In the 1980s, this book contends, an uncritical affirmation of anti-essentialism turned this important feminist critique into a disciplinary dogmatism that constrained and homogenized feminist thinking. Feminist work in the academy became forgetful of both women and nature, and began to exchange an engaged politics for the intensity of sublime experience in its postmodern form. This book works between the modern and postmodern notions of the sublime to show that the gendered politics and effacement of nature, central to the modern sublime, especially in Kant's account, are at the heart of the postmodern sublime as well. It turns to Lyotard's postmodern sublime to argue that this sublime is hard at work in feminist poststructuralism, especially the early texts of Judith Butler. The melting away of the extra-discursively real in these accounts tends to make feminist thinking incapable of meaningfully articulating our relations to the natural world and to one another. Yet these very relations are necessarily tied to powerful aesthetic experiences of beauty and sublimity.
formulation as the most theoretically central and promising principle of Kant’s ethics. Nevertheless, despite the intuitive appeal and the increasingly recognized philosophical importance of the humanity formulation, it has received less attention than many other, less central, aspects of Kant’s ethics. This book is the most sustained and systematic examination yet of the humanity formulation. It argues that the ‘rational nature’ that must be treated as an end in itself is not a minimally rational nature consisting of the power to set ends or the unrealized capacity to act morally, but instead is the more properly rational nature possessed by someone who gives priority to moral principles over any contrary impulses. In other words, good will is the end in itself. This non-standard reading of the humanity formulation provides a firm theoretical foundation for deriving plausible approaches to particular moral issues. Contrary to first impressions, it does not impose moralistic demands to pass judgment on others’ character. This reading of the humanity formulation also enables progress on problems of interest to Kant scholars such as reconstructing Kant’s argument for accepting the humanity formulation as a basic moral principle, and allows for increased understanding of the relationship between Kant’s ethics and supposedly Kantian ideas such as ‘respect for autonomy’.

Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard

Michelle Kosch

Published in print: 2006 Published Online: September 2006
Item type: book

This book traces a complex of issues surrounding moral agency from Kant through Schelling to Kierkegaard. There are two complementary projects. The first is to clarify the contours of German idealism as a philosophical movement by examining the motivations not only of its beginning, but also of its end. In tracing the motivations for the transition to mid-19th century post-idealism to Schelling’s middle and late periods and, ultimately, back to a problem originally presented in Kant, it shows the causes of the demise of that movement to be the same as the causes of its rise. In the process, it presents the most detailed discussion to date of the moral psychology and moral epistemology of Schelling’s work after 1809. The second project — which is simply the first viewed from a different angle — is to trace the sources of Kierkegaard’s theory of agency and his criticism of philosophical ethics to this same complex of issues in Kant and post-Kantian idealism. In the process, it is argued that Schelling’s influence on Kierkegaard was greater than has been thought, and builds a new understanding of Kierkegaard’s project in
his pseudonymous works on the basis of this revised picture of their historical background.

**Welfare in the Kantian State**

Alexander Kaufman

Published in print: 1999 Published Online: November 2003


Item type: book

Kant's theory of justice continues to exert a powerful influence on contemporary discussions of justice and equality. Modern theorists disagree, however, regarding the implications of Kant's theory for the state's responsibility for public welfare. A traditional interpretation holds that Kant's political theory simply involves an investigation of the constraints that reason places on the state's authority to regulate external action. This ‘standard interpretation’ of Kant's thought has remained influential, and has grounded a reinterpretation of the classic liberal state by theorists such as Humboldt and Hayek. Kaufman argues that the standard interpretation neither succeeds as a faithful reading of Kant's texts nor as a plausible, philosophically sound reconstruction of a ‘Kantian’ political theory. Rather, Kaufman argues, Kant's political theory articulates a positive conception of the state's role. In particular, Kantian justice requires that each member of society must be guaranteed the opportunity to realize his or her purposive capacities. In order to secure this guarantee, Kantian justice requires interventions to secure equality of capabilities.

**Hegel and the Transformation of Philosophical Critique**

William F. Bristow

Published in print: 2007 Published Online: May 2007


Item type: book

This book presents a study of Hegel's hugely influential but notoriously difficult Phenomenology of Spirit. Hegel describes the method of this work as a ‘way of despair’, meaning that the reader who undertakes its inquiry must be open to the experience of self-loss through it. Whereas the existential dimension of Hegel's work has often been either ignored or regarded as romantic ornamentation, this book argues that it belongs centrally to Hegel's attempt to fulfil a demanding epistemological ambition. With his Critique of Pure Reason, Kant expressed a new epistemological demand with respect to rational knowledge and presented a new method for meeting this demand.
This book reconstructs Hegel's objection to Kant's Critical Philosophy, according to which Kant's way of meeting the epistemological demand of philosophical critique presupposes subjectivism, that is, presupposes the restriction of our knowledge to things as they are merely for us. Whereas Hegel in his early Jena writings rejects Kant's critical project altogether on this basis, he comes to see that the epistemological demand expressed in Kant's project must be met. This book argues that Hegel's method in the Phenomenology of Spirit takes shape as his attempt to meet the epistemological demand of Kantian critique without presupposing subjectivism. The key to Hegel's transformation of Kant's critical procedure, by virtue of which subjectivism is to be avoided, is precisely the existential or self-transformational dimension of Hegel's criticism, the openness of the criticizing subject to being transformed through the epistemological procedure.

