



## Notes on New Books

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## Notes on New Books\*

AIKEN, W. AND LAFOLLETTE, H. (eds.). *World Hunger and Moral Obligation*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977. Pp. 195. \$9.95.

It is estimated that about half the people in the world today are seriously malnourished, while those in the more developed countries not only have enough to eat but often suffer from obesity. This volume of essays by writers from the United States, Australia, and Canada (but none from lesser-developed countries) explores the moral (not the technical, political, or economic) questions posed by this situation. The purpose of this book, as stated in the introduction, is not to dictate a solution to the problem of world hunger but to provoke the reader to ask himself, What do or should I think of world hunger? Each essay, and the volume as a whole, is prefaced by a series of questions ("Challenges to the Reader") on the salient issues, arguments, and criticisms by the editors and by other contributors.

Inevitably, the discussion does lead beyond the strict moral questions of redistribution of resources. There is talk of population control, world government, land reform, developmental assistance versus direct food shipments, vegetarianism, etc.

The book includes a wide range of viewpoints, from Garret Hardin's "lifeboat ethics" (one is morally required not to give assistance) to William Aiken's right to sufficient food and Richard Watson's stand that food must be shared even if all become malnourished. An intermediate position holds that one may help the starving but is not morally required to do so. The editors and some contributors are donating their profits or honorariums to famine relief.

ERIKSEN, TROND BERG. *Bios Theoretikos: Notes on Aristotle's "Ethica Nicomachea" X, 6–8*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1976. Pp. 272. \$14.00 (paper).

In defining the good which political science aims at, Aristotle writes, ". . . both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is *eudaimonia* (happiness), and identify living well and doing well with being happy; but with regard to what happiness is they differ, and the *hoi polloi* do not give the same account as the *sophoi*" (1095a18–21). Aristotle gives an initial definition of *eudaimonia* at 1098a16–18 when he states that "human good turns out to be an *energeia* (activity) of the *psuche* (soul) in accordance with *arete* (virtue), and if the *aretai* are several in number, in accordance with the best and most perfect."

The different *aretai* are discussed in books 2–9 as a prolegomena to the subject

\*The notes in this issue were written by Art Diamond, Burt Loudon, Philip Stoffregen, and Jon Walton.

of *eudaimonia*, which is returned to in book 10. The possibility that *eudaimonia* may include a plurality of *aretai* seems to be at least a live option for Aristotle, until he returns in book 10 to his initial definition. For here he adds that the best *arete* must be the *arete* of the best part of us, so that the *energeia* of that part in accordance with its own *arete* must be *eudaimonia*. But then a very different and surprising answer follows: "That this *energeia* is *theoretike* (contemplative) has been said" (1177a17).

Precisely where in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*EN*) this has been said is unclear, but a much larger unclarity looms behind the statement. How can Aristotle's earlier statements of praise for the life of *praxis* be reconciled with what he says about the life of *theoria* in *EN* 10. 6–8? If perfect *eudaimonia* can only be found in the *bios theoretikos*, and if we grant that *eudaimonia* is the good for man, how can Aristotle convince people who are engaged in contemplative activity that they should perform moral actions?

Eriksen tries to tackle these and other issues in his commentary on *EN* 10. 6–8. The *EN* has been the subject of more commentaries among modern European and American scholars than any other work of Aristotle, and this section from the tenth book has long been a favorite for commentators. In his introduction, Erikson acknowledges the "indispensable help" (pp. 12–13) he has received from past commentators such as Grant, Ramsauer, Stewart, Burnet, Joachim, Dirlmeier, and Gauthier/Jolif. Jaeger, despite Erikson's initial polemic against his genetic, developmental approach to the study of Aristotle, also remains a strong influence throughout.

In his preliminary remarks, Eriksen writes: "It is our considered opinion that the difficulties of *EN* X, 6–8 cannot be solved by assumptions of form. . . . The solution is to be found, if anywhere, in its contents, because the problem is rooted in its contents, not in its form" (p. 11). But on page 33 he appears to fly in the face of his own advice: "Like the *Republic* of Plato, *EN* can only be understood from its summit. We should not ask if *EN* X, 6–8 is intelligible in the light of what is said before, but rather if *EN* X, 6–8 renders the former books intelligible." In his effort to dissociate himself from the methods of Jaeger-inspired scholars, Eriksen has somehow managed to make the same mistake: He has let considerations of form dictate philosophical content. Why must we accept his dogmatic claim that the concluding pages of *EN* render the preceding nine books intelligible? The claim is especially dubious when seen in the light of contemporary views over the nature of Aristotle's surviving works. Most scholars today believe that *EN* and the other surviving treatises represent only edited versions of Aristotle's lecture notes from the academy.

