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Contingency and Community

Kuki Shûzô, A Japanese Philosopher

Simon Ebersolt

Vrin - Bibliothèque d'Histoire de la Philosophie
304 pages - 13,5 × 21,5 × 1,6 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-2999-2 - July 2021

Between Bergsonism and phenomenology, bushidô and mythology, rhyme poetics and eternal return imagery, cultural nationalism and Edo aesthetics, the multifarious work of Kuki Shûzô (1888-1941) emerged from a fruitful tension between the Japanese, French, and German intellectual worlds.

Far from being reducible to a « properly Japanese » philosophy, or to a synthesis between East and West, Shûzô's thought invites us to reconsider the notions of identity, community, universality and above all what is « we ». He developed a universal and original philosophy centered on the notions of common and community, based on contingency and on the encounter of phenomena in perception.

Simon Ebersolt is Research fellow at the Institut français de recherche sur l'Asie de l'Est (Inalco/ Université de Paris/ CNRS), where he co-directs the Study Group on Japanese philosophy.

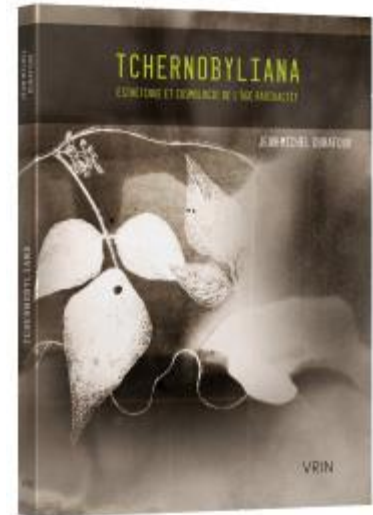


Chernobylia

Aesthetics and Cosmology of a Nuclear Age

Jean-Michel Durafour

Vrin - Recherches d'esthétique contemporaine REC
248 pages - 12,5 × 18 × 1,2 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-3009-7 - July 2021



On April, 26th 1986 at 1.23 am, the reactor n° 4 in the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant exploded. Such a major event at the end of the 20th Century triggered many artistic works and changed our perception of images beyond human experience.

Contrary to the spectacular representations issued from the atomic bomb, the first great environmental nuclear disaster can only be approached by an aesthetics where the gaze is directed by an obscure and infernal threat.

Three claims are suggested and advocated here: radioactivity in art introduced more than a topic, rather a way of contemplating things; the images of living beings contaminated by radioactivity require a specific human gaze; radioactivity art produced a radiant aesthetics.

The Principle

A Metaphysical History

Laurent Cournarie

Vrin - Bibliothèque d'Histoire de la Philosophie Poche
252 pages - 11 × 18 × 1,3 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-3015-8 - July 2021



Undoubtedly, the question of the principle is the first metaphysical question. But an agreement about its priority and necessity does not explain its nature nor the means of knowing it. The history of metaphysics stumbled on the same difficulty over and again: the impossibility of saying it unless by giving it a transcendent or transcendental grounding. Without such an increase in rationality, only the following double factual statement remains: there is no science of principle although there is no science without principle. One must therefore deal with this: the plurality of principles which are irreducibly regional or relative, is the insuperable horizon of any thinking on the principle.

Laurent Cournarie is a Philosophy lecturer in Toulouse.

What is a Landscape?

Justine Balibar

Vrin - Chemins Philosophiques
128 pages - 11 × 18 × 0,7 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-3008-0 - July 2021



A landscape can be understood in two senses: realistically, it refers to the real landscape, a portion of physical space which we can approach with our eyes and our whole moving bodies, thus experiencing it with all our senses; and iconically, it can mean the represented landscape on images of all kinds. Those two senses of landscape give rise to different kinds of aesthetic experiences: on the one hand, the contemplative perceptive experience of a separate space in ontological isolation from our own space, and on the other hand, the immersion or integrative experience of perceiving a space continuous with ours, in which we are situated physically, aesthetically as well as politically.

Justine Balibar is a Doctor in philosophy and lecturer in higher education.

“CHEMINS PHILOSOPHIQUES”

*The series **Chemins Philosophiques** (Philosophical Paths) includes short essays introducing a philosophical notion, discipline or theme. Each essay bears the title “What is...?” (Qu’est-ce que...?) and elucidates the notion under scrutiny and the many issues it involves. The essay is completed by two extracts from classical, modern, or contemporary works that are then commented by the author. Each title is 128 pages long (in a 11×18 cm format), written with a clear and accessible style.*

The whole series is intended for teachers and students alike, but also for the general public. It now includes nearly 100 titles: see our backlist [here](#).