Reason's Nearest Kin
Michael Potter

Published in print: 2002 Published Online: May 2007  
Publisher: Oxford University Press  
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199252619.001.0001  
Item type: book

This book is a critical examination of the astonishing progress made in the philosophical study of the properties of the natural numbers from the 1880s to the 1930s. It reassesses the brilliant innovations of Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, and others, which transformed philosophy as well as the understanding of mathematics. The book argues that through the problem of arithmetic participates in the larger puzzle of the relationship between thought, language, experience, and the world, we can distinguish accounts that look to each of these to supply the content we require: those that involve the structure of our experience of the world; those that explicitly involve our grasp of a ‘third realm’ of abstract objects distinct from the concrete objects of the empirical world and the ideas of the author's private Gedankenwelt; those that appeal to something non-physical that is nevertheless an aspect of reality in harmony with which the physical aspect of the world is configured; and finally those that involve only our grasp of language.

Dialetheism
Graham Priest

in In Contradiction

Published in print: 2006 Published Online: May 2007  
Publisher: Oxford University Press
This chapter focuses on the aim of this book, namely, to argue for the existence of dialetheias, and to discuss their logic, epistemology, and some issues in their metaphysics. It provides an introduction to dialetheism, via a brief discussion of Kant and Hegel.

Latin Poetry and the Judgement of Taste

Charles Martindale

The aim of this book is to encourage an interest in the tradition of modern Western aesthetics as it applies to poetry and the arts. It argues that the study of literature today is unduly dominated by ideology critique, and that there is a need for a new recognition of the importance of beauty and the aesthetic in our response to the arts. It explores ways in which Kant’s aesthetic theory, as set out in the Critique of Judgement, still provides powerful tools of analysis for the modern critic. For example, the Kantian aesthetic — the free judgement of taste — carries a rebuke to the means/end rationality that is so widespread and so dangerous in the contemporary West. It shows that the Kantian ‘judgement of taste’ is a judgement of form and content together, and is thus not a version of formalism. It explores the relationship between politics and aesthetics in the responses to the arts, arguing that aesthetic judgements are not simply disguised judgements of other kinds. Finally, it urges on those writing about literature the value of aesthetic criticism — the attempt to isolate the unique aesthetic quality of artworks — as pioneered by Walter Pater, offering three essays on Latin poets as examples of what might be done.

Diotima's Children

Frederick C. Beiser

This book is a re-examination of the rationalist tradition of aesthetics which prevailed in Germany in the late 17th and 18th century. It is partly an historical survey of the central figures and themes of this tradition, but it is also a philosophical defence of some of its leading ideas such
as: that beauty plays an integral role in life; that aesthetic pleasure is the perception of perfection; and that aesthetic rules are inevitable and valuable. It shows that the criticisms of Kant and Nietzsche of this tradition are largely unfounded. The rationalist tradition deserves re-examination because it is of great historical significance, marking the beginning of modern aesthetics, art criticism, and art history.

Kant's Arguments for His Formula of Universal Law
Derek Parfit
in The Egalitarian Conscience: Essays in Honour of G. A. Cohen
Published in print: 2006 Published Online: May 2006
Item type: chapter

This essay considers the structure of the argument for duty in the Kantian context, in which it was most influentially formed. Kant notoriously argues that the supreme principle of morality must be purely formal, by which he means that it does not direct us to act in order to achieve certain ends. Thus, any principle directed to the realization of certain ends must be merely hypothetical in character, and its motivational grounds subjective. It is shown that Kant overlooks a third possibility, namely, that there can be substantive categorical principles that objectively require us to realize certain ends regardless of our inclinations.

