

Ramsay MacMullen

**Why Do We Do What We Do? Motivation in History and the Social Sciences**



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Motivation in History and the Social Sciences

Managing Editor: Anna Michalska

Published by De Gruyter Open Ltd, Warsaw/Berlin  
Part of Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Munich/Boston



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ISBN: 978-3-11-041758-6

e-ISBN: 978-3-11-041759-3

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek. The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

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[www.degruyteropen.com](http://www.degruyteropen.com)

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*Ramsay MacMullen writes with courage, authority and effect. Few have had the nerve to ask the large question, few could have approached it with the breadth of a distinguished historian who has reflected at length on the social sciences, few can write with his openness and independence of mind, and few have arrived at such an interesting answer. It does MacMullen scant justice to say that he connects what people think with what they feel; relates each to the irreducibly social nature of their lives, and with telling examples, suggests how the cultures created by these facts serve also to frame and direct what they do. All who have thought about his question will be in turn informed, assured, and provoked and those who have not before done so could not have a better guide.*

**Geoffrey Hawthorn**, Professor of International Politics and Social and Political Theory at Cambridge, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences; ex-Syndic of Cambridge University Press and fellow of Clare College, author most recently of *Thucydides on Politics*.

*A wonderful, readable panorama of psychological, materialist, and culturalist theories from a tested master in the History of Antiquity, who has read far and wide well beyond the Ancient World, and always proven himself an original thinker. MacMullen's question is, what motivates various humans to act as they do? He discusses and evaluates the answers given by disciplines neighboring that of History, with constant attention, though, to the different agendas of these disciplines, and therefore, to the contours and limits of what they can provide to historians.*

**Philippe Buc**, Professor, University of Vienna, Institute for History, author most recently of *Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory*.

*When we read history or social science, we want to know why people, and peoples, acted in the way they did. Why did they start a war, why did they move to a new land, why did they choose to fight a state of oppression? These are fascinating questions, and they are not always asked. In this book, Ramsey MacMullen tackles them head on.*

**Keith Oatley**, Professor, University of Toronto, Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology, author most recently of *Emotions. A Brief History*.