



The Early Modern Subject: Self-Consciousness and Personal Identity from Descartes to Hume

By Udo Thiel

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The Early Modern Subject explores the understanding of self-consciousness and personal identity--two fundamental features of human subjectivity--as it developed in early modern philosophy. Udo Thiel presents a critical evaluation of these features as they were conceived in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He explains the arguments of thinkers such as Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, Wolff, and Hume, as well as their early critics, followers, and other philosophical contemporaries, and situates them within their historical contexts. Interest in the issues of self-consciousness and personal identity is in many ways characteristic and even central to early modern thought, but Thiel argues here that this is an interest that continues to this day, in a form still strongly influenced by the conceptual frameworks of early modern thought. In this book he attempts to broaden the scope of the treatment of these issues considerably, covering more than a hundred years of philosophical debate in France, Britain, and Germany while remaining attentive to the details of the arguments under scrutiny and discussing alternative interpretations in many cases.

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- Sales Rank: #854173 in Books
- Published on: 2014-05-20
- Released on: 2014-05-20
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.10" h x 1.30" w x 9.00" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 498 pages



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Review

"an indispensable guide for specialists in early modern philosophy and the history of subjectivity."

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"The thoroughness of Thiel's scholarship is impressive, to say the least ... an extraordinary scholarly achievement ... set[s] a new standard that will profoundly affect subsequent scholarly attempts to synoptically understand the way in which important theoretical issues in general, and not just the ones he considered, got discussed by theorists during the modern period."

--Raymond Martin, Internationale Zeitschrift fur Analytische Philosophie

"Thiel's book is clearly written and accessible to more than just a circle of specialists. Its main virtue is the systematized presentation of an amazing range of authors ... This book is the first pick for everyone who wants to gain insight into the abundance of early modern discussions of these topics."

--Christian Barth, Philosophy in Review

About the Author

Udo Thiel studied Philosophy at the Universities of Marburg, Bonn, and Oxford. He began as a Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Sydney, later moving to the Australian National University in Canberra where he became a Senior Lecturer and then Associate Professor. In 2009 he moved to Austria where he is now Professor of the History of Philosophy in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Graz. His research focuses on early modern epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of mind.

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