



Gesturing Toward Reality: David Foster Wallace and Philosophy

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Asked in 2006 about the philosophical nature of his fiction, the late American writer David Foster Wallace replied, "If some people read my fiction and see it as fundamentally about philosophical ideas, what it probably means is that these are pieces where the characters are not as alive and interesting as I meant them to be."

Gesturing Toward Reality looks into this quality of Wallace's work?when the writer dons the philosopher's cap?and sees something else. With essays offering a careful perusal of Wallace's extensive and heavily annotated self-help library, reconsiderations of Wittgenstein's influence on his fiction, and serious explorations into the moral and spiritual landscape where Wallace lived and wrote, this collection offers a perspective on Wallace that even he was not always ready to see. Since so much has been said in specifically literary circles about Wallace's philosophical acumen, it seems natural to have those with an interest in both philosophy and Wallace's writing address how these two areas come together.

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Editorial Review

Review

Wallace's deeply influential postmodern pragmatism was not the casual by product of his novelistic vision. Rather, it was the distillation of a lifetime of urgent and rigorous philosophical engagement. Unfortunately, that deeply informed background is often obscured by the white light of his intimate, inimitable voice. *Gesturing Toward Reality* refracts that light to reveal the colorful spectrum of his sources. The essays assembled here are as lively as they are entertaining, and provide an accessible introduction to some of the most complex ideas in Wallace's already challenging oeuvre . -- Marshall Boswell, Professor and Chair of English, Rhodes College, USA, author of *Understanding David Foster Wallace*, and co-editor of *David Foster Wallace and "The Long Thing"* *Gesturing Toward Reality* is the first collection of pieces on David Foster Wallace to tackle head-on one of the things that make his work so important to so many: the power of his thinking. Approaching Wallace's thinking from a variety of angles, the philosophers and literary critics in this volume work hard (and to great effect) to tease out Wallace's ideas as they appear in his fiction and nonfiction, to explore how he came to them from his education and experience, how he expressed them through language, and what they meant for him and might continue to mean to us; *Gesturing Toward Reality* thus makes a significant contribution not only to Wallace studies but to the work of anyone interested in literature and philosophy, in the way we tell stories in order to think. -- Samuel Cohen, Associate Professor of English, University of Missouri, USA I spent part of the weekend past making my way through the first four essays in the collection and I've found much to enjoy and think about so far...So this collection has moved from the very interesting to must have. -- Nick Maniatis *The Howling Fantods*

About the Author

Robert K. Bolger (Ph.D., Claremont Graduate University, USA) is the author of *Kneeling at the Altar of Science: The Mistaken Path of Contemporary Religious Scientism*.

Scott Korb teaches writing at New York University, the New School, and in Pacific University's MFA program (all USA). His books include *The Faith Between Us*, *Life in Year One*, and *Light without Fire*.

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