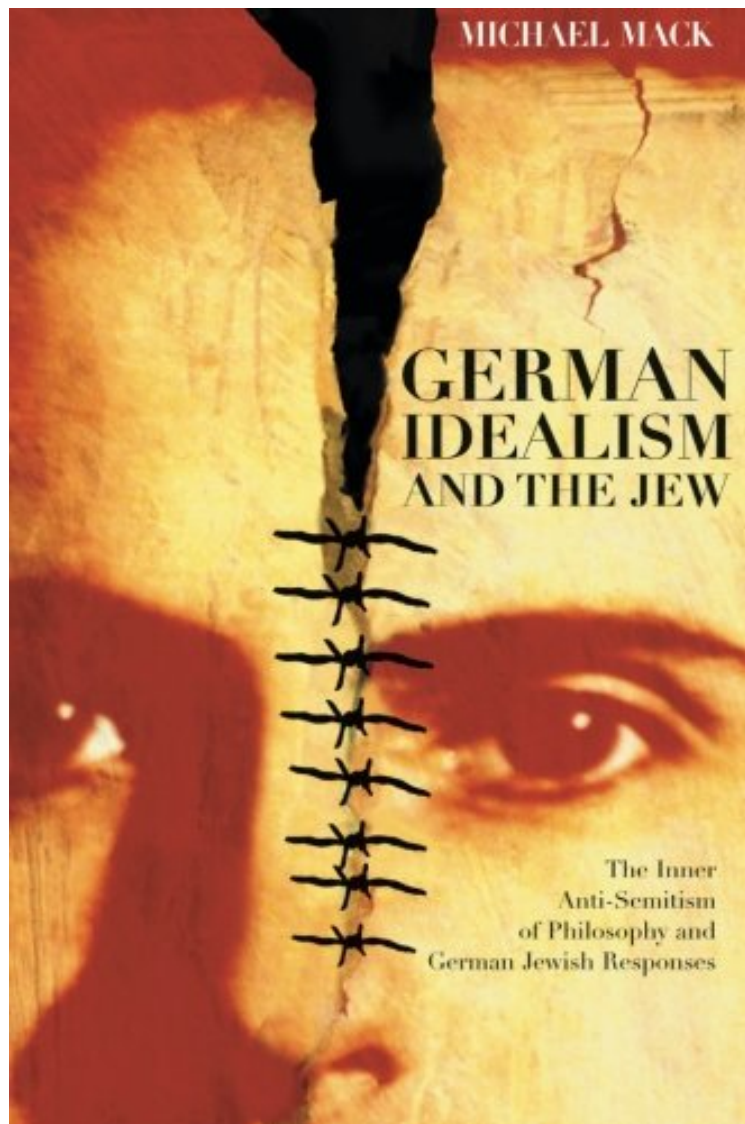


(Free pdf) German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses

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Michael Mack

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#1836917 in Books Michael Mack 2013-10-17 2003-06-15 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.00 x .90 x 6.001, .75 #File Name: 0226500969237 pages German Idealism and the Jew The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses | File size: 69.Mb