A final note concerns not the godly life of *theoria*, but mere matters of *oikonomia*. The U.S. price tag on Eriksen's book is \$14, and this is for a paperback book which is not professionally typeset, has unjustified right-hand margins, and is bound with a very flimsy cover.

HARSANYI, JOHN C. *Rational Behavior and Bargaining Equilibrium in Games and Social Situations*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977. Pp. x + 314. \$29.95.

Ever since Bentham, utilitarians have sought a sound technique for interpersonal utility comparisons. For a while all that the theorists could succeed in justifying was a mere ordering of alternatives for each individual: For an individual one alternative could be said to have more or less utility than another, but nothing could be said

about how *much* more or less, nor could anything be said about how this “amount” of utility compared with that received by another individual. This was the situation until Frank Ramsey and the von Neumann-Morgenstern team independently exhibited a technique by which relative amounts (ratios) of utilities could be measured. But this could be done only for each individual independently—the goal of interpersonal utility comparison remained as elusive as ever.

Now John Harsanyi has come up with a technique that he believes will at last make interpersonal utility comparisons possible. It is noteworthy that, according to Rawls, the device that Harsanyi proposes comes closer than any other to anticipating the veil of ignorance. What Harsanyi suggests is that it is possible for one man to compare his utilities to another’s by having him imaginatively place himself in the other’s position with the other’s preferences. An individual should then be able for any social situation to judge whether he would rather be in his own position with his own tastes in that situation or in various other persons’ positions with their tastes. This suffices, according to Harsanyi, to allow us to compare social situations according to the total utility of all persons in society. In Harsanyi’s brief example one social situation has all men eating only meat, the other has them all eating only fish. If there are two men in the society, with one having a mild preference for fish and the other a strong preference for meat, then the first man will realize that the other man would derive more utility from eating meat than he himself would derive from eating fish. Thus the situation where all men eat meat results in greater total utility for the society.

The method has some plausibility when you have a very small group of people, who know each others’ tastes well, in simple situations, where the intensities of their preferences are widely different. But vary any of these conditions and the technique loses its plausibility. For example, what if you have 100 people, 20 of whom have a strong preference for meat and 80 of whom have a mild preference for fish? Here we would have to have a very precise measure of the utility of each person before we could reach an evaluation of which social situation is preferable. In order to make social-choice decisions of the sort complex enough to be of interest to us, we require an operationally precise utility unit that is common to all men. Like those before him, Harsanyi has not found such a unit.

Though perhaps of most interest for ethics, Harsanyi’s treatment of interpersonal utility and social choice takes up a relatively small portion of his book. His main goal in what appears to be an integrated reworking of material first found in his numerous articles is to provide a general theory of rational behavior in decision theory, game theory, and ethics. Harsanyi is concerned that game theory has failed to live up to the high hopes that social scientists had for it shortly after the publication of von Neumann and Morgenstern’s *A Theory of Games*. He aims at renewing those hopes by removing what he believes to have been the major obstacle to their fulfillment: the failure to “yield determinate solutions for two-person nonzero-sum games and for n-person games.” Harsanyi’s “solution” to two-person nonzero-sum games is well known and controversial. Whether social scientists will find it of use is doubtful, since it seems more a prescription of how bargainers ought to settle their disputes than a prediction about how they actually do settle them. Even as a prescription, Harsanyi’s “solution” has come under powerful attack from T. C. Schelling in *The Strategy of Conflict* and, more recently, from David Lewis in *Convention*. Here, as in social-choice theory, Harsanyi may be wrong. But, as Popper would suggest, perhaps this is the price one pays for offering bold answers to significant problems.

HEGEL, G. W. F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated from the German by A. V. MILLER with Analysis of the Text and Foreword by J. N. FINDLAY. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977. Pp. xxxv + 595. \$29.50.

Hegel scholars have been complaining about Sir James Baillie's old translation of the *Phenomenology* for some time now, and several new translations were reportedly under way a few years ago. A. V. Miller, however, was apparently the first to actually complete the ambitious project of rendering the *Phenomenology* into contemporary English, and the new Oxford text is the result. Having previously translated the *Science of Logic* and the *Philosophy of Nature* as well as the *Zusätze* to the *Philosophy of Mind*, Miller brings a wealth of experience to the task. He is obviously the best English Hegel translator at work today, and the current generation of English readers who are part of the Hegel revival will appreciate his efforts.

