

For its attribution to Socrates, however, the authors do not produce a scrap of evidence. They give us no reason to believe that such an assumption is necessary for the validity of the argument. Nor do they produce any textual evidence for attributing it to Socrates. On the contrary, the paragraph to which they append this note is one in which Socrates summarizes the whole argument, and in that summary the premise he uses is only that something "must be beautiful if it is sound-minded"; and a bit later in the same paragraph he says that "sound-mindedness is *one* of the beautiful things." The argument has many difficulties but this blunder is certainly not one of them.

Another instance, almost as bad, is Footnote 51. Here the authors comment on Socrates' argument that knowledge of knowledge is a strange thing because, among other things, in the case of sense perceptions, such as seeing and hearing, there is no such thing, Critias agrees, as seeing of seeing and hearing of hearing. Here the authors say:

Critias cannot understand that such self-related activities of the soul are possible. Yet he himself experiences such seeing without recognizing it. At 168e he sees that something *appears* impossible to him; in other words, he sees with his "mind's eye" a seeing (or a non-seeing) of his "mind's eye." So there is a kind of seeing that sees itself and other seeings but sees no color.

Now in the first place, Critias is said to *see* that something *appears* impossible, which is not a case of seeing, literal or metaphorical. In the second place, the "seeing" the authors attribute to Critias is metaphorical; it is not a case of sense perception, the case by which Socrates is trying to test the notion of knowledge of knowledge. And finally, appeal to such a metaphorical sense of seeing, which amounts to knowing in some sense, is question begging in the context or circular and uninformative. If we are trying to decide whether there is such a thing as knowledge of knowledge, parallel cognitive examples, such as sense perception, might be of some help; but it is no help to smuggle in the very case to be decided under guise of a non-literal use of "seeing." The metaphorical use of "seeing" occurs in Plato often, and it has been noticed; but it is of no use here.

However, many of the footnotes are helpful. The book as a whole is well suited for use in beginning courses, in intermediate courses for philosophy majors, and even in graduate seminars with Greekless readers. But it remains a difficult dialogue. And to teach it successfully one would need to rely pretty heavily on much of the secondary literature the authors cite in their "Selected Bibliography." I would definitely add, though, Helen North's *Sophrosyne*, which deals not only with the *Charmides*, but also with the Greeks' concept of sound-mindedness before and after Plato.

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**Committed Journalism**, Edmund B. Lambeth.

Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 1986. \$25 cl; \$8.95 pbk. 0-253-31392-9.

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Although journalism and philosophy might not seem on the surface to have much in common, they are inextricably bound together in both democratic theory and practice. The philosophical idea that an informed citizenry is a prerequisite for democratic government nurtured the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, and the claims journalists make for its protection today depend upon a philosophical conviction that the freest flow of information produces the best information. Recent public opinion, though, has paid less attention to the grand idea of a free press than what it sees free presses actually doing with their freedom. Charges

of arrogance, invasion of privacy, superficiality, bias and distortion threaten both journalism's public support and legal foundations, and the problem of ethics in journalism has been the subject of several recent books. Most of these jeremiads simply preach a stricter adherence to traditional standards of good journalism. But University of Kentucky Journalism Professor Edmund Lambeth aims not only to redefine just what those standards are, he hopes to create philosopher journalists to apply them in future practice as well.

Though both journalism and philosophy begin with questions, aren't their ends radically different? Produced under time and commercial pressures, journalism's function, in the words of Walter Lippmann, is primarily to "signalize an event," not reveal truth. It's province, in Plato's words, is opinion—an informed opinion at best. Given the dramatic difference between what philosophers and journalists do, Lambeth's creation sounds a bit, at first, like a turtle that flies. His discussion, though, is a timely reminder of philosophy's significant role in defining and securing those privileges Western democracies have traditionally granted news media, and it should definitely help revitalize thinking about the balance of those privileges with concomitant obligations. Both philosophers and journalists, though, will have some pertinent objections to his specific arguments.

