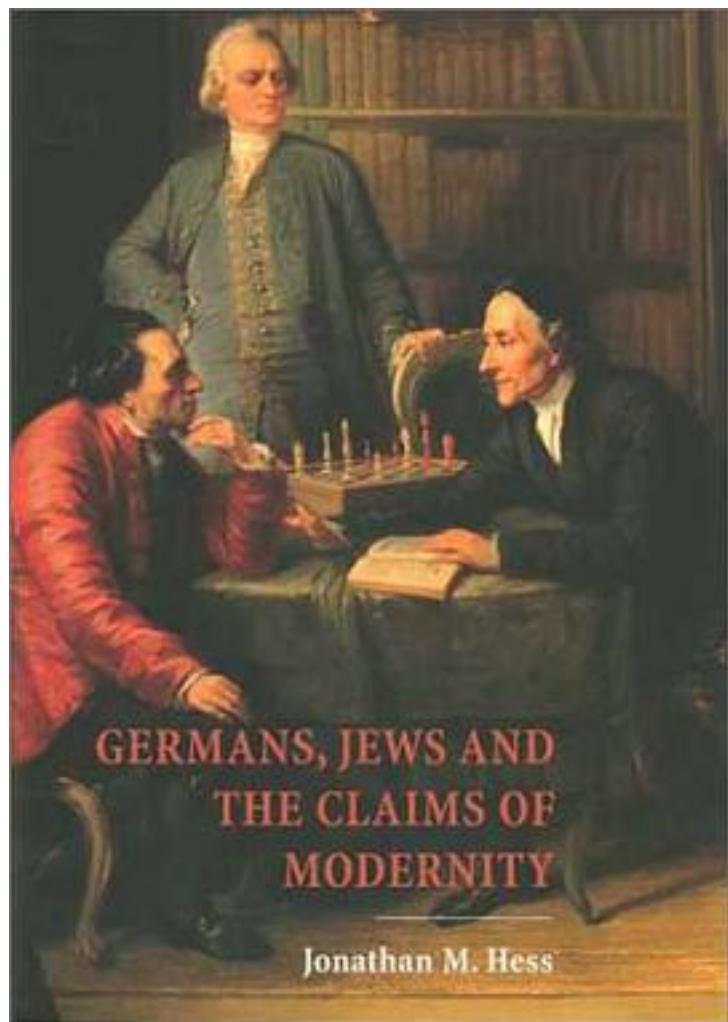


Germans, Jews, and the Claims of Modernity



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著者:Professor Jonathan M. Hess

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In the analysis of the debates in Germany over Jews, Judaism and Jewish

emancipation in the late 18th and 19th centuries, Jonathan M. Hess reconstructs a crucial chapter in the history of secular anti-Semitism. He examines not only the thinking of German intellectuals of the time but also that of Jewish writers, revealing the connections between anti-Semitism and visions of modernity, and the Jewish responses to the treat posed by these connections. By tracking the evolution of the widespread debates between Germans and Jews, Hess uncovers the process by which Judaism came to play a central role in defining secular universalism and political modernisation. For many German intellectuals concerned with imagining a new political order in the era of French Revolution, Judaism was often perceived as the symbolic antithesis of secular modernity. The response of leading Jewish thinkers was to offer their own reflections on modernity and universalism, grounded in Judaism's normative tradition. Hess considers the work of major figures of the period, such as Moses Mendelssohn, Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Schleiermacher, whose debates about the shape of the modern world provide us with fresh insights into Jewish emancipation, German colonial discourse, and the intersections between religious and political reform.

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