The *Phenomenology* is Hegel's most popular work, and it is hoped that this new translation will introduce his work to an even larger audience. (One way to guarantee this would be for Oxford Press to also release a more moderately priced paperback version of the text.) Hegel's prose has always been the object of philosophical jokes, and while some of these jokes were made by positivists who had no sympathy for his thought, it must also be admitted that the existing translations did not always do justice to what he was trying to say. Miller's efforts should result in a Hegel which the English reader can more readily appreciate: "In attempting to convey Hegel's thought to the English reader who has no German, I have done my best to steer a course which, avoiding loose paraphrase, departs at times from a rigid consistency in rendering Hegelian locutions where this seemed to be more helpful to the reader. I have been sparing in the use of capitals and, in general, have only used them for terms which have a peculiarly Hegelian connotation" (p. xxxi).

One novel feature of Miller's edition which bears mention is the numbering of paragraphs in the text. Hegel himself did not number his paragraphs when writing the *Phenomenology*, but Miller's idea should make the problem of referring to passages in the text a bit easier.

Like all great philosophers, Hegel used language for his own purposes—developing his own philosophical vocabulary by stretching and altering the limits of language to better fit his own world view. We cannot expect to find this world view fully expressed in an English translation, nor can we expect that a contemporary translation will always remain contemporary. But Miller's translation is certainly the best currently available, and it should remain so for many years.

MARTIN, REX. *Historical Explanation: Re-Enactment and Practical Inference*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977. Pp. 267. \$15.00.

Much of recent philosophy of history has revolved around the conflict between supporters of the Hempelian covering-law model of historical explanation and those who, in the tradition of Collingwood, reject this analysis in favor of some version of the thesis that explanation in history depends not on the subsumption of actions under general laws of human behavior but upon some non-law-governed understanding of the situations and intentions of historical actors. Professor Martin tries in his book "to bring the 'covering law' and *verstehen* positions together on a middle ground." Martin's strategy in pursuing this goal is to present a detailed analysis of the logical structure of action explanations, from which he derives what

he calls the basic schema of all action explanations. Martin then goes on to discuss the question of why explanations given in accordance with this schema have explanatory power. He rejects the view of the covering-law theorists that there is a necessary or probabilistic law involved in such explanations, but neither is he willing to accept the view that regularity generalizations are of no importance to historical explanations. Instead he argues that historians require regularity generalizations to support the plausibility of their explanations, though these regularity generalizations will never attain the status of laws, or even attain probabilities approaching 1. He also addresses the question of what relationship holds between the explanans and the explanandum in explanations given according to his basic schema of action explanation. Again, he rejects the views of both the covering-law and the *verstehen* theorists. He denies that the connection is one of nomic necessity, but he also argues at some length against the view of Donagan and others that the connection is analytic. Instead, he proposes the Wittgensteinian position that assuming the constancy of the tie between explanans and explanandum is necessary to our practice of explanation in history; that is, he is claiming that historians take the existence of a connection between the explanans and the explanandum in their explanations as a basic presupposition in all of their thinking about human behavior. If it frequently happened that all of the components of the explanans in an action explanation were correctly filled out and still the explanans had no connection with the explanandum, historians would presumably be forced to give up the basic assumptions that underlie their practice of explaining human behavior and adopt different assumptions that would produce some new basic schema of action explanation.

Martin also includes a chapter on other periods and other cultures, in which he is concerned to refute Collingwood's contention that men in different periods are so heterogeneous that no explanation of the deeds of men of one period is possible by historians in latter periods. Martin accepts the claim that human beings are heterogeneous over time, but argues that nonetheless the basic schema of action explanation is constant and allows us to learn, through analogy with our own behavior, the nature of actions performed by members of radically different times and cultures. There seems to be a certain tension between this claim and the view mentioned earlier, that the basic schema of action explanations is central to our practice of action explanation. Martin's position on other times and other cultures seems to force him to assume that the practice of action explanation operative today has remained unchanged through time, and indeed he does say that the principles of action explanation "must have transhistorical application." This would seem to force him to deny that the practice of historical explanation has ever changed, and it is not clear how he might support such a claim.

This brief summary hardly does justice to the subtlety and depth of Martin's work. His book is full of interesting arguments and cogent discussions of the literature and should be of value to anyone interested in the philosophy of history.