Lambeth starts splendidly with several provocative questions to help journalists find an ethical orientation:

- 1) What are the enduring principles which a journalist should consult, without fail, in making ethical judgments?
- 2) Which is most important, which can be subordinated in a conflict?
- 3) To whom does a journalist owe fundamental loyalty—to her or himself, the public, an employer, colleagues?
- 4) How best can a journalist approach classic questions about means versus ends?

His answers, however, are not always fully convincing. It may be necessary, as he suggests, for journalists to stop feeling "uncomfortable with the unavoidable abstractions of ethics," but Lambeth has difficulties finding concrete applications for his own abstractions.

One example he discusses is a 1979 Chicago Sun Times series based on an undercover "sting" operation. To uncover reported shakedowns of small businesses by city health and safety inspectors, the paper leased and ran a bar (aptly called *The Mirage*) with its own staffers posing as employees. The investigative unit filmed payoffs to corrupt officials with hidden cameras and wrote a series of articles that was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Obviously a journalistic scoop, clearly of some public benefit, but using means which left many journalists very uneasy. How can we decide when a story is important enough to get just about any way possible? Journalists often plead that "vital public interest" justifies abjuring further discussion of means and ends. Lambeth wants to follow the questions a bit more systematically. It's important, he says, to more precisely define the parameters of the phrase "vital public interest." Again, his questions are promising.

- 1) Is the problem systemic or selectively present in the institution under investigation?
- 2) Is there compelling reason for believing it cannot be corrected without the news media, and without media's use of deception?
- 3) Does the wrongful condition strike at the heart of the social contract?—i.e. violate basic principles of humaneness, justice, freedom, etc.

But he doesn't ask enough questions or follow up systematically enough the ones he has asked. I can imagine a skeptical journalist with a philosophical bent having several different reactions here. Question number two, he might say, should already be asked routinely—though it may not be specifically articulated as a criteria for making an editorial judgment. But what is the point of number one? Is that the only, or even most important, criteria for

deciding the public significance of the story? What about the quantity and quality of harm being done by the alleged abuse? And it's never been a journalist's job to ask questions like number three. Taking the responsibility of deciding for oneself or one's paper what threatens the "social contract" (whatever that is, Lambeth doesn't clearly say) sounds like a confusion of governmental and journalistic realms.

Perhaps poets are the unacknowledged moral legislators of the world as Shelley claimed, but journalists have, for good reason, been wary of using "the goals and values of society" to justify revealing or concealing information. A persuasive counterargument, which Lambeth could have confronted directly, says that it's one thing to consider immediate consequences (i.e., the clear and present danger doctrine) when deciding to conceal or reveal information, but journalists should not try to calculate ultimate consequences, just provide the best information possible to those policymakers, and citizens, whose constitutional responsibility it is to do so. One classic case where journalists arrogated such rights involved the early sixties Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba by U.S. backed insurgents. The New York Times suppressed a story about the imminent attack, on President Kennedy's plea of "humaneness" that publication would endanger the lives of the invaders. But after the invasion failed dismally, both the editors and president acknowledged that it might have been better, more humane too, if the story had run and the action had been aborted. Humaneness is certainly a fine guiding principle, but is there always one clear humane action that can be taken in a given journalistic situation? In his zeal to provide journalism with a high moral purpose, Lambeth risks reinforcing the journalistic suspicion of theory that he wants to allay.

His discussion of vital public interests which override ordinary ethical practice has little of the analytical precision Sissela Bok brings to her discussion of the topic in the "Investigative Journalism" chapter of *Secrets*. What she does with "the public's right to know" is what Lambeth needed to do with many of his lofty but nebulous catchphrases. Too often he merely waves at descriptions. Just what is this "authentic" interpretation which is supposed to replace objectivity as a reporting ideal? If a new form or sequel to investigative reporting is needed, what kind? If news councils and ombudsmen are to be shelved for a more encompassing ethical dialogue, how does one do it? If all journalists are philosophers it is of course possible. But how make all journalists philosophers? And do we really want to? Would people comfortable with abstractions by good at gathering news in the first place? Would we want people comfortable with them asking a journalist's questions (might they not think they already have the answers?).

