



INTERNATIONALE ROSENZWEIG GESELLSCHAFT e.V.

International Rosenzweig Society

The *International Rosenzweig Society* (IRS) was founded on March 28, 2004 in Kassel, Rosenzweig's city of birth, at the international conference entitled "Franz Rosenzweig's New Thinking," at the University of Kassel. The IRS has the following tasks: To inform a broader intellectual public of the thought of this outstanding 20th century thinker, to promote research into Rosenzweig's specific approach to existence philosophy, his individual contribution to German philosophy, and the uniqueness of his kind of Jewish thinking, and finally, to confront the challenges that arise out of Rosenzweig's thought for Jewish-Christian dialogue in different nations through different academic disciplines.

According to the statements of its more than 100 founding members, the IRS is committed to the philosophical thinking of Franz Rosenzweig. Consequently, it will endeavor to do the following: deepen and spread knowledge of the philosophical and pedagogic works of Franz Rosenzweig, support this kind of academic research, construct what for Franz Rosenzweig was the place of the Jewish heritage within the context of western intellectual history, promote academic thinking about this heritage, as well as, finally, to promote actively interreligious communication and dialogue between Christians and Jews.

The society assumes the following tasks in order to promote greater familiarity with the philosophical, religious and educational work of Franz Rosenzweig: support for the building and maintenance of Rosenzweig research centers, promotion of contacts between Rosenzweig scholars scattered all over the world by organizing at regular intervals international conferences to take place in different countries (possibly every two years), cooperation with other intellectually related academic societies to discuss commonly shared topics, initiation of lectures, seminars, and exhibitions about Rosenzweig in different universities, promotion of studies on the life and thought of Rosenzweig in academic publications with publication subsidies, initiatives of reconciliation and dialogue, as well as, finally, sponsorship of modest grants, to whatever extent it can, of work that accords with the spirit of Franz Rosenzweig's life and thought.

„We find ourselves. We find ourselves present. But we must have the courage to find ourselves present in the truth, the courage to say our Truly in midst of the Truth. For so we may, since the ultimate truth is none other than – ours. God's truth is none other than the love with which he loves us. The light with which the truth illuminates is none other than the word to which our Truly makes answer. ... Thus we say our truly there where we find ourselves present. There is no such thing as mere coincidence. ... Thus truth must be verified, and precisely in the manner in which it is generally denied, that is, by leaving aside the 'whole' truth and by yet recognizing the portion to which one holds as the eternal truth. It has to be thus, for we are dealing with the eternal here. In the eternal, the triumph over death, which is swallowed up in it is celebrated. The broken weapons of death are exhibited in the triumphal procession. Death meant to mow down all life lest it live on to eternal life.” (Star 392 f.)

In order to facilitate all who are interested in making a donation or in becoming a participant in the **IRS**, an annual fee has been set for members at \$20 USD (€20, sFr 30, NIS 100) and for students or the unemployed at \$10 USD (€10, sFr 15, NIS 50). In addition sustaining members and sponsors are most heartedly welcome in order to enable the **IRS** to fulfill its diverse tasks.

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Franz Rosenzweig was born on December 25, 1886 in Kassel, Germany. His parents were part of an emancipated liberal Judaism that was fully integrated into modern, secular German society. The only living member of his family who still practised Judaism was his great uncle, Adam Rosenzweig, who encouraged Franz to participate in Jewish life. Franz began his university studies in 1905 in Medicine, but soon changed his concentration to History and Philosophy. He completed his doctoral dissertation in Freiburg in 1912, which he published as a two volume monograph in 1920 under the title ***Hegel and the State***. This book was the first comprehensive critical study of Hegel's political philosophy that in its own distinct way continues even today to set the standard for studies of Hegel's philosophy within the context of political and cultural history.

