

# The Ethical Foundations of Postmodernity: Communicative Reality and Relative Individuals (German Edition)

Nina Michaela von Dahlern

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A (re-)turn to ethics, which began in the 1980s and 1990s and is still predominant today, has been ascribed to literary studies and theory. In this book theoretical issues within ethics are discussed based on the examples of literary analyses. The authors examined are Margaret Atwood, Jeffrey Eugenides, and Robert M. Pirsig. The main questions concern the foundation on which ethical concepts are based, and the way in which such concepts function. These topics are evidently connected to matters of human concepts and human nature in general, which are understood to be fundamentally communicative. Contrary to popular conclusions of relativity, the need for a realist foundation of ethics - implying universal validity - will be revealed. It is not only possible, but also necessary to develop such an idea of ethics within a postmodern relativist framework. A communicative foundationalist ethics will thus be designed. With regard to literature an increasing emergence of first-person narrative can be witnessed in addition to a new focus on a realist and more mimetic style after a peak of pluralist conceptions at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. The analysis of such narrative situations will reveal the significance of the narrative generation of individual personalities for an understanding of ethical questions. The conflict between relativist and realist points of view centers on the postmodern critique of the individual. The study of the literary generation of individuals will elucidate means of confronting this critique. The theoretical background includes the poststructuralist and communicative concepts of Judith Butler and Seyla Benhabib as well as Ernst Tugendhat's analytical approach. Nina von Dahlern studied English language and literature, philosophy, sociology, and educational sciences at the Universities of Hamburg and Heidelberg. This book is based on her Ph.D. thesis.

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