Lambeth thinks journalism's credibility problem is now bad enough that journalists have little to lose by trying radical new approaches. Here I hear a skeptical journosophical voice again, warning that crying ruin can lead to greater ruin. Lambeth approvingly quotes late Yale Law Professor Alexander Bickel's suggestions that society needs some "uniform rule and scheme of life." He doesn't acknowledge that Bickel's Burkean answer would be to rely on tradition rather than an appeal to independent reason. He quotes Bickel's "the rights of man cannot be established by an theoretical definition," but he doesn't see how it contradicts his own proposal. Again, I envision questions Lambeth ignores: do we really need new forms of coverage, or a better appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of old ones?

Still, *Committed Journalism* is a bold attempt to make philosophical reflection a standard part of journalistic practice, not just after the fact damage containment. I don't think a Lambethian curriculum for all future journalists would produce the all-encompassing ethical transformation he envisions, but it would certainly help reintegrate journalism ideal and real aspects, resolve some of the inherent tension between noble calling and crass business that being both a public trust and private business makes it heir to. Despite its occasional breathless quality—perhaps in part because of it—Lambeth's book can help journalism students remember that an ideal of social responsibility and commitment to high standards of public

service are essential for the survival of both a free press and democratic government.

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**Directing Human Actions: Perspectives on Basic Ethical Issues, Ron Yezzi**

University Press of America, Lanham, MD, 1986, 363 pp., \$31.95 cl.; \$14.50 pbk. 0-8191-5197-3

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T. M. REED

There exist a great many introductory texts in ethics, so it is natural to inquire what, if anything, is distinctive about any addition to their number. Yezzi says of *Directing Human Actions* that it takes a more classical approach to ethics than is found in most other texts—though approximately half of the philosophers considered turn out to be twentieth century authors—and that by including discussions of Freud, Marx, Skinner, and Edward O. Wilson, the book broadens the scope of ethical inquiry beyond what is found in standard accounts of the subject. These claims are true, and the result is a wide-ranging and challenging introduction to ethics which should prove stimulating to any able student.

The book has an interesting and complex format. Five major issues are considered: “What is the Good Life?”, “How is the Directing of Human Life Affected by Conceptions of Human Nature?”, “What Ought to be the Relation of an Individual to Society?”, “Can Human Beings be Morally Responsible?”, and “How Can the Good Life be Known?” Leading thinkers or positions are introduced under each topic heading; for example, the relation of an individual to society is examined from the perspective of Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Rousseau, Stirner, Mill, Marx, Dewey, Rawls, and Nozick. In treating such issues Yezzi combines his own exposition and summaries of views with brief and pertinent quotations from the theorists under consideration. Yezzi also provides sample applications of philosophical theories to issues of contemporary concern; the positions of Hobbes and Rousseau, for instance, are contrasted by tracing their implications with respect to issues of nuclear deterrence. In addition, Yezzi attempts to deepen the student’s comprehension of competing views by offering a well-chosen set of objections to the positions considered along with possible replies to leading sorts of criticism. This is supplemented by provocative study questions and exercises which should assist the serious student in mastering the diversity of philosophical approaches discussed in connection with a given issue.

*Directing Human Actions* is clearly and engagingly written, and any reservations a prospective teacher might entertain about it would be apt to derive from its character rather than the author’s execution of his project. Thus, for example, the discussions of various philosophers are brief and highly compressed; this book is not the place to turn if one desires a complete or sophisticated treatment of Mill, Dewey, Rawls, or any other of the theorists considered. Again, many teachers of ethics prefer to use anthologies of classical and/or contemporary readings at the introductory level, and in consequence would decline to consider even a well-constructed single-authored text. For teachers not so committed, however, *Directing Human Actions* has much to recommend it. Of the many topics or issues which are standardly treated in introductory ethics courses, very few fail to receive at least some coverage in the present volume. At the same time, there are interesting discussions of issues which tend to be neglected by introductory textbooks in the field. Yezzi’s evident enthusiasm for his subject can hardly fail to be communicated to students. Teachers of courses in introductory ethics may find in his book an appealing and attractive approach to the subject which is rarely matched in other texts.

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