What is Transhumanism?

Alain Gallerand

Vrin - Chemins Philosophiques
128 pages - 11 × 18 × 0,7 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-2996-1 - September 2021



Transhumanism intends to use the most sophisticated technology to enhance the human capacities and push their natural limits. This advent of a new, enhanced, human being, to which the deciphering of the human genome gave an unprecedented impulse, raises however many questions.

Whereas liberals foresee the perspective of a controlled evolution for the whole human species, conservative movements fear the return of a new kind of eugenism. A moral assessment of this new material anthropo-technology is therefore more than ever necessary. What is at stake is not only the right to freely use one's own body as an indefinitely extensive power (as Condorcet predicted it), but also the possibility to reshape the genetic basis of the soon-to-be-born baby as an indefinitely plastic living material (as M. J. Sandel feared).

This is why for a liberal ethics concerned with conciliating individual freedom and rights, the questions of one's living body related to the principle of autonomy, and of the others' bodies to which the principle of non-harm must be applied, each call for a particular treatment.

Alain Gallerand is Philosophy Lecturer at the Paul Valéry University in Montpellier and Research Fellow in the CRISES Lab.

Foucault *and*...

Michel Foucault's Dangerous Liaisons

Alain Brossat et Daniele Lorenzini (dir.)

Vrin - Varia

256 pages - 12,5 × 18 × 1,3 cm

ISBN 978-2-7116-2961-9 - August 2021



Michel Foucault is a philosopher who, far from merely commenting other philosophers, moves forward with and against them – and against them not less than with them, given the distinctly agonistic character of his thought. In this collection, Foucault is considered in « dialogue » with twelve philosophers and writers, all of them authors whose works sustained and came across Foucault's in a perpetual tension. Each of those encounters is staged by a Foucault scholar.

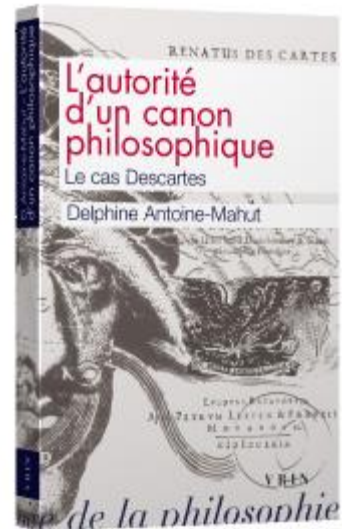
From Foucault *and* Plato to Foucault *and* Althusser or Genet, through Foucault *and* Machiavel, Hegel, Said or many others, everything hangs upon the copula in the title, which simultaneously brings together and apart. With such an approach, the whole corpus loses its citadel character and becomes a knot in a network: that of a living philosophy which builds and goes on in continued interplay with others, designing a spider web whose temporary center would be here a thought named Michel Foucault.

The Authority of a Philosophical Canon

Descartes' Case

Delphine Antoine-Mahut

Vrin - Bibliothèque d'Histoire de la Philosophie Poche
356 pages - 11 × 18 × 1,8 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-3020-2 - August 2021



The Humanities entered a critical period by rejecting the authority of the few past models embedded in a canon. For the sake of what? An acknowledgement of the variety of experiences and its role in the citizens' education. But by doing this, one might forget that the canonical figure is also the purified and pacified product of other possible interpretations of a philosophical doctrine.

Descartes appears as one paradigmatic example. Shifting from the question of the legitimacy of canonical authorship to the question of the genealogy of an identity, this scholarly study explores the relations between Descartes' first polemical self-portraits and his posterity and legacy which forged the label « Cartesian dualism ».

The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill

Landmarks

Aurélie Knüfer

Vrin - Repères Philosophiques
196 pages - 11 × 18 × 0.9 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-3001-1 - September 2021



John Stuart Mill's thought is often reduced to his 1859 formula of the « principle of liberty ». But if Mill is a great thinker of individual freedom, he is also the author of a huge and extremely varied corpus, dealing with the epistemology of social sciences, economy, politics, or even international affairs.

Together with Harriet Taylor, who co-authored many of his texts, he discussed Bentham's Utilitarianism and the Socialist theories of his time. Eager to participate in social and political changes, he was committed to women's emancipation. From his *System of Logic* through the *Subjection of Women* to his *Autobiography*, the very question of education to freedom lies at the heart of his work.

Like each title in the « **Landmarks** » series, this book is divided in three parts, introducing to the life, thought, and main works of the author under scrutiny.

