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Sade My Neighbor (Studies In Phenomenology And Existential Philosophy)



Synopsis

Enlightenment ideals of a society rooted in liberationist reason and morality were trampled in the wake of the savagery of the Second World War. That era's union of cold technology and ancient hatreds gave rise to a dark, alternative reason--an ethic that was value-free and indifferent with regard to virtue and vice, freedom, and slavery. In a world where "the unthinkable" had become reality, it is small wonder that theorists would turn to the writings of a man whose eighteenth-century imagination preceded twentieth-century history in its unbridled exploration of viciousness, perversion, and monstrosity: the Marquis de Sade. Klossowski was one of the first philosophers in postwar Europe to ask whether Sade's reason, although aberrant and perverted to evil passions, could be taken seriously. Klossowski's seminal work inspired virtually all subsequent study of Sadean thought, including that of de Beauvoir, Deleuze, Derrida, Bataille, Blanchot, Paulhan, and Lacan.

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Customer Reviews

This translation of "Sade mon prochain" collects two essays by Klossowski, brother of Balthus, and a painter- philosopher- translator-critic who lived quite a checkered life from 1905 through the end of the century. The first, "The Philosopher-Villain," (1947) attempts to explain his concepts of integral monstrosity and a negative anti-theology testing if supreme evil could indeed triumph, as Sade may have imagined and the Holocaust (the author was from a partially Jewish background, and married

a concentration camp survivor) may have verified. It's a very dense treatise, despite the attempts of its translator, Alphonso Lingis (sounds like a Sade character himself!). The essay, like this short book, goes on about twice the length it needed to, and the point of perversion needing the normative to forever react against it, to transgress the moral standard, to overcome the natural order, is a sensible reading of Sade, although little of the original author remains cited or analyzed in depth. The next essay from 1967, "Sade my Neighbor," reads easier, if only by comparison. The style is less turgid, and the argument clearer. It efficiently compares Sade's thought with the French revolution, and then outlines his system, and looks deeper into its purportedly atheist tenets. One of the most intriguing points is buried near the end, when Klossowski wonders if our being is our ultimate prison, where "duration in the unendurable length and emptiness of time is an experience of being chained to one's condition. Beyond the wall, there is the freedom of nonbeing, the freedom of God, who is accused of incarcerating his creatures in the prison of being." (99) But such passages are rare by their pithy clarity.

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