

nating it as a narrative possibility,” thus forcing male characters to undertake female qualities. (154) The second contention is not only a direct assault on conventionally accepted notions of human sexuality, but also an attempt at providing an analysis of the human being as an entity that is inherently composed of “multiple Selves” and embodies both masculine and feminine qualities. (186) Oppel concludes her book with a brief discussion on the current state of the sexual revolution and how Nietzsche’s desire to destroy binaries is becoming more and more evident through the use of gender-neutral language, gender-reversed roles in the workplace, and the demand for same-sex marriages. (194)

This work is of great value not only to philosophers but also to those engaged in feminist, queer, and transgender theory, as Oppel not only attempts to rescue Nietzsche from the charge of being a small-minded misogynist, but also elucidates his postmodern contentions on gender and sexuality. Those who are concerned about the level of validity and reliability of these unorthodox interpretations should take comfort in the fact that Oppel astutely supports her original interpretations with extensive and frequent references to both primary and secondary sources. In addition, Oppel was brave enough to undertake a serious study of Nietzsche’s laconic notebooks and impassioned letters that have the ability to confound and frustrate even the most erudite and patient of scholars. Oppel’s literary style, persuasive arguments and invigorating approach thrashes spurious statements and outmoded opinions that have commandeered discussion and debate on this misunderstood philosopher and his controversial opinions on gender and sexuality.

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***Philosophy for Life: Applying Philosophy in Politics and Culture***

**Rupert Read**

**London, UK: Continuum, 2007; 165 pages.**

Philosophy infuses both the mundane and the catastrophic, from fly-away phrases to contemporary cinema to our stakes in ecological amelioration. It is threaded in what we opt for, what we craft, and what stances we take. Philosophy is not removed theory; it is not thinking from afar. Neither is it, one hopes, lofty, or exclusive. Philosophy is, elementally,

what we participate in and communicate with and by way of; but most of all, it is what we *do*. This is Rupert Read's premise in his 2007 *Philosophy for Life: Applying Philosophy in Politics and Culture*, a collection of eight essays presented in four sections. Death, faith, pop culture, and our interconnection with/in our natural surroundings are several of the avenues Read navigates in order to depict the necessary place of philosophy. Read asks after undergirding purposes to many of our "everyday" experiences—not only their ramifications, but also whose agenda is being satisfied in what we seek, what we say, and what we believe. He does this by presenting vignettes of encounters and showing where philosophy is presumed to, does already, or should be utilised to help ourselves. Where *Philosophy for Life* leaves readers wanting, however, is in Read's failure to do what he wishes for us to do.

In the first section, *Environment*, Read wrestles with several distinctions we uphold, more specifically the Nature vs. Culture distinction and its underlying opposition, subject vs. object. Read demolishes these dichotomies and attunes us to our irremovable and indistinguishable place within nature. He holds that in taking this philosophical approach—our being *of* the world, and not with or beside it—we can cultivate more long-lasting action. "Philosophy can be a radical and powerful tool for starting something good." (136) The second part, *Religion*, takes the example of Quaker meditation and "friend"-based interactions and extrapolates their political potentiality. Read postulates that faith-based systems are marginalised in our society while a dogmatic neo-liberal series of tenets, like democracy or equality, are simultaneously asserted but not fulfilled. In the following article, Read envisions whether it is worse to die or to be dead, and the repercussions of each: anticipation, the drive of the ego, and the libidinal wish to create something to live on after we pass. Both are assumptions of *self*. The third section, *Politics*, takes on Chomsky's linguistic and political expertise, considering such terms as "Terrorism," "Democracy," and "Patriotism," and the suppositions and consequences of each. It also offers a comparison of *The Lord of the Rings* with present-day government. The fourth and last section, *Art*, offers one essay on T.S. Eliot, in which Read presses readers to heed the context and tone of his poetry, and how both point to the ultimately larger request to think on the nuances of one's life.

We can understand Read's position to be one or both of two things: either philosophy is ever-present such that we only need to be-

come aware of it; and/or philosophy is extraordinarily helpful in its ability to declutter, to “clear the way.” (92) Either way, maintains Read, philosophy helps us out of the fog, assisting us as a kind of guide. Advocated is, in a sense, philosophy for the masses—not a singular ideology to be swept away by, but a portrayal of the quest for the best answers to the questions we face, the quest for the best kind of life to live, that we all partake in, knowingly or not. But it is here that the first glimpse of trouble arises, namely in the assumption of “all-ness.” What Read does, for better (because it feels uplifting and hopeful) or worse (because it may not be true), is to equate philosophy with life—*all* life. He does this, however, without reflexively asking whether there *is* such a thing as “all life.” It looks as though for Read there is a totalised “living through,” one that encompasses gift-giving and Quakerism and fossil fuels and George W. Bush. An essential reality. And, one that is shared. It may well have bolstered his argument to at least address the possibility that there might not be a singular and secure life out there. What of liminality, multivocality, and perspectival plurality? This is of critical relevance given not only the text’s recent publication, but also the choice of examples: Peter Jackson’s filmic adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*, our tarnished eco-systemic relationships, and references to WMDs and Hurricane Katrina. Calling attention to Read’s use of the term *all* might produce a fruitful shift and permit inclusion of more readers.