Consequences of Compassion
Charles Goodman
Published in print: 2009 Published Online: May 2009
Item type: book

Buddhist ethical views have much in common with certain modern ethical theories, and contain many insights relevant to contemporary moral problems. This book examines the theoretical structure of the normative views found in a number of Indian and Tibetan Buddhist texts. Teachings from all three major traditions of Buddhism, the Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna, are considered. Although Buddhist philosophy is quite diverse, and these traditions differ in their ethical perspectives, they can all be understood as versions of a general moral outlook known as welfarist consequentialism. Buddhist versions of consequentialism regard virtue as an intrinsic component of the good life. They range from the cautious indirect approach of the Theravāda, which focuses
on following rules that lead to the welfare of many, to the bold and often shocking direct approach of the Vajrayāna. Buddhists can respond convincingly to certain often-discussed criticisms of consequentialism, including several powerful arguments due to Kant. Buddhist texts offer an interesting approach to the problem of the demands of morality. These texts also contain a powerful critique of what we would identify as the concept of free will, a critique which leads to a hard determinist view of human action. This view supports Buddhist values of compassion, nonviolence and forgiveness, and leads to a more humane approach to the justification of punishment.

Coleridge and Scepticism

Ben Brice

Published in print: 2007 Published Online: January 2008
Item type: book

Coleridge tended to view objects in the natural world as if they were capable of articulating truths about his own poetic psyche. He also regarded such objects as if they were capable of illustrating and embodying truths about a transcendent spiritual realm. After 1805, he posited a series of analogical ‘likenesses’ connecting the rational principles that inform human cognition with the rational principles that he believed informed the teleological structure of the natural world. Although he intuitively felt that nature had been constructed as a ‘mirror’ of the human mind, and that both mind and nature were ‘mirrors’ of a transcendent spiritual realm, he never found an explanation of such experiences that was fully immune to his own sceptical doubts. This book examines the nature of these doubts, and offers a new explanatory account of why Coleridge was unable to affirm his religious intuitions. The book situates his work within two important intellectual traditions. The first — a tradition of epistemological ‘piety’ or ‘modesty’ — informs the work of key precursors such as Kant, Hume, Locke, Boyle, and Calvin, and relates to Protestant critiques of natural reason. The second — a tradition of theological voluntarism — emphasizes the omnipotence and transcendence of God, as well as the arbitrary relationship subsisting between God and the created world. It is argued that Coleridge's familiarity with both of these interrelated intellectual traditions undermined his confidence in his ability to read the symbolic language of God in nature.
This book discusses various epistemic aspects of what it is to be a person. Persons are defined as finite beings that have beliefs, including second-order beliefs about their own and others' beliefs, and engage in agency, including the making of long-term plans. It is argued that for any being meeting these conditions, a number of epistemic consequences obtain. First, all such beings must have certain logical concepts and be able to use them in certain ways. Secondly, there are at least two principles governing belief that it is rational for persons to satisfy and are such that nothing can be a person at all unless it satisfies them to a large extent. These principles are that one believe the conjunction of one's beliefs and that one treat one's future beliefs as, by and large, better than one's current beliefs. Thirdly, persons both occupy epistemic points of view on the world and show up within those views. This makes it impossible for them to be completely objective about their own beliefs. This ‘aspectual dualism’ is characteristic of treatments of persons in the Kantian tradition. In sum, these epistemic consequences add up to a fairly traditional view of the nature of persons, one in opposition to much recent theorizing.

Hegel's Critique of Kant

Sally Sedgwick

This is a study of Hegel’s critique of Kant’s theoretical philosophy. Its main purpose is to defend the thesis that Hegel offers us a compelling critique of, and alternative to, the conception of cognition Kant argues for in his ‘Critical’ period. It examines key features of what Kant identifies as the ‘discursive’ character of our mode of cognition, and considers Hegel’s reasons for arguing that these features condemn Kant’s theoretical philosophy to skepticism as well as dualism. This study presents in a sympathetic light Hegel’s claim to derive from certain Kantian doctrines clues to a superior form of idealism, a form of idealism that better captures the nature of our cognitive powers and their relation to objects.
The chapters in the first part of this book explore Kant's conception of the systematicity of concepts and laws as the ultimate goals of natural science, explore the implications of Kant's account of our experience of organisms for the goal of a unified science, and examine Kant's attempt to prove the existence of an ether as the condition of the possibility of experience of the physical world. The second group of chapters explore Kant's conception of a systematic union of persons as ends in themselves and of their particular ends as the object of morality, and examine his conception of the systems of political and ethical duties necessary to achieve such an end. The third group of chapters examine Kant's attempt to unify the systems of nature and freedom through a radical transformation of traditional teleology.

