

might explain briefly so as to make the text of O'Hear's book intelligible. Explaining them would be more difficult and more time-consuming than presenting the material from scratch. In short, the sort of background knowledge and general philosophical sophistication that is required to understand this book makes it inaccessible to all but those who are not likely to be looking for an "introduction" to the field. More important, it makes it nearly impossible to imagine what use it might be for teaching purposes on any level.

Finally, I find this book to be extremely difficult in a way not yet mentioned. When I first began to read it I was a few pages into Ch. 1, "Faith and the Religious Life," when I realized that I did not know what I was reading *about*. The chapter begins with the observation that "anyone who studies religion, or who has been religious at one time and then has ceased to be, cannot fail to be struck by the fact that for the religious believer religious belief is a personal commitment..." (1). Before long we have moved to what would appear to be a significantly different claim, "religions give transcendent significance to people's lives and efforts..." (3). Shortly thereafter we have a long quote from Tolstoy about faith and meaning (5-6), then the statement of the view that says that "the meaning of any sentence of a given language...can be given by stating its truth conditions.... 'La neige est blanche' is true if and only if snow is white" (7), some exposition of Frazier's *Golden Bough* (8ff.), discussion of some of Wittgenstein's views (10ff.),...and on.... While the individual sentences and paragraphs made good enough sense to me, as I went along I just did not know why what was being said was being said, how any new thing fit with what was said before, what was at issue. When eventually the conclusion is drawn that the believer does not just conceive his faith "as a set of formulas to direct his life," but rather "he thinks that what it says is true" (17; 24), I was surprised. "So *that* is what was at issue all along!" Looking back again, however, from the later perspective of this conclusion still gives little apparent point to much of what is said.

Unfortunately, my experience with the first chapter was repeated over and over with other parts of O'Hear's book. It is very sophisticated philosophically. It occasionally makes discernably good points. But most of the points that it might make fail to be made because of a meandering style that involves neither carefully framing questions nor formulating arguments so that it is apparent what is at issue. Insofar as the book has a style, that style is like the life of the farmer who in successive years suffered through flood, fungus, drought, locusts, erosion, and foreclosure: "it looks like it's just one damn thing after another." And this is too bad. With better writing *Experience, Explanation and Faith* might have been a really good book for advanced students and professional philosophers.

Earlier I mentioned several other "introductions" to the philosophy of religion, none of which is as lengthy as O'Hear's. Yet another recent book is J. L. Mackie's *The Miracle of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982). It is as substantial as O'Hear's book, and it is at least as sophisticated. And Mackie writes with clarity, style, and purpose. Anyone looking for an advanced level book on philosophy of religion would do well to look to Mackie.

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Philosophy: Theory and Practice, Jacques P. Thiroux.

Macmillan, 1985, 563pp. \$30 cl.

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As the main text for an introductory course, Thiroux's presentation of some of the main

subjects of philosophical thought has many virtues. The print and spacing is large and inviting, the writing style clear and readable while neither chatty nor oversimplistic. The discussions are spiced by reference to experiences with which students can identify, and are regularly subdivided into short sections with appropriate, descriptive headings. There are lengthy chapter summaries which are clear, comprehensive, well organized, and which facilitate study and review of the main points covered. The book should be attractive and interesting to freshman students, and easily used for reference.

Several features make the text a springboard for further student thought, lively class discussion and enlightening lectures. Presentations of major theories and central objections are largely clear while neither so precise nor detailed as to discourage further thought by beginning students. The discussions leave room for both students and faculty to develop modifications of and rejoinders to the stated positions. They exemplify a certain balanced and sensitive quality well worth noting and equally present in Thiroux's introductory ethics text. Thiroux does not merely state a theory and then the criticisms of it. Such obtuse dialectic at times bewilders students, leaving them with the impression that they have studied a false theory, that philosophy is after all the study of the unknowable, and that therefore they are wasting their time. Thiroux counters such nihilism with finesse, impressing the reader with the significance of the issues, the value of the theories studied and the contributions they make, as well as some of their main shortcomings. He conveys a sense of the relevance, importance and ongoing nature of the philosophic enterprise.

Of particular pedagogic value are the interesting situations presented at the end of most chapters. These are designed to assist students to further apply, interrelate, analyze and question the main ideas of the text. Some are fictional and some are widely known cases which pertain to the text. Others are well qualified general questions accompanied by more specific subquestions or strategies to assist one's inquiry. They are attractive and useful as topics for class discussions or writing assignments.

