

BOOK NOTICES

Haynes, Felicity. 2016. *Philosophy in schools*. (Educational philosophy and theory). London and New York: Routledge.

Since Norwegian author Jostein Gaarder has launched his best-selling novel *Sophie's world: A novel about the history of philosophy* in 1995, philosophizing by and with children has become a special branch of educational science as well as of philosophy itself. Controversial as it may be, the concept causes confusion and misunderstanding as it may have different meanings, stand for different approaches, that can lead to significantly different effects on the children concerned. The book *Philosophy in schools*, offers a collection of ten essays that were published earlier in *Educational philosophy and theory*. They were first presented during the 2010 annual national conference of the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia. Australia has several active associations promoting philosophy in schools. What is interesting in the selection is that the various types and methods of teaching philosophy for and with children are being discussed. Since the pioneering work of Matthew Lipman in the anti-authoritarian 1970's, the so-called P4C—or “Philosophy for Children” movement—has seen a lot of transformations arising from Lipman's original concept, consisting in a teacher-facilitated community inquiry into issues that were raised through narratives, with the purpose of stimulating the use of logic or critical thinking and its expression. Under the influence of John Dewey rather than of Jean Piaget, it was believed that children would benefit from early exposure to philosophy in their later, adolescent developmental stages, and that this would also boost democracy. However, critics were questioning if the depth and intensity of the discussions with children did not inevitably “dumb down” the subject. Others were questioning methodological issues: should P4C be a separate subject in the curriculum, or should critical thinking be inserted in existing subjects, as social science, art, or literature? Still other questions pertain to the evaluation or progress assessment of participating pupils: how can such be graded, if course outcomes are open-ended? Sometimes, philosophy may interfere with religion as a subject, especially when discussion turns on ethical matters. And there is also the question whether P4C has not come to induce participants to permanently question and reconstruct their subjectivities, rather than to adopt a universal attitude of wonder, caring, contextual awareness, or simply reasonableness, that may as well be promoted through other subjects as art and literature. Definitely, teacher education programs will have to include philosophy and related teaching skills to make any initiative on P4C a success. The book may not always provide clear-cut answers to questions, but in philosophy this is not usually expected from a stimulating, thought-provoking work! (WV)

Agassi, Joseph and Abraham Meidan. 2016. *Beg to differ: The logic of disputes and argumentation*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

A philosophical treatment of disagreement and the rational procedures one must adopt in order to avoid frustration, Joseph Agassi and Abraham Meidan's book is unique among tracts in critical thinking. It comes close to the erudition of T. Edward Damer's contemporary classic, *Attacking faulty reasoning* (now on its seventh edition), though it is not a book about argumentation per se. Rather, it examines the nature of disputes, providing a taxonomy of the kinds that may occur in various fields, along with cogent guidelines toward the resolution of each one. These include: disputes about general facts and theories, disputes about statistical generalizations, metaphysical disputes, disputes about history and predictions, disputes about technology and medicine, disputes about ethics and politics, and disputes about aesthetics.

The authors begin with the premise that disagreements are often culturally perceived as sources of frustration, and that agreement is usually preferred. The aversion toward disagreement stems from tribalism and the general difficulty of critiquing received views. What is often overlooked is that contentious debates can be enjoyable, primarily because—if done well—they can help us learn from our errors. The authors point to Plato's Dialogues as paradigmatic examples of rational disputes in action. They believe that frustration arises from the inability to adhere to existing rules of rational debate, techniques which are easy to master. As the authors themselves write, their book does not deal with a new subject matter. However, it is singularly useful for its detailed discussion of the procedural aspects of argumentation, as well as the concrete examples it provides to illustrate these procedures. (NC)

Bernstein, Richard. 2016. *Ironic life*. Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press.

No scholar in philosophy can pretend never having heard the term “irony.” Indeed, given its link with the Socratic method, the concept seems intrinsically connected with the very genesis of Western critical thinking. However, the concept seems to be very fluid, hard to define, because of the wide range of contexts in which it may be used. Richard Bernstein asks for help from four very different guides: Jonathan Lear, Richard Rorty, Gregory Vlastos, and Alexander Nehamas. At the start is the fundamental but too “literary oriented” definition of Marcus Quintilian, characterizing irony as a figure of speech, saying the opposite of what one means. Admitting that Anglo-American philosophy has had rather little interest in the philosophical dimension of irony, Bernstein turns to German Romanticism. The point of Friedrich Schlegel was, for instance, that irony cannot be defined since it consists in what is incomprehensible. Lear, inspired by Soren Kierkegaard, stated that many philosophers have quite a superficial understanding of irony. In fact, irony is essential to human excellence, as far as this presupposes the capacity to ironically detach from it. Rorty locates irony in the disillusion to rationally justify our basic beliefs. The discussion becomes more fruitful where Bernstein brings Socrates—the father of irony—on the scene, since the disinterest of the Anglo-Americans for irony does not pertain to him. The interpretation of the figure of Socrates and his irony are the essence of the discussion between Vlastos and Nehamas. The former believes that the Socrates of

