
and Francesco Paolo Ciglia

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ubiquity press  
London

Ubiquity Press Ltd.  
Unit 322–323  
Whitechapel Technology Centre  
75 Whitechapel Road  
London E1 1DU  
www.ubiquitypress.com

Text © Martin Brassler, Petar Bojanić and Francesco Paolo Ciglia 2021

First published 2021

Cover design by Mattin Delavar, Ubiquity Press

Print and digital versions typeset by Siliconchips Services Ltd.

ISBN (Paperback): 978-1-914481-08-6

ISBN (PDF): 978-1-914481-09-3

ISBN (EPUB): 978-1-914481-10-9

ISBN (Mobi): 978-1-914481-11-6

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/bco>

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The full text of this book has been peer-reviewed to ensure high academic standards. For full review policies, see <http://www.ubiquitypress.com/>

Suggested citation:

Brassler, M., Bojanić, P. and Ciglia, F. P. (eds.) 2021. *The Star for Beginners: Introductions to the Magnum Opus of Franz Rosenzweig*. London: Ubiquity Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/bco>. License: CC-BY

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*Wohinaus aber öffnen sich die Flügel des Tors? Du weißt es nicht?*

*INS LEBEN.*

*(Franz Rosenzweig, Stern der Erlösung 472)*



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## Siglenverzeichnis / Abbreviations

GS = *Gesammelte Schriften*, 4 volumes, Dordrecht / The Hague, 1976–1984

GS I (or GS 1) = *Briefe und Tagebücher*, 2 Bände, hg. von Rachel Rosenzweig und Edith Rosenzweig-Scheinmann, unter Mitwirkung von Bernhard Casper, The Hague 1979

GS II (or GS 2) = *Der Stern der Erlösung*, Hinweise und Verzeichnisse von Annemarie Mayer, 4. Auflage im Jahre der Schöpfung 536 mit einer Einführung von Reinhold Mayer, The Hague 1976

GS III (or GS 3) = *Zweistromland. Kleinere Schriften zu Glauben und Denken*, hg. von Reinhold und Annemarie Mayer, The Hague 1984

GS IV.1 (or GS 4.1) = *Sprachdenken [im Übersetzen]. Fünfundneunzig Hymnen und Gedichte: dt. und hebr. / Jehuda Halevi; mit einem Vorwort und mit Anmerkungen: Franz Rosenzweig – die sechzig Hymnen und Gedichte*, 3. Ausgabe hg. von Rafael N. Rosenzweig, The Hague 1983

GS IV.2 (or GS 4.2) = *Sprachdenken [im Übersetzen]. Arbeitspapiere zur Verdeutschung der Schrift*, hg. von Rachel Bat-Adam, The Hague 1984

SE = *Der Stern der Erlösung*, either cited by GS II or by the following edition: Bibliothek Suhrkamp, Bd 973, mit einer Einführung von Reinhold Mayer und einer Gedenkrede von Gershom Sholem, Frankfurt a.M., various editions since 1988 [online-version: <https://freidok.uni-freiburg.de/fedora/objects/freidok:310/datastreams/FILE1/content>]



[Digitalisat der ersten Auflage von 1921 hier: <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/content/titleinfo/596291>]

HuS = *Hegel und der Staat*, München 1920 or edited in the series Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft no 1941 by Frank Lachmann, Berlin 2010

BGK = *Das Büchlein vom Gesunden und Kranken Menschenverstand*, hg. und eingeleitet von Nahum Glatzer, Frankfurt a.M. 1992

GB = *Die "Gritli"-Briefe – Briefe an Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy*, hg. von Inken Rühle und Reinhold Mayer, mit einem Vorwort von Raphael Rosenzweig, Tübingen 2002 [online-version: <http://www.erhfund.org/the-gritli-letters-gritli-briefe/>]

