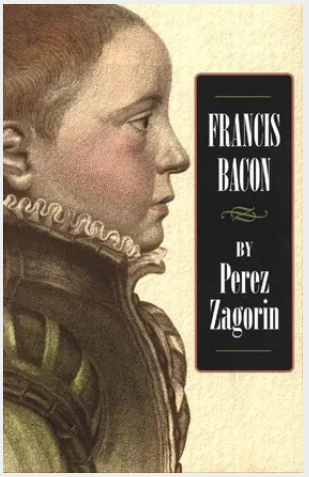
Zagorin

Francis Bacon



Francis Bacon (1561-1626), commonly regarded as one of the founders of the Scientific Revolution, exerted a powerful influence on the intellectual development of the modern world. He also led a remarkably varied and dramatic life as a philosopher, writer, lawyer, courtier, and statesman. Although there has been much recent scholarship on individual aspects of Bacon's career, Perez Zagorin's is the first work in many years to present a comprehensive account of the entire sweep of his thought and its enduring influence. Combining keen scholarly and psychological insights, Zagorin reveals Bacon as a man of genius, deep paradoxes, and pronounced flaws.The book begins by sketching Bacon's complex personality and troubled public career. Zagorin shows that, despite his idealistic philosophy and rare intellectual gifts, Bacon's political life was marked by continual careerism in his efforts to achieve advancement. He follows Bacon's rise at court and describes his removal from his office as England's highest judge for taking bribes. Zagorin then examines Bacon's philosophy and theory of science in connection with his project for the promotion of scientific progress, which he called "The Great Instauration." He shows how Bacon's critical empiricism and attempt to develop a new method of discovery made a seminal contribution to the growth of science. He demonstrates Bacon's historic importance as a prophetic thinker, who, at the edge of the modern era, predicted that science would be used to prolong life, cure diseases, invent new materials, and create new weapons of destruction. Finally, the book examines Bacon's writings on such subjects as morals, politics, language, rhetoric, law, and history. Zagorin shows that Bacon was one of the great legal theorists of his day, an influential philosopher of language, and a penetrating historian.Clearly and beautifully written, the book brings out the richness, scope, and greatness of Bacon's work and draws together the many, colorful threads of an extraordinarily brilliant and many-sided mind.

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44,30 €
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Lieferfrist: bis zu 10 Tage

Artikelnummer: 9780691009667
Medium: Buch
ISBN: 978-0-691-00966-7
Verlag: Princeton University Press
Erscheinungstermin: 05.12.1999
Sprache(n): Englisch
Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 1999
Produktform: Kartoniert
Gewicht: 483 g
Seiten: 312
Format (B x H): 156 x 234 mm

Kundenservice Verlag Dr. Otto Schmidt KG
Neumannstraße 10, 40235 Düsseldorf | kundenservice@otto-schmidt.de | 0221-93738-997 (Inland)