Rosenzweig's most important teacher in philosophy was his cousin, Hans Ehrenberg (1883-1958), who taught philosophy as a Privatdozent in Heidelberg. Ehrenberg not only reinforced Rosenzweig's critique of Hegel, but also motivated Rosenzweig's interest to study the religious philosophy in Schelling's late work that indelibly shaped Rosenzweig's subsequent thought. Beginning on July 7, 1913, Rosenzweig became engaged in the so-called "Leipzig conversation" with his other cousin, Rudolf Ehrenberg (1884-1969), and the young Dozent of the History of Law, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy (1888-1973), in which these two Christian and existentially philosophical friends tried to persuade him to convert to Christianity. However, after a period of doubt, Rosenzweig came to the conclusion that he could live authentically as a Jew rather than as a Christian, and decided, in his own words, "Thus I will remain a Jew." ("Ich bleibe also Jude.") Following this personal decision Rosenzweig began an intensive course of Jewish studies and attended the lectures of the famous Marburg philosopher, Hermann Cohen (1842-1918). Cohen had retired from the University of Marburg and had begun to lecture in Berlin at the "Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums".

The Star of Redemption was written in 1918 and published in 1921. It is a work of German philosophy in defense of Judaism. Without a doubt the *Star* provides one of the most significant philosophical bases for religious belief in the 20th century. It arose systematically out of a critical engagement with the tradition of classical German philosophy that initiated the first so called discussion of "existence-philosophy". After more than 150 years of German-Jewish history, Franz Rosenzweig was the first thinker since Moses Mendelssohn to take a stand against what remained a distinctively modern and German philosophical position of Christian religious philosophy.



The ***Star of Redemption*** consists of three parts, which, when understood as three separate volumes, proceed methodologically out of different questions. The first part is a polemical philosophical clarification directed against the absolutist thought of idealist philosophy. The second part develops a religious-philosophical basis for revelation that is decidedly unlike conventional theology. The third part develops a phenomenology of a Jewish and a Christian religious community, both of which – with reference to divine truth – should be understood together as a "laborer at the same work."

„Before God, then, Jew and Christian both labor at the same task. He cannot dispense with either. He has set enmity between the two for all time, and withal has most intimately bound each to each. ... The truth, the whole truth, thus belongs neither to them nor to us.“ (Star 415 f.)

After to his marriage to the Jewish religious school teacher Edith Hahn from Berlin, Franz Rosenzweig was called to Frankfurt a.M. in 1920 to manage and direct the ***Free Jewish Academy (Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus)*** that would point the way to the conscious development of a new and viable form of Jewish life in the modern world. In addition to Rosenzweig himself, the famous lecturers were Rabbi Nehemiah A. Nobel, the Biochemist Eduard Strauss, the physician Richard Koch, the lawyer Eugen Mayer, and the religious philosopher Martin Buber. Rosenzweig's expectations for the success of the Academy were only partially fulfilled, but his achievement was significant at the time of the persecution of the Jews in Germany after 1933, and, after the Second World War, the Lehrhaus became a model for the development of a number of similar institution in the USA and Europe.

1922 – in the year of the birth of his son Rafael – Rosenzweig was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Completely paralysed, in the last years dictating only with the eyes, Rosenzweig still could write the foundational philosophical treatise ***"The New Thinking"*** (1925), in which he explained the intention of his existential philosophy. However, the chief works of this period of his illness were his translation of the ***Psalms and Poems of Judah Halevi*** (1085-1141) from the original Hebrew, and the German translation with his friend Martin Buber (1878-1965) of ***Scripture (The Five Books of Direction)***, (1925), which Buber continued after Rosenzweig's death. In May, 1923 the liberal rabbi Leo Baeck conferred on Rosenzweig the honorary rabbi with the title "morenu" : our teacher. Shortly before his 43rd birthday, on December 10, 1929, Franz Rosenzweig died.

Franz Rosenzweig:

The Star of Redemption, trans. by William W. Hallo, Notre Dame, 1970
The Little Book of Healthy and Sick Human Understanding, Harvard, 1999
Die „Gritli“-Briefe. Briefe an Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy, Tübingen, 2002.

Franz Rosenzweig's "The New Thinking", edit. and trans. by Alan Udoff and Barbara E. Galli, Syracuse University Press, 1999.

Cultural Writings of Franz Rosenzweig, trans. by Barbara E. Galli, Syracuse University Press, 2000.

Scripture and Translation, edit. and trans. by Lawrence Rosenwald and Everett Fox, Indiana University Press, 1994

Franz Rosenzweig: Philosophical and Theological Writings, trans. by Michael Morgan and Paul Franks, Hackett, 2000.