Michael Mack : German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. solid, in part, though fundamentally flawedBy Michael BThree or three-and-a-half stars. When Mack keeps to the historical and empirical evidence, reviewing the more substantial evidence as applied to Kant, Hegel and Wagner, and in reviewing some of the German Jewish re-actions to German high idealism, his (Mack's) essay on the subject is well worth a considered review. However, in the book's introduction, most of which could have formed a conclusion, Mack strays a great deal from more responsible lines of inquiry and resulting conclusions. A brief glimpse of this is encapsulated in the contrast exhibited in the title vs. the subtitle of the volume - German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses. The volume does address problems within German idealism, but it does not address philosophy as a whole as the subtitle would imply. This juxtaposition might of course be dismissed as a minor editorial oversight, excepting there are passages, primarily within the extensive introduction, that do in fact (ambiguously) suggest philosophy as a whole is being indicted. When keeping to the evidence, the historical and empirical facts (e.g., Mack cites a note by J.G. Herder, after attending one of Kant's lectures, that unequivocally hi-lights an anti-Semitic prejudice on the part of Kant), Mack's review is substantial. However, his analysis and too many of his conclusions are too often less than responsibly guarded, are formulated in less tentative terms than they should be. The idealism/realism nexus and divide, the general dialectic between idealism and "realism," reflects a perennial and in fact an on-going set of philosophical and broader cultural and anthropological issues. Mack fails to place his criticism within that larger sphere and too often substitutes assertions and unguarded presumptions in places where more tentative and more circumspect philosophical delineations are needed. 33 of 39 people found the following review helpful. Attack on KantBy Barrett Pashak Mack's book struck me as a kind of sequel. A few years ago, I read Jonathan Israel's Radical Enlightenment, with its thrilling enthronement of Spinoza at the heart of the Enlightenment. I was disappointed when the book ended with Christian Wolff, that is, just before Kant, who I had hoped to see exposed as the ultimate anti-Spinoza. Well, Mack picks up where Israel left off, criticizing not only Kant's "one-sided reading of Spinoza," but identifying Kant as an anti-Semite and the intellectual father of the Holocaust. Mack's critique of Kant is well reasoned and indicative of a very sound knowledge of the Kantian conceptual universe. Mack makes good use of quotations in arguing his case, citing for example this horrifying example from Kant: "The euthanasia of Judaism is pure moral religion." Mack's charges against Kant alone makes his book not only worthwhile, but essential. While Mack devotes only the first chapter to Kant, he remains the primary figure throughout the book. The second chapter, on Hegel, serves to demonstrate how the worm had got into the bud, that is, how Kantian anti-Semitism came to infect the whole German idealist project. Anti-Semitism lies at the heart of Hegel's project in that he basically subscribes to Christian supercessionism. Mack then proceeds to Wagner and the rise of anti-Semitism in its full flowering: social, political, economic, artistic, and racial. These first three chapters describe the anti-Semitic core of German idealism. The rest of the book presents the responses of a selection of German Jews to this anti-Semitism. Mack starts with Mendelssohn, and then moves to Geiger, Heine, and Graetz. These latter struck back with "counter-histories" that overturned the conceptual framework into which idealism had cast Judaism. They proclaimed Judaism as a universal system that had effectively produced everything of value in Western culture, including Christianity. There was, inevitably, a backlash against these counter-histories, particularly where they "took issue with the most noteworthy exponents of German high culture." Mack describes how the renowned historian Treitschke led the way with a number of anti-Semitic articles which "contributed to making racism socially and intellectually acceptable in fin de sicle Germany." Thus anti-Semitism acquired an academic respectability, and "[t]he majority of professors, schoolteachers, and lawyers made anti-Semitism part of their professional calling." In the eyes of the anti-Semites, the essential dichotomy resolved itself as one between the idealist Germans and the materialist Jews. Mack next cites a number of other well-known German Jews, including Cohen, Rosenzweig, Freud and Benjamin. These individuals by and large developed their thought along mainly materialist lines. As Mack states in his concluding paragraph: "German Jewish writers indeed may have contributed to the diversity of materialist philosophy when they undermined the discriminatory dimension of high-status registers of ideation. In this way, German Jewish thought of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries anticipated a postmodern sensibility concerning issues of narrativity, bodiliness, and timeliness." Thus much of materialist philosophy can be seen as a corrective to the excesses to which idealism can give rise, including anti-Semitism. The danger with this strategy lies, however, in the temptation to abandon the ground of idealist philosophy to anti-Semitism and other distorted thinking.

In *German Idealism and the Jew*, Michael Mack uncovers the deep roots of anti-Semitism in the German philosophical tradition. While many have read German anti-Semitism as a reaction against Enlightenment philosophy, Mack instead contends that the redefinition of the Jews as irrational, oriental Others forms the very cornerstone of German idealism, including Kant's conception of universal reason. Offering the first analytical account of the connection between anti-Semitism and philosophy, Mack begins his exploration by showing how the fundamental thinkers in the German idealist tradition—Kant, Hegel, and, through them, Feuerbach and Wagner—argued that the human world should perform and enact the promises held out by a conception of an otherworldly heaven. But their respective philosophies all ran aground on the belief that the worldly proved incapable of transforming itself into this otherworldly ideal. To reconcile

this incommensurability, Mack argues, philosophers created a construction of Jews as symbolic of the "worldliness" that hindered the development of a body politic and that served as a foil to Kantian autonomy and rationality. In the second part, Mack examines how Moses Mendelssohn, Heinrich Heine, Franz Rosenzweig, and Freud, among others, grappled with being both German and Jewish. Each thinker accepted the philosophies of Kant and Hegel, in varying degrees, while simultaneously critiquing anti-Semitism in order to develop the modern Jewish notion of what it meant to be enlightened—a concept that differed substantially from that of Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, and Wagner. By speaking the unspoken in German philosophy, this book profoundly reshapes our understanding of it.

"Michael Mack's *German Idealism and the Jew* fills a grave void in philosophy's self-critical scholarship. Mack seeks to clarify how the German Idealist philosophical tradition directly served toward the burgeoning of a new, more dangerous anti-Semitism that, under the blank eye of 'civilized' nations and with the blessing of the Christian churches, resulted in the methodical slaughter of millions upon millions of European Jews. . . . *German Idealism and the Jew* is a work long overdue, of great importance to scholarly understandings of Nazi Germany and anti-Semitism and the larger problem of the functioning of the scapegoat mechanism in chaotic societies."