Book Proposal

**Critiques of Theology**

German-Jewish Intellectuals and the Religious Sources of Secular Thought

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**Brief Abstract**

*Critiques of Theology* presents a fresh perspective on the relation of critique to theology in previously less discussed writings of four giants of twentieth-century German-Jewish thought – Sigmund Freud, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and Hannah Arendt. Rather than pointing to the separation between modern forms of critical investigation and religious traditions, the book demonstrates how these thinkers’ critical stance concurrently emerges out of theological traditions and can in many ways be traced back to them. Our view of critical thinking is then reversed: Contrary to the common view, critical thinking does not signify in the writings of these prominent scholars a secular separation from religion and theology but their reiteration. Moreover, and however counterintuitive it might seem, I argue that religious modes of critique power critique’s secular distancing from religion. A form of immanent critique, critical thinking does not come from the outside of religion to build a new world of ideas, but redeploy those already present within its theological constellations.