The first part of the book, "What Philosophy Is and Does," is lengthy and at times complex and abstract. There are, perhaps, too few clear, understandable, concrete illustrations for a chapter addressed to the beginning introductory student. Although it does present a fairly good sense of the flavor of philosophy, it might well be found more illuminating at the end rather than the beginning of an introductory course.

Part II on the nature of a human being has chapters on the mind and brain relationship, the question of the nature of the self, and the determinism and free will issue. These seem to be among the best in the book: clear, concise and comprehensive.

Part III on Ethics covers, with mixed success, some of the standard distinctions and theories on the subject. The discussion of the relation between fact and value is rather skimpy, showing little appreciation of twentieth century contributions to the subject. One interesting chapter is devoted to the ethical issues involved in questions of taking human life. It purports to offer a method which would be of help in resolving some of the issues. The method, based on five general moral principles, appears to be somewhat simplistic, and less helpful than one might hope.

Part IV on the philosophy of religion contains separate chapters describing Eastern and Western religions, and another on the nature of religion in general. There is here a real effort to give religion a sympathetic presentation, despite the onslaught of the standard skeptical attack, capably presented in the last chapter.

Part V on epistemology offers an introduction to the sources and nature of knowledge, presenting the major theories of truth, propositions, and perception. The presentation is largely traditional in orientation, avoiding contemporary discussions of the issues.

The last part contains only one brief eight page chapter, designed to help the student develop an overall world view by interrelating ideas and beliefs pertaining to the subjects

of the foregoing chapters. It is difficult to understand how such an approach could be of much use for those whose ideas are in the undeveloped and flexible state of introductory students.

There is a quiz and test manual available containing hundreds of true and false and multiple choice questions. One who needs to test large classes of students on their reading comprehension might find the manual a worthwhile time-saving aid.

Because of its introductory nature, the book is understandably limited in scope as well as depth. There is almost nothing on topics such as political philosophy, aesthetics or philosophy of science and technology. Despite the many references, expositions and discussions of the work of great philosophers of the past, the book does not provide much of a sense of the history of philosophy. It could, however, be used compatibly with other texts devoted to such topics, serving to set the stage for further study.

Philosophers will find their share of inadequate discussions, oversimplifications and even confusions. But such shortcomings are neither frequent nor serious enough to reduce significantly the overall value of the book as a teaching instrument for introductory students.

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Ethical Issues in the Use of Computers, Deborah G. Johnson, John W. Snapper, eds.
Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1985, 375 pages, \$16.95 pbk.

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With the success of Business and Professional Ethics as hot topics in philosophy, and with the ubiquity of computers in our lives and in the news, it was inevitable that Computer Ethics should come to be. On the other hand, as interesting and, perhaps, as valuable as this anthology is, reading it gave me the distinct impression that Computer Ethics is barely in the process of becoming: Out of the 33 readings, precisely *one* (not counting the editors' introductory essays) is both by a philosopher and about computers!

Ethical Issues in the Use of Computers is divided into five parts: Codes of Conduct for Computer Professionals, Issues of Responsibility, Privacy and Security, Computers and Power, and Software as Property. The editors are careful to note that they are not defining the field of Computer Ethics by this division. Each part begins with a brief introduction, and the essays—by philosophers, computer scientists, journalists, and lawyers (*lots* of lawyers)—date from 1890-1984.

In their general introduction, Johnson and Snapper distinguish among new problems arising through new technology, old problems given "odd twists," and old problems that have become more "urgent" or "significant" because of the new technology. They promise, for each section, background studies in ethical theory, applications of that theory to computer technology, and case studies. There are plenty of the latter, which are quite valuable; there is much of the former, if the definition of 'ethical' is extended to include "legal"; and there are many applications of *legal* theory, but—as noted—only one of the philosophical theory.

The book is intended for use in courses as well as for researchers. But its usefulness for research is doubtful: there is no index (which is inexcusable for research *or* teaching), and many of the articles have had their notes deleted.

Part 1 offers five codes of conduct devised by various professional computer societies, one case study in the form of a Supreme Court opinion concerning a professional code (not one of those included) that was found to be overly restrictive, and two essays by philosophers: