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Transparency In Postwar France: A Critical History Of The Present (Cultural Memory In The Present)



Synopsis

This book returns to a time and place when the concept of transparency was met with deep suspicion. It offers a panorama of postwar French thought where attempts to show the perils of transparency in politics, ethics, and knowledge led to major conceptual inventions, many of which we now take for granted. Between 1945 and 1985, academics, artists, revolutionaries, and state functionaries spoke of transparency in pejorative terms. Associating it with the prying eyes of totalitarian governments, they undertook a critical project against it—in education, policing, social psychology, economic policy, and the management of information. Focusing on Sartre, Lacan, Canguilhem, Lévi-Strauss, Leroi-Gourhan, Foucault, Derrida, and others, *Transparency in Postwar France* explores the work of ethicists, who proposed that individuals are transparent neither to each other nor to themselves, and philosophers, who clamored for new epistemological foundations. These decades saw the emergence of the colonial and phenomenological "other," the transformation of ideas of normality, and the effort to overcome Enlightenment-era humanisms and violence in the name of freedom. These thinkers' innovations remain centerpieces for any resistance to contemporary illusions that tolerate or enable power and social coercion.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Essential for understanding the problems we face in the digital age with regard to new forms of exposure, Geroulanos's masterful account of postwar thought inaugurates a new style of semiotic history and provides a necessary propaedeutic to a revaluation of our current ideals of transparency

and openness." (Bernard Harcourt Columbia University)"This expansive and original book sheds important new light on the thought of the trente glorieuses as profoundly preoccupied with opacity and otherness. Geroulanos communicates the deep ethical and political commitments that motivated these philosophical and social investigations, underscoring why the French thought that emerged in this period still matters." (Judith Surkis Rutgers University)"With elegance and rigor, Geroulanos traces the evolution of the concept of transparency in postwar France in fields ranging from philosophy and film to psychoanalysis, medicine, and social history. Interweaving original archival research with careful close readings, this extremely impressive semiotic history challenges us to think about texts, their contexts, and our present in fascinating new ways." (Camille Robcis Cornell University)

Stefanos Geroulanos is Associate Professor of European History and Director of the Center for International Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences at New York University. He is the author of *An Atheism that Is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought* (Stanford, 2010).

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