ROBINSON, JONATHAN. *Duty and Hypocrisy in Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind: An Essay in the Real and the Ideal*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977. Pp. x+150. \$12.50.

Robinson's book is primarily a close commentary on part c of chapter 6 of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, which contains the infamous critique of *Moralität*. Hegel's critique of

*Moralität* is also presented in a slightly altered and much abbreviated form in the later *Philosophy of Mind* as well as the *Philosophy of Right*, where it eventually gives way to Hegel's own *Sittlichkeit* alternative—a concrete ethics which reaches its completion in community. Traces of this complaint against ethical formalism can also be found in Hegel's early writings. But while an assessment of Hegel's critique of *Moralität* is the most important issue involved in understanding his own approach to ethics (as well as in understanding any relevance which his view may have in regard to certain contemporary ethical theories which repeat Kantian formalist errors), Hegel scholars have not given much attention to this crucial section of the *Phenomenology*. Robinson has therefore performed a valuable service in producing a commentary which tries both to follow the details of Hegel's (not entirely lucid) presentation as well as to offer an independent judgment as to its validity.

On a broader level, the book explores the tension between the real and the ideal, a recurrent motif in all of Hegel's writings. On this point, Robinson argues "that the practical lesson of Hegel's thought is basically conservative" (p. 130). Robinson also has some interesting remarks to offer concerning the change in perspective between the *Phenomenology* and the *Philosophy of Right*. The commentary itself largely ignores Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* alternative, which in the latter work supersedes the formalist *Moralität*. But why is the *Sittlichkeit* alternative absent from the *Phenomenology*? Robinson suggests that "the theory advanced in the *Phenomenology* represents a shift away from a philosophy oriented around the nation state, a theory to which Hegel subsequently returned" (p. 126).

Robinson candidly admits in his introduction that he finds himself "outside" Hegel's system when he attempts to analyze the discussion on *Moralität* (p. 6). This confession may come as a relief to those Anglo-American readers who have always shuddered at the suggestion of the *Weltgeist*. As he notes earlier, ". . . I have chosen to discuss Hegel's view of morality in a way which deliberately downplays this dialectical development [that is, Hegel's view that reality develops dialectically]. I believe that this will reveal a Hegel who has a great deal to say to moral philosophers in the English-speaking world" (p. 3). In other words, Robinson's commentary (unlike most Hegelian commentaries) does not go after the whole Hegel. But if "the whole really is somehow implied by the parts, then the effort to understand one of these parts should give us some grasp of the whole, so long as we remember from the beginning that the part is only a part" (p. 4).

Robinson takes it "as a working principle that Hegel is concerned with a morality of duty as described and defended by Kant" (p. 40), and it is in this assertion that Hegel is specifically criticizing Kant's ethical theory in the section on *Moralität* where we find the major difficulty with Robinson's interpretation. He admits that Hegel is not only criticizing a philosophical position but rather a general *Weltanschauung* (p. 38), and a careful look at Hegel's presentation reveals that the three postulates of practical reason attributed to the moral *Weltanschauung* are not, in fact, Kant's, and that other crucial concepts such as God and conscience (to mention only two) are not described in a strict Kantian manner. Indeed, Kant is never even mentioned by name. But Hegel obviously did know Kant's work well, as Robinson himself admits (p. 38). Are we then forced to assume that he made severe errors in his presentation of the moral *Weltanschauung*? Robinson seems to ignore this (necessary) conclusion, and instead offers three justifications for concentrating on Kant as the unnamed defender of *Moralität*: (1) ". . . in so far as Kant and Fichte both share a common belief in the primacy of practical reason, they are both the object of attack" (p. 39). (2) Hegel's analysis "can be understood in Kantian terms . . ."

(p. 38, my emphasis). (3) “English-speaking philosophers are relatively familiar with Kant’s ethics. . .” (p. 38). Robinson admits that his decision to focus entirely on Kant is “methodological” rather than a real resolution of a touchy historical problem, but it is still hard to believe that one could take any of these three statements, alone or together, as a solid argument for the claim that the moral Weltanschauung must be seen as Kant’s Weltanschauung.

Nevertheless, Robinson has written a coherent and engaging essay which should interest all those who want a close study of the critique of *Moralität*. Written in a clear and independent manner, this book is also highly recommended to those who may be looking for alternatives to contemporary rationalist and formalist approaches to ethics.