



Alienation (New Directions in Critical Theory)

Rahel Jaeggi

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The Hegelian-Marxist idea of alienation fell out of favor during the post-metaphysical rejection of humanism and essentialist views of human nature. In this book Jaeggi draws on phenomenological analyses grounded in modern conceptions of agency, along with recent work in the analytical tradition, to reconceive of alienation as the absence of a meaningful relationship to oneself and others, which manifests itself in feelings of helplessness and the despondent acceptance of ossified social roles and expectations.

A revived approach to alienation helps critical social theory engage with phenomena, such as meaninglessness, isolation, and indifference, which have broad implications for issues of justice. By severing alienation's link to a problematic conception of human essence while retaining its social-philosophical content, Jaeggi provides resources for a renewed critique of social pathologies, a much-neglected concern in contemporary liberal political philosophy. Her work revisits the arguments of Rousseau, Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Heidegger, placing them in dialogue with Thomas Nagel, Bernard Williams, and Charles Taylor.

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