



Philippe Aries and the Politics of French Cultural History (Critical Perspectives on Modern Culture)

Patrick H. Hutton

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The author of *Centuries of Childhood* and other landmark historical works, Philippe Ariès (1914–1984) was a singular figure in French intellectual life. He was both a political reactionary and a path-breaking scholar, a sectarian royalist who supported the Vichy regime and a founder of the new cultural history?popularly known as *l'histoire des mentalités*?that developed in the decades following World War II. In this book, Patrick H. Hutton explores the relationship between Ariès's life and thought and evaluates his contribution to modern historiography, in France and abroad.

According to Hutton, the originality of Ariès's work and the power of his appeal derived from the way he drew together the two strands of his own intellectual life: his enduring ties to the old cultural order valued by the right-wing *Action Française*, and a newfound appreciation for the methodology of the leftist Annales school of historians. A demographer by training, he pioneered a new route into the history of private life that eventually won him a wide readership and in late life an appointment to the faculty of the prestigious École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. At the same time, he fashioned himself as a man of letters in the intellectual tradition of the *Action Française* and became a perspicacious journalist as well as a stimulating writer of autobiographical memoirs. In Hutton's view, this helps explain why, more than any other historian, Philippe Ariès left his personal signature on his scholarship.

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