Zweistromland = *Zweistromland. Kleinere Schriften zu Religion und Philosophie*, hg. und mit einem Nachwort versehen von Gesine Palmer, Berlin 2001

SH = *Star of Redemption*, translated from the second edition of 1930 by William W. Hallo, London 1971

SG = *Star of Redemption*, in translation by Barbara E. Galli, Madison (Wis.) 2005

JL = *On Jewish Learning*, edited by N.N. Glatzer, 1955

CW = *Cultural Writings of Franz Rosenzweig*, edited and translated by Barbara E. Galli, with a Forward by Leora Batnitzky, Library of Jewish Philosophy, Syracuse N.Y. 2000

NT = *Franz Rosenzweig's The New Thinking*, edited by and translated from the German by Ulan Udoff and Barbara E. Galli, Syracuse N.Y. 1999

GMW = *God, Man, and the World: Lectures and Essays of Franz Rosenzweig*, edited and translated by Barbara E. Galli, Syracuse N.Y. 1998

USH = *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy: A View of World, Man, and God*, with a new introduction by Hilary Putnam, originally edited by N.N. Glatzer, New York 1953, and published in Cambridge (Mass.) 1999

PWT = *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, edited by Paul W. Franks and Michael L. Morgan, Indianapolis 2000

Further writings of Rosenzweig (which are not used in these commentaries):

Feldpostbriefe. Die Korrespondenz mit den Eltern (1914–1917), edited by Wolfgang Herzfeld, Freiburg Alber Verlag 2013

Franz Rosenzweigs Jugendschriften (1907–1914), edited by Wolfgang Herzfeld,

Teil I – Kant, Hamburg Verlag Dr. Kovac 2015

Teil II – Hegel, Hamburg Verlag Dr. Kovac 2015

Teil III – Schriften zu Geschichte und Kultur, Hamburg Verlag Dr. Kovac 2017

# **Einleitung / Introduction**



# Introduction I

Martin Brassler, Petar Bojanić  
and Francesco Paolo Ciglia

*Unteroffizier* Franz Rosenzweig began writing *Star of Redemption* toward the end of the First World War, on the Macedonian front, on August 22, 1918. Having contracted malaria shortly thereafter, he worked on his text in various hospitals, as the German army retreated in defeat. The thirty-year old Rosenzweig partially wrote the book in an army hospital in Belgrade, which he entered on September 25, 1918. Much later, on June 4–5, 2012, the same city hosted an International Conference, *Rosenzweig für Anfänger / Rosenzweig for Beginners* at the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, at which the majority of texts in this volume were initially presented. The book that came about in the midst of the First World War opposed above all abstract philosophy as such and classical German Idealism, but also served to deconstruct “Rosenzweig the philosopher” and create a “New Thinking,” as well as a Jewish Philosophy.

On August 27, 1918 Rosenzweig writes to Gertrud Oppenheim:

“(…) I am deeply involved in developing my letter (of November 1917) to Rudi (Rudolf Ehrenberg) into a book. It’s going to be quite fantastic, entirely unpublishable, equally scandalous to “Christians, Jews, and heathens” – but I’ll learn what I need to learn in the process, and that’s enough. For the present... the introduction. I’ll probably write to you again tomorrow. I just noticed that I am sending you this insolent announcement of my system on Hegel’s birthday. It’s a pity about him! Only Nietzsche (and Kant) pass muster!”

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## How to cite this book chapter:

Brasser, M., Bojanić, P. and Ciglia, F. P. 2021. Introduction I. In: Brassler, M., Bojanić, P. and Ciglia, F. P. (eds.) *The Star for Beginners: Introductions to the Magnum Opus of Franz Rosenzweig*. Pp. 3–4. London: Ubiquity Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/bco.a>. License: CC-BY

This was a book written in dire circumstances, with the first two sections scrawled on army postcards. After Belgrade and Kassel, Rosenzweig continued writing it in Berlin where he completed it on February 16, 1919. Even though some friends and Christian cousins tried to convince him to publish it in some Christian publishing house, he refused resolutely, setting himself the fundamental task of preparing and publishing the text in Hebrew. A one-volume edition of *Der Stern der Erlösung* came out in 1921 from the Frankfurt publisher Verlag Kauffmann, with a three-volume second edition put out by Schocken, Berlin in 1930.