The Possible Man

Robert Musil on the Good Life

Pierre Fasula

Vrin - Philosophie du présent
186 pages - 12,5 × 18 × 0,9 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-2991-6 - September 2021

At the heart of Robert Musil's *The Man without Qualities* lies the question of the good life: How am I to live? The novel displays the various answers given by Ulrich, its main character, but also the reasons, both ordinary and profound, which made him ask it.

In this study, Pierre Fasula offers an original and powerful reading of Musil's novel. He underlines its philosophical significance by showing how the literary work and the ideas it develops contribute to clarify the question of the good life with the answers suggested by Ulrich. The question involves a certain sense of what is possible, an ability to imagine other lives than one's own – but a sense which is adapted to Ulrich's growing indifference towards his profession, his country, and himself. It then appears that it is the refusal of existing possibilities and the distance from life and the « average man » which explain the failure of imagined solutions.

Pierre Fasula is an Associate Researcher at the Institut des sciences juridique et philosophique (University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne).



From Matter to Intellect

Man's Soul and Substance in Al-Farabi's Work

Jawdath Jabbour

Vrin - Études musulmanes
472 pages - 16 × 24 × 2,8 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-2970-1 - September 2021



Al-Farabi's thought played a major role in the development of medieval psychology. However, modern readers often limited his doctrine of the soul to eschatological and political issues, thus eschewing what the soul is and how man, from a material substance, becomes an intellectual substance.

This study addresses those essential questions and underlines the originality and coherence of Farabi's philosophy, in which epistemology, metaphysics, natural science, logic, and politics are all connected. His thinking is guided by a focus on the one/multiple relation, whether it combines multiplicity of forms and human powers with the radical unity of their substances, or reduces the variety of philosophical sources in a coherent and unitary system within the 10th Century thought.

Jawdath Jabbour is a Lecturer in Arabic and a Research Fellow at the French CNRS.

Democracy and Social Justice

Pierre-Étienne Vandamme

Vrin - L'esprit des lois

256 pages - 13,5 × 21,5 × 1,5 cm

ISBN 978-2-7116-3004-2 - September 2021

Is democracy the regime most likely to foster just decisions and, if so, by virtue of which characteristics? If, on the other hand, its decisions are not *always* just, how can democracy be improved so as to come closer to its own ideal? Those important issues are addressed by Vandamme's book, in a dialogue between political philosophy and social sciences.

The study begins by advocating democracy against its various alternatives, on the basis of a higher potential of social justice, promoted by egalitarian inclusion, the free circulation of information, public debates, the control of governments by those governed and protection of fundamental rights. This however does not preclude an acute awareness of the various imperfections of contemporary democracies. This is why four possibilities of improving the justice potential of actual democratic institutions are then suggested and developed: political education, governance partly by sortition, systematic justification of votes, and protection of social rights.

Pierre-Étienne Vandamme is a Researcher in political theory, a Research Fellow at the Belgian FNRS and lecturer at the Free University of Brussels (Cevipol).



Liberty, Equality, Singularity

Rousseau's Legacy

Paul Audi

Vrin - Bibliothèque d'Histoire de la Philosophie Poche

302 pages - 11 × 18 × 1,5 cm

ISBN 978-2-7116-3016-5 - October 2021



Where does Jean-Jacques Rousseau's legacy stand today? What could we retain from it with respect to our main concerns now? Which concepts in the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, the *Social Contract*, or the *Confessions*, among his other works, are still relevant and beneficial today?

According to Paul Audi, the Rousseau who most directly concerns us could be captured by the legacy of these three key notions: liberty, equality, singularity. It is the interplay of those notions, or more exactly the pattern underlying most of Rousseau's texts under those terms, which still gives his thought its relevance.

In this new essay, Paul Audi thus conducts a thorough analysis of the Rousseauian juncture between ethics and politics, Rousseau's views on the good and the right, but also on being-oneself and being-together, which enlighten many aspects of our modernity.

Paul Audi is a Doctor in Philosophy, a Rousseau scholar and the renowned author of many studies and essays in political and moral philosophy.

Astrology and Science in the Middle Ages

Graziella Federici Vescovini

Vrin - Études de philosophie médiévale
192 pages - 16 × 24 × 1,2 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-3003-5 - October 2021



Since its Greek and Arabic origins, through all the centuries known as the « Middle Ages », astrology was at the heart of all knowledge of Heaven and Earth, in close relation to astronomy and cosmology. This short study provides an organic history of the discipline which offered an authentic system of the world, a narrative picture from the Fourth Century BC to the modern age.