Plato's earlier dialogues is quite representative for the real, historical Socrates, and that irony is complex in nature: what is said simultaneously *is and is not* what is meant. If Socrates did not theorize irony, it is because irony is something to be incarnated in one's way of life, including one's method of thinking and teaching. Nehamas instead considers Socrates primarily as a literary fiction of Plato. He describes irony rather as "silence": it consists, then, in what is not said (and what we, therefore, should not try to say). Kierkegaard's thesis, added to his Magister dissertation, that irony is to a truly human life what wonder is to philosophy, turns the father of existentialism into another important player in the game. In spite of the weight given to irony, Kierkegaard swerves from seeing it as sheer negativity and nihilism to the onset of ethical passion. To Bernstein, irony is a well-suited stimulus to revalorize "practical philosophy"—or philosophy as art-of-living in a Hellenistic sense—and bring it at par with "theoretical philosophy" that may have been overrated in contemporary philosophical discourse. With this title, Bernstein has not only offered an appetizing confrontation of viewpoints on irony, but also highlighted the moral as well as intellectual value of balance, modesty, and detachment! (WV)

Chamayou, Gregoire. 2015. *A theory of the drone*. Translated by Janet Lloyd. New York and London: The New Press.

Gregoire Chamayou presents an exacting ethical and ontological analysis of Predator drones, or "unmanned aerial vehicles" equipped with cameras and missiles, which first came into regular use by the US in 2012 under the Obama administration. Drones have been principally deployed in places such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Syria. Admitting the polemical nature of his book, the author focuses on the moral status of drones as a means: "Rather than wonder whether the ends justify the means, one must ask what the choice of those means, in itself, tends to impose. Rather than seek moral justifications for armed violence, one should favor a technical and political analysis of the weapons themselves." To this end, Chamayou looks at the techniques and tactics of drone warfare; the ethos and psychology behind it; the "necroethics" which justifies it; the principles of the philosophy of the right to kill; and the role of political bodies in the deployment of drones.

Drone warfare is new and unconventional because of the extent of the unilateral violence it is capable of wreaking; in practice, it is closer to targeted assassination than ordinary combat. It also transgresses national boundaries, inasmuch as the kill zone is geographically undefined. Last but not least, it represents an uncomfortable overlap between the military and policing roles of the state, which results in unclear standards about when it is permissible for a drone pilot to fire. In spite of its polemical tone, the book presents a timely and incisive analysis of the worrying evolution of military values augured by the Predator drone, as well as the sorts of psychological problems faced by its operators—which are better described by the phrase "perpetration-induced traumatic stress" (such as that suffered by executioners) rather than "post-traumatic stress disorder." Situating drone warfare against the discourse of just war theory, Chamayou questions the permissibility of risk-free war-making. He argues that the justification of homicide in a noncombat situation (for the invulnerability of drone operators means they are not in actual combat) leaves drone apologists no other recourse than appeal to doctrines of political assassination. (NC)

Tan, Seow Hon. 2015. *Justice as friendship: A theory of law*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate.

With the present work, Seow Hon Tan seems to have produced at least an original work in the philosophy of law, not another version of the “classical” discourse and its arguments, according to the foreword by Harvard professor Lewis Sargentich, and in spite of the fact that the theme on friendship and law was lately given attention also by other authors. The book was actually born from the author’s personal experience of consistency—or its absence—in human relations, something which is generally expected from judges as they deal with cases. Starting from the Christian moral ideal of love as “giving one’s life for one’s friends,” she ends at friendship as opposed to self-interest, and characterized by reciprocity and relative exclusivity, as far as every single friendship generates its own, usually implicit, rules. As the book develops its theme, it becomes obvious that it deserves a place in the ongoing debate about legal theory. In four parts, the author manages to present her case of Justice as Friendship (JAF), which is more adequate than other justificatory accounts of law, as those other “vantage points” often end up begging the question or justifying their own presuppositions. The first part tackles the major issue of justification, triggering questions like whether legal theory should go for either a more descriptive or a more normative approach of law. Whether law should be based on morality, whether a theory of what is right is sufficient without venturing into a theory of the good, or whether simply “might makes right” is also being addressed here. There still is the question whether law is not simply instrumental at the service of some vested interest or used to legitimize *a posteriori* certain acquired powers or privileges. The search for an extra-judicial morality as basis for legal justice is exemplified by Ronald Dworkin and natural law theory, as they take the opposite stand of Herbert Hart and the legal positivists, who see law primarily as a set of rules to comply with. The second part of the book offers an overview of friendship, its themes and its history. Even as it has not been—unlike marriage—formally institutionalized, its widespread treatment in ancient literature, not only in Aristotle, but also in the Bible (Leviticus), turns it into a potentially interesting phenomenon to understand the principles underlying legal justice. This has something to do with the universal affirmation of friendship’s goodness. Even schools, like the Stoics and Epicureans, can hardly keep themselves from praising friendship, in spite of their emphasis on self-sufficiency and invulnerability, which suggests that friendship is indispensable in becoming happy. The most salient characteristic that brings friendship at par with justice is reciprocity, however. The third part links the two preceding ones into the concept of JAF. The author underscores its unifying qualities, as it transcends the global pluralism of often contradicting worldviews in a concept that is conceivable to people of different cultures, and treats different laws and legal doctrines as parts of one single system. The fourth part is an application of JAF to selected areas of private law, particularly contract law and tort of negligence. The treatment of these issues is illustrative rather than fundamental, according to the author, as she wants to show a direction to doctrinal experts who may further carry on the discussion. To students or teachers of philosophy, the latter part will be experienced as the most technical, and therefore least interesting; however, the last part completes the book from a legal point of view in as far as it ends with the discussion of relational contexts in which the rights and obligations of

