

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT FLAP)

gions shaped the concept of a single omnipotent God, one removed from the world and yet potentially knowable through prayer and reflection, human beings became increasingly free. Gauchet's paradoxical argument is that the development of human political and psychological autonomy must be understood against the backdrop of this double movement in religious consciousness—the growth of divine power and its increasing distance from human activity.

In a fitting tribute to this passionate and brilliantly argued book, Charles Taylor offers an equally provocative foreword. Offering interpretations of key concepts proposed by Gauchet, Taylor also explores an important question: Does religion have a place in the future of Western society? The book does not close the door on religion but rather invites us to explore its socially constructive powers, which continue to shape Western politics and conceptions of the state.

Marcel Gauchet is Professor at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. He is the editor of *Le Débat*, France's most influential intellectual journal, and the author of numerous books. This current book was originally published in France as *Le Désenchantement du monde*.

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