Graziella Federici Vescovini follows the changes in cosmological systems which succeeded one another, their bounds in space and time, but also the various breaks they involved. She studies the evolution of the relations between the sciences among which astrology ended up playing a more and more specific role. She shows finally how a certain kind of astrology was always included and accepted both by the Church and by academic authorities while its most allegedly dangerous aspects were rejected, resulting in frequent polemical debates on its nature and value. Far from claiming exhaustivity in a fragmentary history where documents are scarce, this book provides however many clues on the meaning and importance of astrology in the development of the medieval mind.

Graziella Federici Vescovini is Emeritus Professor in the History of Philosophy at the University of Florence, Italy.

The Subject of Passion

Lectures in the Collège de France

2015-2016

Alain de Libera

Vrin - Bibliothèque d'Histoire de la Philosophie
536 pages - 13,5 × 21,5 × 3,2 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-2962-6 - October 2021



In the project of an archeology of the subject, those lectures approach the question of the passion's subject as a test for the « long duration » hypothesis, where christology is viewed as the ontological and ethical laboratory of Western anthropology.

Following such different topics as the monothelism quarrel in late Antiquity, or debates over the Eucharist in pre-modern times, a double goal is pursued: to wrest theology and its history from the hell of « secondary studies » and to bring the « Greek » or « Eastern » theology back in the history of European thought.

The topics of the Christ's suffering on the Cross, the status of pain in Francis of Assisi's stigmata, or the ascetic practices of the Rhenan « mystic » Henry Suso present all an occasion to examine the genesis of notions of contamination and compassion, accounting for the possibility of a « shared suffering » between man, men and God, as well as the problem-complexes developed since Pseudo-Aristotle to Luther and the 16th Century christological controversies. From a passion-Passion couple, in the horizon of a metaphysics of Incarnation, it results in the working out of what is understood as a « chiasm » of human and divine sufferings.

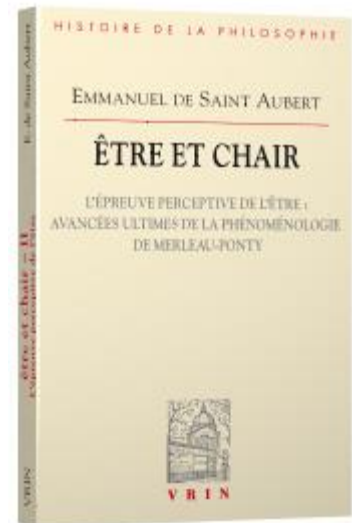
Alain de Libera is Honorary Professor at the Collège de France in Paris (History of Medieval Philosophy).

Being and Flesh II

Merleau-Ponty on the Perceptive Experience of Being

Emmanuel de Saint Aubert

Vrin - Bibliothèque d'Histoire de la Philosophie
344 pages - 13,5 × 21,5 × 1,8 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-3021-9 - November 2021



After the ontological certification of body and desire in *Being and Flesh I*, this second volume examines the complementary move in Merleau-Ponty's ontology, designing being as it appears to the flesh experiencing it. Such an experience stems from our bodily openness to the world, in the fundamental act of perception, whose analysis must avoid the pitfalls of both realism and idealism.

Three groups of concepts are here at work, closely related to the study of perceptive life: freedom, expression and birth; imaginary, real and ultra-things; pervasiveness, the unconscious and metaphoricity.

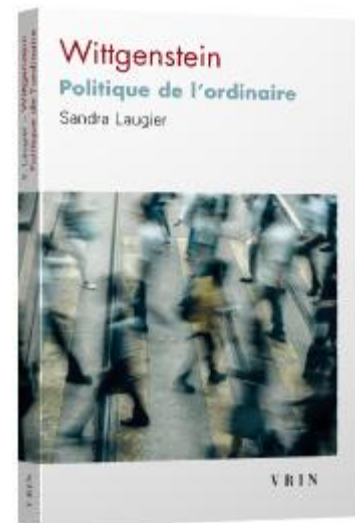
Based on the later works and manuscripts written in response to Descartes and Sartre, *Being and Flesh II* gives life to Merleau-Ponty's dramatic rendering of the relations between the flesh and Being, the horizon of a phenomenology of the body within and beyond the world we inhabit.

Emmanuel de Saint Aubert is Research Director at the French National Research Centre C.N.R.S. (Husserl Archives in Paris).

Wittgenstein's Politics of the Ordinary

Sandra Laugier

Vrin - Moments Philosophiques
326 pages - 11 × 18 × 1,6 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-3024-0 - November 2021



The political and social significance of Wittgenstein's work is not the best known aspect of his thought. But it has raised many debates among his readers, especially since the later Wittgenstein's method has now become a reference in several domains of the social sciences, from anthropology to critical theory.