those involved depend on the manner in which they are situated. This generally easy-reading book deserves a place on the book shelf of all who have a particular interest in jurisprudence as well as in moral, political and legal philosophy. (WV)

Nussbaum, Martha C. 2016. *Anger and forgiveness: Resentment, generosity, justice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Philosopher Martha C. Nussbaum's latest book presents an analysis of anger and of the usual alternative suggested in place of it: forgiveness. She concludes that, contrary to many contemporary accounts, neither anger nor forgiveness is a virtue in any of the areas or "realms" of human sociality. These include the realm of intimate personal relationships, the "middle realm" of interactions with people who are not one's close friends, and the abstract realm of participation in political institutions.

Nussbaum opens with an interpretation of Aeschylus's play *Eumenides* as a parable about the place of retributive anger in a just society. She tells of how the terrible Furies, avengers of kin-slaying, are asked by Athena to transform into their more benign selves as a condition for acceptance into the new society. The story supports Nussbaum's view of anger as problematic in one or the other of two possible ways: "the road of payback," which relies on the mistaken view that the suffering of the wrongdoer can somehow restore what has been damaged, and "the road of status," which wrongly reduces the injury committed to the down-ranking of the victim's status.

Nussbaum defines anger as involving at least two aspects: (1) the presence of a serious wrong done to someone or something and (2) the sense that it would be beneficial if the wrongdoer suffered negative consequences. She then proceeds to critique the "commonplaces" about anger in modern thought, namely: (1) that anger is necessary for the protection of dignity and self-respect, (2) that anger is essential to treating the wrongdoer seriously, and (3) that anger is integral to combating injustice. Even forgiveness, long perceived as a central political and personal virtue, is not spared. Nussbaum argues that transactional forgiveness, the traditional paradigm of reconciliation that has its roots in Judeo-Christian philosophy, is not a virtue in any of the three social realms. Nussbaum makes the startling conclusion that we should move beyond the drama of anger and forgiveness, focusing instead on more constructive activities guided by the virtues of generosity, justice, and truth. (NC)

Jullien, Francois. 2016. *The philosophy of living*. Translated by Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski. London, New York, and Calcutta: Seagull Books.

With the current title, French university professor, philosopher, and sinologist, Francois Jullien illustrates his zeal for the philosophy of life, for practical philosophy, as opposed to traditional concept-based theoretical talk. The reader may discern in the title a vague echo of Martin Heidegger and Friedrich Nietzsche, as "living" is from the introduction prudently opposed to "being," and "presence" is used in combination with "absence." All of us know what living is, but no one could give a satisfactory definition of it, so it appears. What is highly elementary and imminent is also transcendent: "How, without renouncing it, do we emerge from an immediacy that is condemned to being

illusory and become sterile? How do we prevent ourselves from being engulfed in the immediacy of living without abandoning it?" These are some of the questions which the book suggests to answer, in an attempt spread over five chapters. To prevent any temptation to "capture" living and turn it into a kind of museum item, the time-matrix has to be included. This is why "repetition," "postponement," and "process" are useful concepts in this matter. Western people tend to rush straight to what is at the end of a process; if they had patience, however, this is if they had chosen "not to act" (in Chinese: *wu wei*), they would have had a different experience, attuned with oriental viewpoint and language. Also tackled is the issue of "evidence," as different from "withdrawal." Even the Christian God is said to live, exactly because of his withdrawal, first in the incarnation of Jesus, then in the death and resurrection of the latter. Jullian also refers to a statement by Jean Jacques Rousseau about a book project on the influence of our surroundings (including climate, season, sounds, food...) in our lives. What appeared as a feasible project was never pushed through with, however, raising doubts once more on whether philosophy is able to deal with a topic as "living." The author is also inspired by the French novelist Marcel Proust's work, as he tries to transcend time by remembering the past from the present, combining the distant emphasis of remembrance and the actuality of sensation. Any reader of this book will need to brace for an at times dense and literary style, that has not been remedied in the English translation. However, readers who are wary of well-structured outlines and go for adventurous reflexive explorations instead will be delighted, especially if they are open to the synergy of Oriental and Western philosophical traditions. (WV)