



Leo Strauss on Moses Mendelssohn

By Leo Strauss

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Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86) was the leading Jewish thinker of the German Enlightenment and the founder of modern Jewish philosophy. His writings, especially his attempt during the Pantheism Controversy to defend the philosophical legacies of Spinoza and Leibniz against F. H. Jacobi's philosophy of faith, captured the attention of a young Leo Strauss and played a critical role in the development of his thought on one of the fundamental themes of his life's work: the conflicting demands of reason and revelation.

Leo Strauss on Moses Mendelssohn is a superbly annotated translation of ten introductions written by Strauss to a multi-volume critical edition of Mendelssohn's work. Commissioned in Weimar Germany in the 1920s, the project was suppressed and nearly destroyed during Nazi rule and was not revived until the 1960s. In addition to Strauss's introductions, Martin D. Yaffe has translated Strauss's editorial remarks on each of the passages he annotates in Mendelssohn's texts and brings those together with the introductions themselves. Yaffe has also contributed an extensive interpretive essay that both analyzes the introductions on their own terms and discusses what Strauss writes elsewhere about the broader themes broached in his Mendelssohn studies.

Strauss's critique of Mendelssohn represents one of the largest bodies of work by the young Strauss on a single thinker to be made available in English. It illuminates not only a formerly obscure phase in the emergence of his thought but also a critical moment in the history of the German Enlightenment.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Leo Strauss’s introductions to the works of Moses Mendelssohn are crucial for an understanding of the development of his thought. This splendid translation makes these works available for the first time to English-speaking readers. At last we will be able to appreciate Strauss’s engagement with this central figure of the German Enlightenment. Bravo!”

(Steven B. Smith, Yale University)

A remarkable work of deep and careful scholarship. These early writings by Strauss on Mendelssohn and the ‘Pantheism Controversy’ shed light on Strauss’s understanding of the theological-political problem and the deficiencies of modern rationalism. Beyond that, Yaffe’s interpretive essay brilliantly relates this early work of Strauss to his readings of Hobbes, Spinoza, Rousseau, and Nietzsche, and his account of the ‘three waves of modernity.’ A great achievement.

(Richard Velkley, Tulane University)

Martin D. Yaffe has performed a vital task for English-speaking readers who are interested in the work of Leo Strauss: bringing to light Strauss’s crucial introductory essays on Moses Mendelssohn. The translations are superlative: precise, literal, readable, and carefully attentive to Strauss’s language. These works show not only Strauss’s high regard for Mendelssohn, but also his growing appreciation for Lessing, who eventually exercised a powerful influence on Strauss’s own thought. This is a major work to be welcomed by all those who wish to penetrate some of the hidden recesses in the thought of Leo Strauss.

(Kenneth Hart Green, University of Toronto)

An extraordinary wealth of meticulously presented material. In addition to translating and commenting on Strauss’s treatment of ‘the philosophical founder of modern Jewish thought,’ Yaffe has provided readers of English with a plethora of clues to Strauss’s important but under-studied relationship to Lessing—the man to whom Strauss owed, ‘so to say, everything he had been able to discern in the labyrinth’ of the great question of philosophy and revelation.

(Svetozar Minkov, Roosevelt University)

“A philosophical optic that allows readers to glimpse, as if for the first time, the fundamentally theological-political character of Strauss’s thinking. . . Yaffe has not only succeeded magisterially in presenting readers with a ‘whole picture’ of Strauss’s relation to Mendelssohn, he has also allowed readers to perceive the depth of this relationship as it opens onto Strauss’s overall work. . . . We owe a debt of gratitude to Yaffe for bringing such an in-depth treatment of these issues to the wider English-speaking world.”

(*Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy* 2014-09-05)

"A remarkable feat. The staggering amount of work and its meticulous execution would require of those who want to understand the origin of Strauss’s thought or who concern themselves with the essential issues in these introductions, to offer Yaffe their heartfelt gratitude."

(*Interpretation* 2015-07-06)

About the Author

Leo Strauss (1899–1973) was one of the preeminent political philosophers of the twentieth century. He is the author of many books, among them *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, *Natural Right and History*, and *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, all published by the University of Chicago Press. **Martin D. Yaffe** is professor of philosophy and religion studies at the University of North Texas and the author or editor of several books, including *Shylock and the Jewish Question*.

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Nowadays reading books be a little more than want or need but also become a life style. This reading practice give you lot of advantages. The advantages you got of course the knowledge even the information inside the book which improve your knowledge and information. The information you get based on what kind of guide you read, if you want have more knowledge just go with schooling books but if you want really feel happy read one having theme for entertaining like comic or novel. Typically the Leo Strauss on Moses Mendelssohn is kind of reserve which is giving the reader erratic experience.

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