



# Louis XIV

*Anthony Levi*

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## **Louis XIV** Anthony Levi

A nation exceedingly rich and extraordinarily powerful, its arts unparalleled in elegance and excellence, France in the seventeenth century mirrored the monarch who ruled it: Louis XIV, heritor not only to the throne of his country but also, supposedly, to the powers of the mythological sun god Apollo. Known as le roi soleil—the sun king—and vested with unprecedented power and privilege, for fifty years Louis epitomized the glory that was France. On the dark underside of the monarchy's grand, gilded looking glass, however, lurked peasant starvation, financial bankruptcy, military defeat, and the deaths of thousands—all of which would plague the conscience of the king. It is in the struggle of the lofty sun king, who at least half-believed in his quasi divinity, to reconcile his extravagant persona with the shortcomings, flaws, miscalculations, and failures of an ordinary mortal that the fascination of this new, intricate, and controversial illustrated biography lies. Indeed, at the heart of Anthony Levi's probing study brews the conflict between Louis XIV's regal infallibility and his human, often tragic and far-reaching errors. Out of it emerges a complex personal portrait of one of the most politically effective monarchs ever to reign in Europe.

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