

Guest or host: A philosophical essay

Hospitality

PETER VENMANS

Every day we are somebody's guest or host. We travel abroad, visit friends, or welcome new staff to our organization. Hospitality is omnipresent. At the same time, some say we are experiencing the end of hospitality. As a result of mass tourism, the rise of the hospitality industry, and the Covid-19 pandemic, the spontaneous cordiality of times past is said to have been replaced by commercial considerations, pragmatism, and prescribed codes of conduct.

Peter Venmans's 'Hospitality' presents itself as a philosophical essay. Philosophical because it analyses an abstract concept, and essayistic because it undertakes an attempt to increase our understanding of a phenomenon without trying to be exhaustive or give ready-made answers.

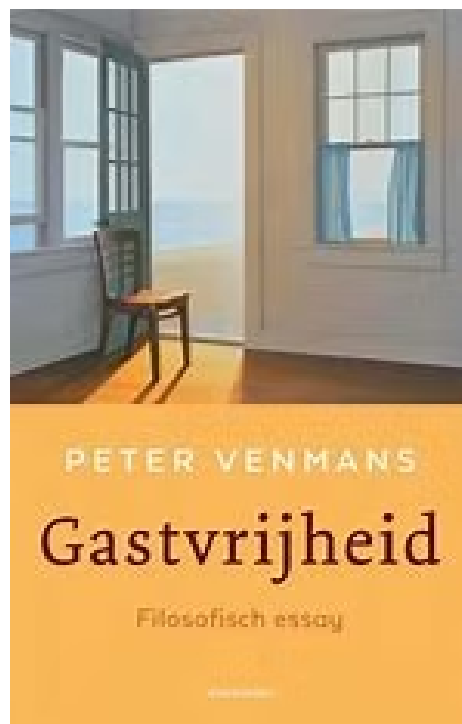
Peter Venmans continually succeeds in taking his readers with him in a way that is appealing and accessible.

DE VOLKSKRANT

In the odd chapters, Peter Venmans follows a chronological line in his thinking about hospitality. He begins with what Homer's 'Odyssey' has to say about hospitality or 'xenia', before switching in chapter 3 to the Christian concept of charity or 'caritas'. In modern times this concept was replaced by 'hospitality' of the kind that involves payment.

In the even chapters he swaps this chronological approach for a reflection on the etymology of the Dutch word for hospitality, *gastvrijheid*, and takes an ethical approach, in light of the thinking of philosophers Levinas and Derrida, which ends with political thoughts about hospitality, drawing upon the philosophy of Kant and Arendt.

This book offers a broad view of contemporary hospitality which is more than welcome.



AUTHOR



Peter Venmans (b. 1963) is a philosopher and expert on Spain who has made a point of publishing very readable books about philosophy and society. His earlier essays include 'The Discovery of the World. On Hannah Arendt' (2005), 'On the Purpose of Usefulness' (2008), 'The Third Part of the Soul. On Thymos' (2011) and 'Amor Mundi' (2006). His work has won him several awards and been translated into Spanish.

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