In 1976, *Stern* appeared in Rosenzweig's *Gesammelte Schriften* and since 1988 as a single edition in the Suhrkamp Library (11th edition 2018). A digital scan of this has been publicly available on the server of the University Library of Freiburg since 2002, and since 2009 the digital copy of the first edition from 1921 can be accessed via the University Library of Frankfurt am Main. Since 2014, a team of researchers has been working on the development of an online platform for collaboratively annotating the Star of Redemption in the spirit of the Digital Humanities. The prototype of this platform is already accessible and usable at <https://www.annotatedstar.org>.

These stages of the publication history show: Rosenzweig's assessment that the Star could not be published was – fortunately – a touch too skeptical. Behind Rosenzweig's assessment was probably the fear that the book would not find its readers because its thoughts and arguments were so difficult to grasp and comprehend. In any case, shortly after the publication of *Stern*, Rosenzweig was clearly more optimistic about the mark it would leave. In January 1923, he wrote in a letter to Rudolf Hallo: "Our work will be honored to us by Germany at most posthumously..." (GS I, 887). As far as the reception of the Star of Redemption is concerned, this assessment has indeed proved to be correct. After an initially hesitant reception, the Star is still today, and today perhaps more than ever, intensively read, discussed, received, critically questioned, and thought about further. What has remained is that Rosenzweig's argumentation is demanding and difficult – for professionals in philosophy and theology as well as for everyone who simply out of interest in religion and faith wants to find inspiration in the Star of Redemption.

The following introductions are intended for this interest. Each book of the Star of Redemption is treated individually and its argumentation is reconstructed step by step. The authors elaborate the central patterns of argumentation on which Rosenzweig's train of thought is built. The introductions allow those who wish to read *The Star of Redemption* to see the "big picture" in each chapter. On this basis, reading "en detail" can then bring further inspiration.

The editors  
*Martin Brassler, Petar Bojanić, Francesco Paolo Ciglia*

# Introduction II: Viewing Rosenzweig from a Jewish Perspective. A Master of Return

Norbert Samuelson

In many respects Franz Rosenzweig is the antithesis of Baruch Spinoza. First, these two philosophers live at different ends of the so-called “modern” age of Jewish philosophy. Spinoza, trained in pre-modern Jewish texts, advocates all of the major values of enlightenment Humanism. The key topics of Jewish belief are reconstructed in the light of Cartesian values in sharp criticism of his inherited Maimonidean interpretations of rabbinic philosophy. Spinoza is in every sense of the phrase the first Jewish modern philosophy. His very heterodoxy is inherently modern. In contrast, Rosenzweig, trained as a modern German intellectual in the most modern and German of philosophers, George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, turns against that tradition to devote his life to recapturing traditional Jewish values. He does so both in his writings, especially in his magnum opus, *The Star of Redemption*, a word painting of all of human history which functions for him as a prolegomena for the direction of his life, viz. to being a teacher of Jewish adults in a school (the Lehrhaus) whose most fundamental commitment was to bring back Jews from the “enlightenment” (Aufklärung) of the newly emerged German civilization of a post-enlightenment, rooted-in-rabbinic-tradition

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## How to cite this book chapter:

Samuelson, N. 2021. Introduction II: Viewing Rosenzweig from a Jewish Perspective. A Master of Return. In: Brasser, M., Bojanić, P. and Ciglia, F. P. (eds.) *The Star for Beginners: Introductions to the Magnum Opus of Franz Rosenzweig*. Pp. 5–6. London: Ubiquity Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/bco.b>. License: CC-BY