Ethics and Qualities of Life
Joel J. Kupperman

This book looks at what enters into ethical judgment and choice. Interpretation of a case and of what the options are is always a factor, as is a sense of the possible values at stake. Intuitions also enter in, but often are unreliable. For a long time it seemed only fair that oldest sons inherited, and it struck few people as unfair that women were not allowed to attend universities. A moral judgment is putatively part of a moral order in a society that any reasonable person would accept. But what counts as “reasonable” is generally contestable. The unreliability of intuitions leads naturally to ethical theory. Kantian, contractualist, and consequentialist theories all have some important truth in them, but not the whole truth. Contractualism lacks the resources required for a fully determinate account of what counts as “reasonable.” Broad general rules are important to Kant and are at the center of everyday morality. But can Kantian ethics explain why they have to have this central role? Our evolving social contract now contains elements (e.g., the rejection of racism and sexism) that once would have seemed counter-intuitive to most people. But could consequentialists have predicted with entire confidence the consequences of social changes that we now think were
desirable? The last part of this book contains a double argument. One is that ethical theory is employed by humans in a state of semi-ignorance of relevant factors, grasping at likely truths and evolved intuitions. The other is that consequentialist considerations have a major role at the fundamental level, but much more in justification or criticism than in ethical discovery.

**Practical Reason in Law and Morality**

Neil MacCormick

Published in print: 2008 Published Online: May 2009

The concept of practical reason is central to contemporary thought on ethics and the philosophy of law — acting well means acting for good reasons. Explaining this requires several stages. How do reasons relate to actions at all, as incentives and in explanations? What are values, how do they relate to human nature, and how do they enter practical reasoning? How do the concepts of ‘right and wrong’ fit in, and in what way do they involve questions of mutual trust among human beings? How does our moral freedom — our freedom to form our own moral commitments — relate to our responsibilities to each other? How is this final question transposed into law and legal commitments? This book explores these questions, vital to understanding the nature of law and morality. It presents an account of practical reason. It also offers a reinterpretation of Kant's views on moral autonomy and Adam Smith's on self-command, marrying Smith's 'moral sentiments' to Kant's 'categorical imperative'.

**The Riddle of the World**

Barbara Hannan

Published in print: 2009 Published Online: May 2009

This book is an introduction to the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer. The peculiar inconsistencies and tensions in Schopenhauer's thought are emphasized. A main theme of the book is that Schopenhauer was torn between realism and anti-realism, and between denial and affirmation of the individual will. A useful summary of Schopenhauer's main ideas is provided. In addition, the book connects Schopenhauer's thought with ongoing debates in philosophy. The book argues that Schopenhauer was struggling half-consciously to break altogether with Kant and transcendental idealism and that the anti-Kantian...
features of Schopenhauer's thought possess the most lasting value. Schopenhauer's panpsychist metaphysics of will is defended, and compared favorably with contemporary views according to which causal power is metaphysically basic. Schopenhauer's ethics of compassion is also defended against Kant's ethics of pure reason. Friendly amendments are offered to Schopenhauer's theories of art, music, and “salvation.” The book illuminates the deep connection between Schopenhauer and the early Wittgenstein, as well as Schopenhauer's influence on existentialism and psychoanalytic thought.

The Beloved Self
Alison Hills

The Beloved Self is about the ‘holy grail’ of moral philosophy: an argument against Egoism, that we all have reasons to be moral. The first part of the book introduces three versions of Egoism, each paralleling a different moral theory, and sheds new light on the concept of self-interest in virtue ethics and especially in Kant's moral theory. Part Two looks at attempts to prove that Egoism is false, and shows that even modest arguments against Egoist appear to fail. Part Three discusses the relationship between knowledge and action and defends a new conception of moral epistemology, centred on the importance of moral understanding, which has wide-ranging implications regarding not only moral testimony and moral disagreement but also the nature of virtue and morally worthy action. This final part of the book culminates in a vindication of morality, an argument that it is not epistemically rational to believe the most plausible versions of Egoism.

Lying and Deception
Thomas L. Carson

This book addresses questions in ethical theory and practical questions about lying, deception, and information disclosure in public affairs, business and professional ethics, and personal relationships. Part I is a conceptual map for the rest of the book. It proposes an analysis of the concepts of lying and deception and related concepts such as withholding information, “keeping someone in the dark,” and “half-
truths.” Part II addresses questions in ethical theory. The book examines the implications of Kant's theory, act-utilitarianism, Ross's theory, and rule-consequentialism for moral questions about lying and deception. The book argues that Kant's absolutism about lying is untenable and that his moral theory doesn't commit him to being an absolutist. It also argues that the standard debates about lying and deception between act-utilitarians and their critics are inconclusive because they rest on appeals to disputed intuitions. The book defends a version of the golden rule and a theory of moral reasoning. The book's theory implies that there is a moral presumption against lying and deception that cause harm — a presumption that is at least as strong as that endorsed by act-utilitarianism. The book uses this theory to justify its claims about the issues it addresses in Part III: deception and withholding information in sales, deception in advertising, bluffing and deception in negotiations, the duty of professionals to inform their clients, lying and deception by leaders as a pretext for fighting wars (or avoiding wars), lying and deception about history (with special attention to the Holocaust), and cases of distorting the historical record by telling half truths. The book concludes with a qualified defense of the view that honesty is a virtue.