



Things Merely Are: Philosophy in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens

Simon Critchley

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This book is an invitation to read poetry. Simon Critchley argues that poetry enlarges life with a range of observation, power of expression and attention to language that eclipses any other medium. In a rich engagement with the poetry of Wallace Stevens, Critchley reveals that poetry also contains deep and important philosophical insight. Above all, he argues for a 'poetic epistemology' that enables us to think afresh the philosophical problem of the relation between mind and world, and ultimately to cast the problem away.

Drawing astutely on Kant, the German and English Romantics and Heidegger, Critchley argues that through its descriptions of particular things and their stubborn plainness - whether water, guitars, trees, or cats - poetry evokes the 'mereness' of things. It is this experience, he shows, that provokes the mood of calm and releases the imaginative insight we need to press back against the pressure of reality. Critchley also argues that this calm defines the cinematic eye of Terrence Malick, whose work is discussed at the end of the book.



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