

Colin Robert Marshall
Curriculum Vitae

New York University
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Areas of Specialization: Kant, Early Modern Philosophy, Metaethics

Areas of Competence: Ethics, Ancient Philosophy

Dissertation: *Keeping Our Selves Together: Kant's Metaphysics of Selves and Objects*

Committee: Béatrice Longuenesse (chair), Don Garrett, J. David Velleman

Against the view that Kant sees a priori metaphysics as confined to the realm of appearances, I argue that the *Critique of Pure Reason* contains metaphysical theories of the self and objects that underlie appearances. I contend that Kant understands both selves and objects as constituted by mind-independent entities, but that these entities only come to constitute selves and objects in virtue of their relation to experiences.

Non-Dissertation Projects

My current work in early modern philosophy argues that Spinoza's account of the intellect's power over the passions is not the philosophical embarrassment some interpreters have taken it to be, but is instead an independently plausible view in moral psychology. My research in metaethics argues for a strong form of naturalist moral realism, based on the claim that certain empathetic experiences can be understood as perceptions of other creatures' conscious states.

Education

New York University
Ph.D. in Philosophy
2004–2010 (*expected*)

M.A. in Philosophy
January 2007

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Visiting Student, Institut für Philosophie
April–July 2009

Reed College
B.A. in Philosophy
1999–2003

Fellowships and Awards

Graduate Fellow, New York Institute of Philosophy, 2009-2010
Dean's Dissertation Fellowship, 2009-2010
Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD) Grant, for research in Germany, 2008
Fulbright Award (*declined in order to accept DAAD*), 2008
Outstanding Graduate Student Paper Prize, Pacific APA, March 2006
MacCracken Fellowship, NYU, 2004-2009
Edwin N. Garlan Prize in Philosophy, Reed College, 2003

Publications

"The Mind and the Body as 'One and the Same Thing' In Spinoza"
British Journal for the History of Philosophy (2009) 17:5, 897-919

Review of Michael N. Forster, *Kant and Skepticism*
Journal of the History of Philosophy (2009) 47:2, 319-320

Presentations

"Spinoza, Kant and the Moral Powers of Reason"
Washington DC Spinoza Society, Goethe Institute of Washington
Washington DC, October 2009

"Spinoza on the Power of Reason over the Passions"
Leibniz-Preis-Forschungsprojekt Colloquium, Humboldt Universität
Berlin, Germany, June 2009

"Kant on the Real Existence and Composition of Everyday Objects"
Goethe Universität
Frankfurt, Germany, June 2009

"The Metaphysics of the Self in Kant"
Humboldt Universität
Berlin, Germany, June 2009

"The Identity of the Self in Kant's Third Paralogism"
Workshop on Kant on the Identity of Persons, Amiens Université de Picardie
Amiens, France, May 2008

"A Kantian Account of Epistemic Normativity"
Seoul National University/NYU Micro-Conference, New York University
New York, NY, February 2007

"Two Arguments Against the Particular Content Reading of Malebranche's 'General Volitions'"
Pacific Meeting of the American Philosophical Association
Portland, OR, March 2006

Teaching

As Instructor, with responsibility for all aspects of the course

- Ethics, NYU, Summer 2008
- Life and Death, NYU, Summer 2007
- History of Modern Philosophy, NYU, Summer 2006

As Teaching Assistant, with responsibility for leading sections and grading

- Ethics, David Velleman, NYU, Fall 2007
- History of Modern Philosophy, Don Garrett, NYU, Spring 2007

As Teaching Assistant, with responsibility for grading:

- History of Ancient Philosophy, Matt Evans and Phillip Mitsis, NYU, Fall 2006
- History of Modern Philosophy, Wayne Waxman, NYU, Fall 2005

Graduate Courses Taken or Audited (*)

