



Simone Weil (Reaktion Books - Critical Lives)

Palle Yourgrau

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Simone Weil, legendary French philosopher, political activist, and mystic, died in 1943 at a sanatorium in Kent, England, at the age of thirty-four. During her brief lifetime, Weil was a paradox of asceticism and reclusive introversion who also maintained a teaching career and an active participation in politics.

In this concise biography, Palle Yourgrau outlines Weil's influential life and work and demonstrates how she tried to apply philosophy to everyday life. Born in Paris to a cultivated Jewish-French family, Weil excelled at philosophy, and her empathetic political conscience channeled itself into political engagement and activism on behalf of the working class. Yourgrau assesses Weil's controversial critique of Judaism as well as her radical re-imagining of Christianity—following a powerful religious experience in 1937—in light of Plato's philosophy as a bridge between human suffering and divine perfection.

In *Simone Weil*, Yourgrau provides careful, concise readings of Weil's work while exploring how Weil has come to be seen as both a modern saint and a *bête noir*, a Jew accused of having abandoned her own people in their hour of greatest need.

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