

the review of
metaphysics

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The final chapter criticizes consequentialist readings of Fichte's ethics and argues in summary what Ware has defended all along. Fichte's ethics is deontological at the level of ordinary, everyday moral deliberation, but teleological at the level of philosophical reflection.

This is simply an exceptional book, clearly written and argued and a delight to read. It is required reading for anyone interested in German Idealism or in normative ethics in general.—Jeffery Kinlaw, *McMurry University, University of North Carolina at Pembroke*

WILSON, Jeffrey Dirk, editor. *Mystery and Intelligibility: History of Philosophy as Pursuit of Wisdom*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021. xi + 262 pp. Cloth, \$75.00; eBook \$75.00—This book is somewhat less schematic and coherent than the subtitle might suggest. It collects seven essays by different authors, some published previously. Four of them address particular areas and themes in the history of philosophy. Jeffrey Wilson argues that Plato and Aristotle valued Homeric myth by contrast with the demythologizing philosophers who preceded them. Donald Verene also writes about metaphysics and myth, developing ideas from Vico, Kant, Hegel, Bradley, and Cassirer. William Desmond looks at Heraclitus, partly through the eyes of Hegel and Nietzsche. Eric Perl contends that the question "Why is there anything at all?", taken in its "absolute" sense not restricted to concrete objects, is not "distinctively modern" but "has scarcely been asked since the Middle Ages," except by Heidegger. These pieces could be regarded as examples of "history of philosophy as pursuit of wisdom" in practice. It is in the three remaining essays (and the editor's long, programmatic introduction) that the volume makes its theoretical claims.

In "What is Philosophy?" Philipp Rosemann does not directly answer his ambitious question but tells us that philosophy is one of four axes, along with "the narrative, the religious, and the political," found "in every field of human experience." The philosophers he considers in this vein are a few celebrated figures of the distant and more recent past: Plato, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein (all figures, interestingly, from outside Rosemann's medieval specialism). His most telling point is perhaps all the stronger for being left unsaid. The three dimensions he specifies are all areas usually neglected by analytical philosophers and historians of philosophy—although politics is indeed frequently treated by them as a special topic, Rosemann has in mind the political dimension of any philosophy, as evinced by Leo Strauss.

In his "Guide for the Perplexed," the historian of ancient philosophy John Rist explains "how to present or pervert the history of philosophy." Rist is especially interested in the perversions, as practiced by "sophists," ranging from the assumption that a later philosopher must have read an earlier one, to constructing "dustbin" philosophers to whom a variety of

fragments can be attributed, to the type of charitable interpretation by which a thinker who lived centuries ago is recognized as having produced “a poor man’s version of what is better spelled out” by a much more recent one, to the interpretative ruthlessness by which whole passages in old texts are dismissed as “ridiculous” and ignored. The students who can recognize and avoid sophists can genuinely learn philosophy, which Rist, unlike Rosemann, is willing to define: “a love of truth which drives us to try to understand, not various sets of facts about the world, but what the world is, if possible why it is, and what we are ourselves.” Rist clearly believes that being taught philosophy, so understood, involves intensive study of past philosophers, because modernity—which he dates to the “new science” of Bacon and Descartes and the “new morality-substitutes of Machiavelli and Hobbes”—is not the only way forward, and it is one of the basic duties of philosophers today to challenge modernity’s assumptions.

Timothy Noone defends, more explicitly than Rosemann and Rist (who just take it for granted), the view that doing philosophy involves, centrally, studying texts from the past. Noone sets up his own position by contrast with that of another well-known medievalist, Jorge Gracia. For Gracia, although philosophy of the past can have some direct use in suggesting ideas and arguments to philosophers today, and in training students in the art of reasoning, its main value is related to the fact that philosophy is grounded in particular cultures. A knowledge of its history helps us to transcend cultural provincialism. Noone finds that this answer alone does not allow history of philosophy to be sufficiently intimate with and indeed “constitutive of” philosophy. In Noone’s view, philosophy is a practice and a craft, which can be mastered only by studying the great philosophers of the past. Why not, you might ask, by reading today’s textbooks and academic articles? Because, Noone answers, “when we start to study philosophy, we are lucky if there is anywhere in the world a master of philosophy at the time we live.” No philosopher today can compare mentally with Aquinas, Scotus, Descartes, and even less with Plato or Aristotle. We can, therefore, encounter “a masterful philosophical mind” only by reading the texts of such great thinkers of the past.

The special value of this collection is that the writers, especially of theoretical essays, present boldly a view of philosophy, as a search for ultimate truth and wisdom, that is very rarely heard in most Anglophone universities. Rosemann, Rist (and, in his introduction, Wilson) lose some of this value by writing too much just for those who already agree, asserting—and in Rist’s case ridiculing—rather than arguing. Noone does indeed develop an argument, but it is open to two obvious objections. Although there is no one nowadays who works at the highest level in all the different fields where Aristotle excelled, it is not obviously true that our best philosophers are less good at thinking philosophically than he or the other great figures of the past. It is also not obvious why we, people with ordinary minds, would best learn how to philosophize by studying philosophical geniuses. Will the ways their Super Intellectuals work not

escape our grasp because of their rapidity and subtlety, so that we shall either be put off altogether, left behind, or confused?

There are two more general criticisms of the approach adopted in the book as a whole. First, the authors' conception of where the history of philosophy stretches is very narrow. It is not just that they have the Western tradition alone in view. Even here they restrict themselves to Greece, the Roman Empire, and writers in the Christian tradition in Europe, mostly northern Europe. But this tradition flourished also, in Arabic, in the Middle East and in vast swathes of central Asia, in Greek in Byzantium, and in Hebrew among Jews in southern Europe: It is a falsification to leave these sides of it in the dark. Second, the particular studies and the thematic reflections embody or advocate an approach to philosophy and its history completely alien to that of most professional philosophers in analytic departments, and professional historians of philosophy almost everywhere. Rather than offer it as an alternative, to be chosen to the exclusion of both these others, the authors might do better to present it as a third possibility, compatible with philosophy as usually done today and history of philosophy as usually done today: a way of seeing philosophy that comes near to how we normally approach literature and that enables nonspecialists to enrich their lives by reading Aristotle or Avicenna or Spinoza or Hume, just as they already do with the works of, for instance, Virgil, Racine, and Shakespeare. The authors, and their readers, could only gain by such generosity.—John Marenbon, *Trinity College, Cambridge*

WRATHALL, Mark A., editor. *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. xxxviii + 867 pp. Cloth, \$125.00—This colossal volume contains an impressive 220 encyclopedic entries on words and concepts perceived as being integral to Martin Heidegger's corpus. The entries are written by a veritable "Who's Who" of accomplished Heidegger scholars from diverse interpretive approaches and geographical backgrounds (though there are a few glaring omissions). The *Lexicon* also includes an extremely detailed biography, an exhaustive list of Heidegger's works, as well as a hearty bibliography of secondary scholarship. Although this substantial volume contains much of value for scholars of all levels, there are a few general shortcomings that the reader should keep in mind.

To begin with, the inside flap boasts of a "comprehensive" collection of Heidegger's vocabulary. In claiming such comprehensiveness, the *Lexicon* gives the impression that only the words/concepts that were given individual entries mattered to Heidegger, and that other words/concepts that are not given entries are not as important to his thought. Such a structure, inevitable for a project such as this, runs the risk of deciding for readers which words/concepts are crucial to Heidegger's work, and which