Wittgenstein's philosophy, which was for a long time considered as a conservative approach to existing « forms of life » and practices, does not seem open to critical modes of thought or to the possibility of social change. However, by examining carefully the language uses and the changes they produce and imply, it rewards our efforts in imagining new possibilities of life, for progressive or radical changes. Forms of life are not limited to the scope of our concepts, and this study explores that ever livelier dimension of Wittgenstein's philosophy.

Sandra Laugier is Professor of Philosophy at the University Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne and also a member of the Institut Universitaire de France.

Easy Living On Ancient Cynicism

Olimar Flores-Júnior

Vrin - Textes et traditions
344 pages - 16 × 24 × 2 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-3019-6 - November 2021



Cynicism is a philosophical movement which developed in Greece from the 4th Century BC on, mainly around the figure of Diogenes. Often viewed as an expression of gross naturalism, the Cynic philosophy has even been defined as a reactionary anti-Promethean attitude according to which civilisation is bound to bring unhappiness and vice to the human kind. With such a view, the Cynics allegedly offered a return to nature, or life according to nature, inspired by primitive modes of existence and by animals. The present study challenges that widespread interpretation by a careful reading of Ancient texts.

Against the idea of a life according to nature, the hypothesis of a life according to *easiness* as the major concern for Cynics is advocated here: rather than naturalism, cynicism presents a radical form of pragmatism in which the dualistic principles of our thought (*nomos vs. phusis* in the first place) tend to dissolve for the sake of an active adaptation to circumstances. The hypothesis is confirmed by several texts, including two often-neglected works, Dio Chrysostom's *Fourth Discourse*, and the short dialogue attributed to Lucian and entitled *The Cynic*.

Olimar Flores-Júnior is Associate Professor of Greek language and literature at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (Belo Horizonte, Brasil).

Acting by Virtue of Another

Thomas Aquinas and the Ontology of Instruments

Charles Ehret

Vrin - Études de philosophie médiévale
240 pages - 16 × 24 × 1,4 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-3006-6 - December 2021



Aristotle's *Physics* is subject to an underlying problem: according to his principles, what is moved cannot move. The moved is in potentiality whereas the mover is in actuality, so that a mover that is in essence moved is a contradiction. The present study shows the importance of that problem, whose solution only appears with the concept of instrument forged in the 13th Century by Thomas Aquinas.

If according to Thomas, instruments correspond to the Aristotelian « moved mover », he also goes beyond the formula to develop a whole theory of instrumental causality. Analysis shows that the notion of a moved mover tends to disappear in favor of the instrument as what acts by virtue of some other. The main agent gives its power (*virtus*) to the instrument, which receives it according to an intentional being (*esse intentionale*). But this detailed doctrine can only be understood if the physics it overrides is carefully reconstructed on a par with the metaphysics of powers it results in.

Charles Ehret is Doctor in Philosophy and Associate Researcher in the GRAMATA centre (Paris I – Panthéon-Sorbonne). He also teaches in secondary school and at the University of Lille.

Pleasure and Necessity

Natural Philosophy and Anthropology in Democritus and Epicurus

Pierre-Marie Morel

Vrin - Bibliothèque d'Histoire de la Philosophie
256 pages - 13,5 × 21,5 × 2 cm
ISBN 978-2-7116-3037-0 - December 2021



Pleasure and necessity, or the marriage between hedonism and materialism: a strong but complex and arguable relation, which originated in the Ancient atomistic tradition with Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius.

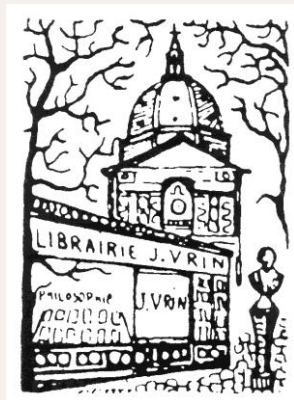
In renewing the interpretation of that founding debate, Pierre Marie Morel reconsiders the relation between physics and anthropology. He shows how Epicurean hedonism replies to Democritus' formula « everything happens according to necessity » and to the conception of human activity which results from it.

Epicureanism considers all our actions according to pleasure, the first and natural emotion grounding the agent's freedom and his ability to escape the realm of necessity. It does not deny our being immersed in the world, but rather views the analysis of external circumstances (material, political, social) the first condition of internal peace and of a trouble-free life. The principles of conduct advocated by Ancient atomism are without illusion – a disenchanted ethics, one might say, but a credible ethics anyway, grounded on a clear-sighted philosophy of circumstances.

Pierre-Marie Morel is Professor in History of Ancient Philosophy at the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

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