

Adrian M. S. Piper,
Rationality and the Structure of the Self, Volume II: A Kantian Conception

Cambridge University Press Reader A

Adrian M. S. Piper is a brilliant philosopher and her book, *Rationality and the Structure of the Self*, is unquestionably a groundbreaking piece of philosophical writing. The book is breathtakingly original in its attempt explain Kant. I say this not because I necessarily accept all the arguments of the book; for my most basic philosophical instincts are not at all Kantian. Rather, it is my opinion that Piper has pushed the argument farther and better and with more subtlety than anyone writing in the area. Here I am making direct reference to neo-Kantians such as (in alphabetical order) Stephen Darwall, Barbara Herman, and Christine Korsgaard.

So often with Kantian moral philosophy, there is sense that one has witnessed a *ledger de main*. Piper will have none of that. She wants the argument to work. And my thought is that if her arguments do not succeed, then there will be none that do. Upon meeting years ago, at a conference, the now-retired Kurt Baier, I recall his speaking of the extraordinary heights of analytical abstraction and rigor that her work attained. Now that I have read this volume, I understand first-hand what Kurt Baier meant. His words did not, and could not, have done justice to sophistication of Piper's work.

I should also add that I very much appreciated Chapter 1 of book where Professor Piper discussed the pursuit of philosophy. This lends an enormous power to the book. And one reason why it does is that it gives the book a kind of real-life imprimatur. to my knowledge, no theoretical book on Kantian philosophy has ever contained a chapter that speaks to the travails of being in philosophy.

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For me, there is the theoretical pay-off (inconsistency) and there is the practical pay-off (a genuine disconnection). ... Piper has made the case for the theoretical pay-ff more thoroughly and powerfully and with more subtlety than anyone in times has done. To my mind, no one comes even close. Indeed, in comparison to Korsgaard's argument in this regard, as given in her Tanner Lectures (for example), Piper's argument is on an entirely different and higher plane in terms of its richness and majesty and thoroughness. At the theoretical level, insofar as any one has a claim to leaving no stone unturned, Piper most certainly does.

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Piper's argument on friendship and impartiality is one of the most one of the most powerful and, if you will, morally beautiful arguments in the book. No one has made more sense of Kantian moral philosophy and the subject of friendship than she has. The very idea that friendship requires strict impartiality is absolutely marvelous. It is so often the case that Kantians writing on the subject convey a "you-just-don't-understand" attitude towards those, like Blum, who speak to the partiality of friendship. Piper is to be commended for finally, perhaps, getting us beyond that impasse.

Working through Professor Piper's manuscript has been a most rewarding philosophical experience. I have learned so much at every step along the way. Disagreement in philosophy is par for the course. But this is disagreement and there is instructive disagreement. I have been persuaded by much that Piper has written; and I have disagreed at very points. But in each every case the disagreement has been most instructive. And that pertains to what I take to be my most searching criticism of her book.

Kantians will surely love the book, though each will have her or his difference with Piper's argument. However, there is this: If at this point in time I were to recommend to a dyed-in-the-wool non-Kantian moral philosopher that she or he read one book on Kant's moral philosophy, Adrian Piper's Rationality and the structure of the Self would be it.