

# Literary Criticism from Plato to Postmodernism

## *The Humanistic Alternative*

This book offers a history of literary criticism from Plato to the present, arguing that this history can usefully be seen as a dialogue among three traditions – the Platonic, Neoplatonic, and the humanistic, whose first practitioner was Aristotle. There are many histories of literary criticism, but this is the first to clarify our understanding of the many seemingly incommensurable approaches employed over the centuries by reference to the three traditions. Making its case by careful analyses of individual critics, the book argues for the relevance of the humanistic tradition in the twenty-first century and beyond.

James Seaton is a professor in the Department of English at Michigan State University, where he teaches courses on the history of literary criticism, American literature and culture, and literature and law. His previous books include *Cultural Conservatism, Political Liberalism: From Criticism to Cultural Studies* (1996) and *A Reading of Vergil's Georgics* (1983). He is the editor of *The Genteel Tradition and Character and Opinion in the United States* by George Santayana (2009) and co-editor with William K. Buckley of *Beyond Cheering and Bashing: New Perspectives on The Closing of the American Mind* (1992). Seaton's articles and reviews have appeared in such publications as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Weekly Standard*, *The Claremont Review of Books*, *The American Scholar*, *The Hudson Review*, *The University Bookman*, *Modern Age*, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, *Society*, *The Review of Metaphysics*, *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities*, *Legal Studies Forum*, *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature*, and *Michigan State Law Review*. He has been a frequent guest speaker at the Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal in Mecosta, Michigan.