Proseminar, Harman and Street, Fall 2004

Seventeenth-Century Rationalism, Garrett, Fall 2004

Aristotle's Teleology*, Richardson, Fall 2004

Topics in Ethics, Parfit and Harman, Fall 2004 and Spring 2005

Descartes, Garber, (Princeton) Spring 2005

Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, Waxman, Spring 2005

Plato's Ethics and Epistemology, Evans, Spring 2005

Percepts and Concepts, Block and Strevens, Fall 2005

Philosophy of Action, Velleman, Fall 2005

Ancient Philosophy of Mind*, Evans, Fall 2005

Heidegger*, Richardson, Fall 2005

Expressivism and Self-Knowledge*, Shoemaker, Spring 2006

Mind and Language Seminar*, Garrett and Longuenesse, Spring 2006

Spinoza on the Metaphysics of the Mind and Body, Garrett (Writing course), Spring 2006

Kant on Inner Sense, Longuenesse (Writing course), Spring 2006

Locke, Hume and Reid*, Garrett, Fall 2006

Advanced Logic, Kit Fine, Fall 2006

Kant's Practical Philosophy*, Rosenkoetter, Spring 2007

Kant and Contemporary Philosophy*, Longuenesse and Peacocke, Fall 2007

Spinoza and Hobbes*, Garrett, Fall 2008

The Self*, Velleman, Spring 2009

Freud*, Longuenesse, Fall 2009

Thesis Preparation Seminar, Schiffer, Fine, Field, and Street, Fall 2006 - Fall 2009

Service

Referee for *Ancient Philosophy*

Co-Founder (with Jeff Sebo), New York Institute of Philosophy Outreach Program

(The NYIP Outreach Program teaches philosophy in local high-schools and middle schools)

Volunteer Instructor, New York Institute of Philosophy Outreach Program

Graduate Student Representative, 2007-2008

Invited Panel Member, Departmental Orientation for New TAs, 2007, 2008

Service (continued)

Curriculum Committee, 2004-2005

Paper Reviewer for NYU/Columbia Graduate Student Conference, 2004-2009

Organizer for Washington Square Circle, Spring 2006-Spring 2008

Languages

German – good reading, fair conversation

Latin – fair reading

References

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Dissertation Summary:

KEEPING OUR SELVES TOGETHER: KANT'S METAPHYSICS OF SELVES AND OBJECTS

Against the view that Kant sees a priori metaphysics as confined to the realm of appearances, I argue that his *Critique of Pure Reason* contains a priori metaphysical views of the self and of objects of experience. I contend that Kant upholds the commonsense belief that selves and objects underlie our experiences, even while he views their existence as dependent on experience. By seeing how Kant can coherently advance such a position we find not only several unexplored metaphysical proposals, but also a way of maintaining some of our core everyday beliefs that is compatible with agnosticism about the fundamental nature of reality.

I begin with the topic of the self. Many interpreters claim that in the *Critique* Kant denies that we can have any a priori knowledge of the self, especially knowledge of its identity across changes of state. I argue against such a reading in three steps. In the first step, I consider the passage that has most directly motivated it (the Third Paralogism) and argue that a close reading of the text actually motivates the opposite view. In the second step, I argue that Kant *needs* some a priori metaphysical doctrine of the self, since he relies on substantive claims about the self's identity and nature in the central argument of the *Critique* (the Transcendental Deduction).

With this background, the third step identifies Kant's positive view, which is at once epistemological and metaphysical. On that view, we know a priori that a self is constituted by whatever thing or things jointly produce a unified course of experience. In other words, selves are individuated by experiences. This view's power lies in the fact that it provides us with knowledge of the basic structure of the self without requiring that we know its ultimate metaphysical basis (neurons? an immaterial soul? 11-dimensional strings?).

I reinforce this interpretive proposal by locating a structurally similar view in Kant's theory of the objects of experience. On this latter view, the components of an object are whatever thing or things produce the sensations involved in certain mutually coherent experiences. But it is only in virtue of these experiences that these things stand in a relation of composition. This view takes the composed object to be ontologically dependent on experiences, even while being constituted by some thing or things that exist independently of those experiences.

As a whole, the interpretation I defend allows us to see Kant as an idealist, while respecting his insistence that his position differs fundamentally from Berkeley's phenomenalism. According to Kant's version of idealism, selves and objects do have a mind-dependent existence, but not because they are constituted by representations. Rather, their mind-dependence is a result of the fact that the things from which they are composed only *constitute* objects or selves in virtue of their producing representations, just as the people who make up a film's production team only constitute a team in virtue of their producing the film.