



The Practices of the Enlightenment: Aesthetics, Authorship, and the Public (Columbia Themes in Philosophy, Social Criticism, and the Arts)

Dorothea E. von Mücke

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Rethinking the relationship between eighteenth-century pietistic traditions and Enlightenment thought and practice, *The Practices of Enlightenment* unravels the complex and often neglected religious origins of modern secular discourse. Mapping surprising routes of exchange between the religious and aesthetic writings of the period and recentering concerns of authorship and audience, this book revitalizes scholarship on the Enlightenment.

The study engages with three critical categories: aesthetics, authorship, and the public sphere, tracing the relationship between religious and aesthetic modes of reflective contemplation, autobiography and the hermeneutics of the self, and the discursive creation of the public sphere. Focusing largely on German intellectual life, this critical engagement also extends to France through Rousseau and to England through Shaftesbury. Rereading canonical works and lesser-known texts by Goethe, Lessing, and Herder, the book challenges common narratives recounting the rise of empiricist philosophy, the idea of the "sensible" individual, and the notion of the modern author as celebrity, bringing new perspective to the Enlightenment concepts of instinct, drive, genius, and the public sphere.

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