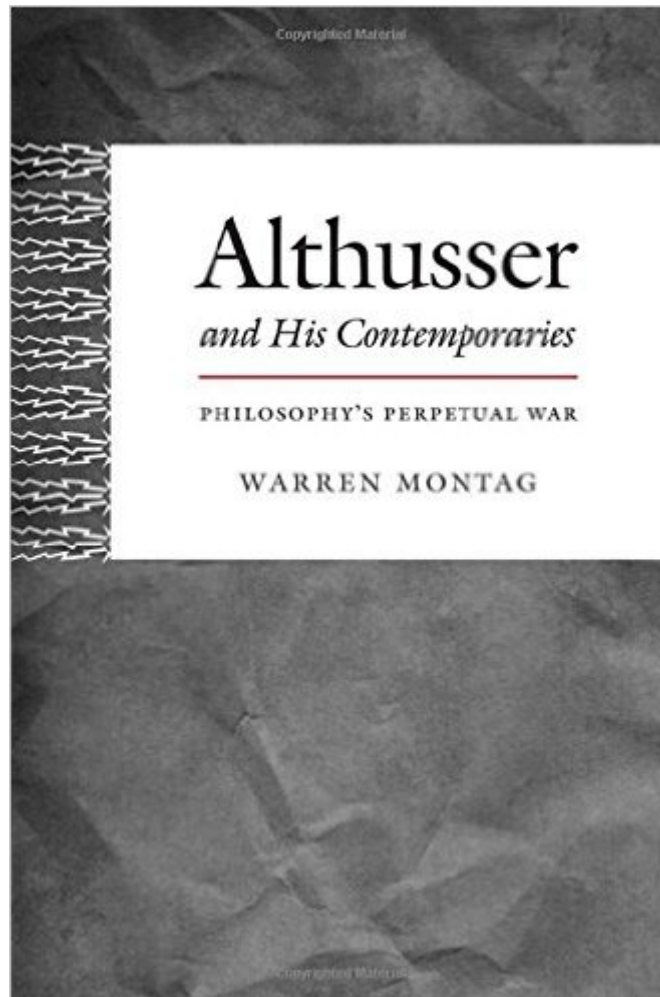


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Althusser And His Contemporaries: Philosophy's Perpetual War (Post-Contemporary Interventions)



Synopsis

Althusser and His Contemporaries alters and expands understanding of Louis Althusser and French philosophy of the 1960s and 1970s. Thousands of pages of previously unpublished work from different periods of Althusser's career have been made available in French since his death in 1990. Based on meticulous study of the philosopher's posthumous publications, as well as his unpublished manuscripts, lecture notes, letters, and marginalia, Warren Montag provides a thoroughgoing reevaluation of Althusser's philosophical project. Montag shows that the theorist was intensely engaged with the work of his contemporaries, particularly Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, and Lacan. Examining Althusser's philosophy as a series of encounters with his peers' thought, Montag contends that Althusser's major philosophical confrontations revolved around three themes: structure, subject, and beginnings and endings. Reading Althusser reading his contemporaries, Montag sheds new light on structuralism, poststructuralism, and the extraordinary moment of French thought in the 1960s and 1970s.

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Customer Reviews

The low rating is for the subject of the book not the author's efforts to make nonsense intelligible. 20th century French philosophers after BEING AND NOTHINGNESS would be a pack of barking dogs except for their pernicious influence on literary studies. To think that Barthes, Derrida and their ilk are now more important to Anglo-American lit professors than Trilling and Leavis (the

latter not exemplary but at least more worth reading than the French) demonstrates that it's closing time in the gardens of the West. Similarly, Althusser interpreting Marx is a travesty of thought. It was bad enough when Sartre, a brilliant traditional philosopher and outstanding novelist and short story writer, turned to crotchety lucubrations about "socialist ontology" (or whatever label you prefer). Sartre claimed existentialism led inevitably to the class struggle, but the biographical evidence shows clearly that when he wrote NAUSEA and BEING AND NOTHINGNESS, Sartre was almost apolitical, probably best characterized as an anarchist. When he became an apologist for Stalin (and even more disgustingly the Munich Olympics murderers) Sartre revealed how little he understood his cathedral-sized guilt complex. Althusser was revealed convincingly as a faker by E.P. Thompson (in THE POVERTY OF THEORY), but since Thompson himself never understood reality, it was a case of a jack trumping a knave. All the "reinterpretations" of Marx by French thinkers claim to be exegesis, but insofar as I can tell, they're all eisegeses--that is, "truths" are found in Marx that he would have rejected without reservation. Similarly, does anyone think Freud would have considered Lacan's esoteric interpretation of psychoanalysis an advance on his theory?

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