

SHAFTESBURY AS A POPPERIAN: CRITICAL RATIONALISM BEFORE ITS TIME? PART II

Summary

Shaftesbury has assigned humor an unparalleled role within philosophy, which may be encapsulated in the following tenets: (1) ridicule is the test of truth; (2) humor and good humor have a habilitating function with regard to truth; (3) the most effective criticism is humorous; and (4) humor is the mark of rationality. In the present article, I introduce Shaftesbury's views on ridicule, good humor and humor in order to assess both the originality and viability of Shaftesbury's contribution. I argue, first, that Shaftesbury's views on ridicule as a test of truth and on good-humor as habilitating truth are thoroughly original, but cannot be implemented without adhering to his metaphysics and epistemology. Second, Shaftesbury's views on humor are only partially original, though these can be implemented independently of metaphysical and epistemological assumptions for the greatest benefit of philosophers in general and critical rationalists in particular. I conclude that not only does Shaftesbury anticipate the view that critical thinking is the core of rationality, the main principle of the view known as critical rationalism associated with the renowned 20th century philosopher of science and social philosopher, Karl Popper, but he also offers a viable means to enhance criticism as rationality by taking into consideration the psychological resistance to criticism that Popper acknowledges but refuses to address.