



On the Origins of Jewish Self-Hatred

Paul Reitter

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Today, the term "Jewish self-hatred" often denotes a treasonous brand of Jewish self-loathing, and is frequently used as a smear, such as when it is applied to politically moderate Jews who are critical of Israel. *In On the Origins of Jewish Self-Hatred*, Paul Reitter demonstrates that the concept of Jewish self-hatred once had decidedly positive connotations. He traces the genesis of the term to Anton Kuh, a Viennese-Jewish journalist who coined it in the aftermath of World War I, and shows how the German-Jewish philosopher Theodor Lessing came, in 1930, to write a book that popularized "Jewish self-hatred." Reitter contends that, as Kuh and Lessing used it, the concept of Jewish self-hatred described a complex and possibly redemptive way of being Jewish. Paradoxically, Jews could show the world how to get past the blight of self-hatred only by embracing their own, singularly advanced self-critical tendencies--their "Jewish self-hatred."

Provocative and elegantly argued, *On the Origins of Jewish Self-Hatred* challenges widely held notions about the history and meaning of this idea, and explains why its history is so badly misrepresented today.

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