

## Essays in Honour of Kai Nielsen

Edited by Michel Seymour and Matthias Fritsch

Dr. Nielsen, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the University of Calgary and Adjunct Professor of Philosophy at Concordia University, is one of Canada's most eminent philosophers. He is among the most important figures worldwide in the areas of moral and political philosophy. He has published more than twenty books and more than four hundred articles. His books have been translated into Chinese, Polish, Spanish and Greek. Symposias have been devoted to his books in congresses such as the Canadian Philosophical Association, the Western Canadian Philosophical Association and the American Philosophical Association (Central and Pacific Divisions). He has published articles in virtually all the major philosophical journals, including *The Journal of Philosophy*, *The Philosophical Quarterly*, *Philosophical Studies*, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, *Ethics*, *The Monist*, *Mind*, *Inquiry*, *Theoria*, *Dialectica* and *Erkenntnis* (many of his articles have been anthologized and translated into several languages). Professor Nielsen is a member of the Royal Society of Canada and a past president of the Canadian Philosophical Association. He is also one of the founding members of the most important philosophical journal in Canada, the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*.

The famous British philosopher Anthony Kenny (who is one of the contributors) recently wrote in a *London Review of Books* review of Professor Nielsen's latest book, that Kai Nielsen is a "genial solitude". We believe that it is about time that we remove him from this solitude and to publicly recognize the magnitude of his intellectual contribution by publishing this collection of essays followed by replies from Professor Kai Nielsen.

The anthology will be divided into five sections: religion, metaphilosophy, Marxism, global justice, and nationalism. Each section contains a number of papers that respond to issues raised in Nielsen's work, followed by Nielsen's replies.

### I. Religion

The section explores the epistemological defensibility of religious belief and the claim that religious belief is essential to the development of an ethical theory as well as to ethical practice. Secularists like Kai Nielsen deny both the theoretical tenability and the practical necessity (or even usefulness) of religious belief. Some papers respond by attempting to refute (at least some of) the epistemological arguments made on behalf of the secularist stance, while others seek to save a place for belief by removing it from the epistemological question of ethical foundationalism.

Jeffrey Stout (Princeton University)  
Socrates, Euthyphro, and Nielsen

Nicholas Wolterstorff (Yale University)  
To be Justified or Rational in Holding Theistic Belief: A Response to Kai Nielsen

Sir Anthony Kenny (Oxford University)  
Kai Nielsen and the Limits of Naturalism

Alain Voizard (Université du Québec à Montréal)  
Naturalism and the Incommensurability of Religious Beliefs

Replies by Kai Nielsen

## II. Metaphilosophy

This section addresses the viability of metaphilosophical naturalism and a non-foundational methodology of critical social theory. Issues discussed include the question of whether naturalism is defined sufficiently by the denial of supernatural entities, as in Sir Anthony Kenny's essay, and the role value pluralism, including religious views, as well as truth claims, play in the account of a social theory that centers on what Rawls calls reflective equilibrium. The views expressed range from a call for a more strongly truth-oriented conception of pragmatist and naturalist theory, to Richard Rorty's denial of the epistemic and social value of critical argumentation, as opposed to historical narratives and utopian proposals.

Idil Boran (Université du Québec à Montréal)  
Are Some of the Sailors in Neurath's Ship Moral Philosophers?

Matthias Fritsch (Concordia University)  
Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Critical Social Theory

Richard Rorty (Stanford University)  
A Response to Kai Nielsen's Proposal for a Transformation of Philosophy

Cheryl J. Misak (University of Toronto)  
Truth and Our Practices: Why the Naturalist Can't Do Without Truth

Robert Sinclair (Simon Fraser University)  
Nielsen's Conception of Philosophy: Its Essential Tension and Naturalist Resolution

Replies by Kai Nielsen

## III. Marxism

The topics in this section address the relevance of Marxist social and historical theory in attempts to preserve the liberating potential of the Enlightenment. The papers deal with the degree to which Marx is an heir of the Enlightenment, the history and contemporary strengths of viable Marxist theories, and the contemporary relevance of a Marxist theory of ideology.

Joseph McCarney (University of Essex)  
An Emancipatory Science of Society

Steven Lukes (NYU)  
Marxism and the Enlightenment

Andrew Levine (University of Wisconsin at Madison)  
Whatever Happened to Marxism?

David Schweickart (Loyola University)  
Does Historical Materialism Imply Socialism?

Koula Mellos (University of Ottawa)  
Ideology and the New political 'Ideologem'

Replies by Kai Nielsen

#### IV. Global Justice

Here, the focus is on the contours of an appropriate account of moral and political equality in the face of the growing inequalities of global capitalism. While Norman Daniels defends a broadly Rawlsian account of political equality in the face of Gerald Cohen's and Kai Nielsen's criticisms of the 'difference principle', other authors in this section inquire about the possibility and desirability of extending trans-national egalitarian and liberal responsibilities to increasingly global economic and political relations, with and beyond the Rawlsian account of international political justice.

Norman Daniels (Harvard University)  
Some Lessons About Egalitarianism

Jocelyne Couture (Université du Québec à Montréal)  
Propositions for a Relational Global Justice

Richard Miller (Cornell University)  
Globalization Moralized

Replies by Kai Nielsen

#### V. Nationalism

The last section addresses the potential tension between national and international moral commitments. Issues discussed cover the degree to which cosmopolitan impartiality may overrule patriotic attachments, and the right of nations, suitably defined, to secede from an encompassing state.

Jon Mandle (SUNY Albany)  
Identity, Justice, and Legitimacy

Kok-Chor Tan (University of Pennsylvania)  
Nielsen's Cosmopolitan Nationalism: Cosmopolitan Impartiality and National Partiality

Michel Seymour (Université de Montréal)  
Secession as a Remedial Right

Replies by Kai Nielsen

The book is intended for an audience of intellectuals and academics, university students and professors. The manuscript would reach no more than 400 pages (these are not type setting pages, so it would be less in terms of type setting pages). (As an average, authors have sent us 17 pages for a total of 340 pages.) We received all the papers and Professor Nielsen is now in the course of preparing his replies.

About the editors:

MICHEL SEYMOUR- is Professor of Philosophy at Université de Montréal since 1990 where he teaches Anglo-American philosophy. He has written extensively on a number of topics both philosophical and political. Some of his publications include: (ed) *The Fate of the Nation state*, McGill-Queen's (forthcoming early in 2004), (ed) *Rethinking Nationalism* (in collaboration with Kai Nielsen and Jocelyne Couture), Supplementary Volume of the *Canadian Journal of philosophy*, University of Calgary Press, 1996. He has published three monographs in French : *Le pari de la démesure*, l'hexagone 2001, *La Nation En Question* (Montreal, l'hexagone, 1999) and *Pensée, langage et communauté*, (Vrin/Bellarmin, 1994). He has published articles in journals such as the *Journal of Philosophy* (1992), *Philosophical Studies* (1994), the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* (1995), *The Monist* (1999), *Nations and Nationalism* (2000) and *Scottish Affairs* (2001).

MATTHIAS FRITSCH- is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Concordia University, Montréal, where he teaches social and political philosophy. He has published a number of articles on political theory and contemporary European philosophy in journals such as *Constellations* (2002), *Human Studies* (2002), *Rethinking History* (2001) and *International Studies in Philosophy* (2000, 1999). Dr. Fritsch has also published a number of translations of Heidegger, Gadamer, Apel, and others. His book *The Promise of Memory: Marx, Benjamin, and Derrida on History* will be published by SUNY PRESS (2004).