Read assists the reader in taking a critical account of his or her assumption by pointing to the counterintuitive and the uncomfortable. This is most successful in his *Environment* section where he demands that we ask ourselves whether empathy distances us from nature. His discussion provokes us not so much to be (a) part of nature, but rather, to see how we already are a part of it.

Braided throughout Read’s investigation is a discussion of communication—of the meaning and the implications of our utterances. Without relying on heavily technical language, Read focuses on usages gone wrong, looking specifically at turns of phrase we readily use—to *forgive or forget* and *to have a change of heart*, most notably—yet rarely question. In this sense, he offers what he demands: philosophy’s accessibility. The “user-friendliness” of the text reaches a humorous apex though when Read in his writing turns to the use of capital letters to convey importance. “(Imagine the attack on the World Trade Center repeating itself twice EVERY MONTH!)” (106); “On the one hand, we might

want to talk about ACCEPTING SOMEONE BACK INTO ONE'S LIFE, about certain kinds of behavioural changes." (76) Read does not however question the meaning behind his mechanical use of convention. Similarly, he problematises analogies or likenesses we use every day; for example he wonders if "forgiveness [is] relevantly analogous to accepting an apology" (74) but omits overtly discussing the likenesses he is himself positing. In particular, he does not ask whether his four chapters are similar in intensity and meaning.

The point is not that all cases and examples should be equal, but rather, it must be asked why these sections and not others (Philosophies of Sexuality, Food, Family), why in this order (why Environment before Religion), why this contemporary thinker in lieu of another (Noam Chomsky and not Donna Haraway), and why some sub-topics and not others (*The Lord of The Rings* instead of Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*, T. S. Eliot's approach to poetry instead of Milan Kundera's writings on fiction)? It would be helpful for Read to name his method in order to contextualise his discussion and allow the readers to understand what is at stake in all of this. Perhaps we are to assume that he takes particular examples as but interchangeable conduits used to communicate a core theme. Or, we might feel left out, unable to share in his focusing on a single novel, poet, environmental concern, or political thinker. We might also misunderstand him, believing that he views environment, religion, art, and politics as parallel or Chomsky and Eliot as equally influential. What must be considered, then, is what Read might be inherently equating by laying his text out as he does. He does, after all, speak abstractly about form in his *Art* section. Oddly, Read does not dig deeply enough into this in his own work: Why, I would ask, include *four* parts, and why *those* four parts?

There is a kind of uniformity to what Read resists including in his *Philosophy for Life*. Read refuses to call his position what it is. While Read's preferences are very much loud and clear, their *why* is not. Read asks us to do important things (unrelentingly question our assumptions) and helps clarify our thinking (in that he draws our attention to our unquestioned assumptions). But he keeps himself in part concealed. Consistency is no doubt hard to achieve. Yet it is difficult to simply let Read off the hook given that his message is one of *doing*. Ought Read not be performing what he asks us to do? At times Read comes off as pushing his personal catalogue of beliefs, from nomenclature to Abu Ghraib to

the reprioritisation of wealth distribution. While all of these might be important concerns, not only should the choice and the context of his examples be considered, so should the connection be strengthened between each overarching section and the book's larger aspirations. This text, then, is best suited for those with particular interests intersecting with Read's, or for those who can make the leap between a belief in the wholeness of philosophy and itemised sketches, or for those who wish to be quixotically reminded as to why philosophy matters. What will come across to all readers is that while philosophy cannot resolve any problems, it can add to our understanding of the problem, and enrich life.

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***Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God***

**G.W.F. Hegel**

**Trans. Peter C. Hodgson**

**Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2007; vi + 213 pages.**

Continuing the ongoing project of the Oxford's *Hegel Lectures Series*, Hodgson has once more rendered an invaluable service to those interested in the philosophy of Hegel by producing a readable, precise and scholarly translation of Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Beweise vom Dasein Gottes*. As is standard with the series, this translation includes marginal pagination referring to Jaeschke's critical edition of the German text, editorial footnotes that point to relevant passages in Hegel's other works, and a translation glossary. Hodgson has also provided a substantial editorial introduction to the text, including a lengthy summary of each lecture and the supplementary passages from a manuscript fragment on the cosmological proof and material from Hegel's 1831 lectures on the teleological and ontological proofs respectively.

The significance of this book is partly reinforced by the fact that only three days before his death Hegel signed a contract to produce a book entitled *Über das Dasein Gottes*. (1) Hodgson claims, following Jaeschke and Marheineke, that the 1829 manuscript of Hegel's lectures on the proofs essentially constitutes a draft of that projected work. (2) Given that Hegel may with some justice be said to have published only