

tion than a creative interpretation and application, against the author's intentions if need be. Ours is indeed an age of nihilism, Vattimo maintains, and in such an age what is needed is a symbol of wisdom not unlike Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, or Vattimo's domesticated *Übermensch*. This is "an ideal of life and wisdom that ultimately sees the goal of moral refinement as a 'plural' subject capable of living his/her own interpretation of the world without needing to believe that it is 'true' in the metaphysical sense of the word: grounded in a secure and steadfast foundation." (131)

Other chapters find Vattimo arguing along similarly novel lines, often to good effect. Whether in the end one shares his interpretations or not, the book makes for compelling reading and may be recommended rather highly. Readers should be aware, however, that Vattimo's work on Nietzsche here as elsewhere, as he puts it, "has never been a straightforward exercise in the philological clarification, explication, or 'objective' reconstruction of Nietzsche's thought. If this implies that the essays collected here are limited in certain ways, that is something I am quite prepared to accept." (ix)

Paul Fairfield, Queen's University

Doing Philosophy: A Practical Guide for Students

Clare Saunders, David Mossley, George MacDonald Ross, Danielle Lamb

New York: Continuum, 2007; 184 pages.

The goal of *Doing Philosophy: A Practical Guide for Students* is to provide an introduction to and present useful strategies for doing philosophy. The book is intended for students who have never taken philosophy before, that is, primarily first-year undergraduates. While it does introduce some useful techniques for all undergraduates, this book is definitely for the serious student.

The book is divided into chapters on reading, note taking, writing, discussion and resources. Throughout the work, the authors not only provide methodological tips but also explain how these particular methods will aid in philosophy studies. While the introduction claims that the book is not a "how-to" manual (1), students will expect just that. The

authors feel the need to add often lengthy explanations and justifications for their methodological devices, which obscures the methods by surrounding them with a block of text the student must wade through to pick out the suggested method; the practical guidance that might actually prove useful to students could well be summarised in a volume a quarter of the size (the book totals 184 pages, a daunting length for a student looking for a brief introduction). For example, the chapter on “Reading Philosophy” includes a section on reading historical texts. The authors first emphasise the importance of studying historical texts, list some authors a student may encounter at some point in their studies, and explain the virtues of the Oxford English Dictionary, second edition (the 20-volume set). The recommendation in this section is less practical than most in the work (the authors suggest reading in the library near a copy of the OED, or using an electronic version, which may be available through the library; if not, the student would have to pay for an individual, very expensive, subscription).

They then provide a two-page analysis of six lines from Hobbes’ *Leviathan*. This seems more effort than the average first-year undergraduate will be willing to devote to the task of reading, and the analysis adds nothing other than emphasising the fact that the language used in the text is different from modern English, concluding that even should the student take advantage of all available resources, some parts of the passage are yet incomprehensible. On the whole, it makes the reading of historical philosophy seem like a tedious and perhaps even an impossible task.

In general, the authors seem conflicted, as they seem to want both to introduce particular methods they feel are helpful for studying philosophy and to stress that these methods are not universal. They consistently ask the student to refer to their department or their instructor for further guidance. For instance, in Chapter 5 on “Writing Philosophy,” the authors state, “We do not give detailed advice about how to give references here, because there are various systems, and different departments have different preferences”; yet, they add, “See Chapter 6 for more information on referencing systems” (117), where they actually do give detailed advice about the Harvard referencing format.

Sometimes, the examples provided seem peculiar to those schooled in the Canadian system. The authors refer to modules, tutors and grading according to classes. The most jarring example of this occurs

in the chapter on “Reading Philosophy,” where the authors go through a detailed examination of a sample reading list a student should expect to receive in a first-year philosophy course. Contrary to what one expects, the reading list includes primary and secondary literature, anthologies and journal articles in bibliographic format and covers one and a half pages in print. It seems either that the authors are working within a different system, where students are expected to select their readings from a larger, recommended list of readings, or that they are here providing advice for more advanced students.

The most valuable portion of the work is clearly the section on “Writing Philosophy.” The authors introduce some generally accepted expectations of a philosophy student and give the student some idea of how her work will be graded. This section is most directly applicable to a first-year student’s philosophy work and provides the most help to a student who is unsure of the expectations of the academic discipline of philosophy. The authors provide examples of writing exegetical, comparative and evaluative philosophy assignments, and work through these examples with respect to particular expectations, encouraging students to evaluate their own work. The only problem with this section is that the examples deal with particular philosophical works. Not only will this probably seem daunting, but if the student knows nothing about the texts and problems the authors are discussing, she will not know how to evaluate the examples the authors provide, nor will she see how one way of answering a particular question is better than another.

The final section of the book is on “Resources.” In addition to general advice on where to find resources specific to philosophy (e.g., the library), the authors provide specific references for philosophical dictionaries, other introductions to philosophy, study guides, logic books and some (British) philosophical societies. This section includes both print and online sources, and seems destined to become obsolete relatively soon. The section ends with relatively long explanations of a very short list of philosophical terms (8 of them, to be exact) and seems an odd way to end the book.

Throughout my reading, I searched for passages or sections that may be particularly helpful to my seminar sections for their assignments and class discussions. While the book does include chapters on both these topics, I failed to find something concise enough to justify recommending this book. An instructor may find the guide helpful if she is

looking for particular methods to recommend to students, but these recommendations would likely be better received if made to the students verbally, in class or in seminar, with significant paraphrasing.

Despite these problems and shortcomings, it must be emphasised that this guide will be helpful to the small number of students who are not merely looking for a quick way to raise their grade in an introductory philosophy course, but for the assurance that their methods are valuable and efficient. While the average student may not be keen to engage in an in-depth consideration of their note-taking techniques, the student who is will be very pleased with this text. I would not recommend using this guide in a course, but if approached by a student looking for some extra guidance, I might mention it.

Charlene Elsby, University of Guelph

Hegel's Philosophy of Right: A Reader's Guide

David Rose

New York: Continuum, 2007; 159 pages.

What is valuable about David Rose's *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, a short reader's guide of fewer than 150 pages (not counting the notes and index)? The answer, I think, lies immediately under our eyes. More precisely, it is in this text's diminutive stature, limited scope, and simplification of a difficult topic, that I see its greatest strength. I approached Rose's text in much the same manner as I think scholars approach much of the scholarship on Hegel's philosophy: I was looking for bold assertions and grand insights. What the text offered me, alternatively, was a second look at a key Hegelian work. Amid scholarship that is often fit only for Hegel experts, which often rivals the original in density and difficulty, this little text stands out for its ease, its good nature, its comfort and its prudence. Having said this, however, I do not always agree with Rose's assessment of Hegel's work.

Rose's text is not intended as the representation of new discoveries. As a *Reader's Guide* it is simply a presentation of Hegel's ideas in an accessible manner. In Rose's own words (5–6), the text is meant as a guide, and does not aspire to be anything more. He refers to it as a crampon (a mountain climbing aid), a prop to ensure that the reader who