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Boran Berčić, *Filozofija*. Svezak prvi, Zagreb: Ibis grafika, 2012, XVII + 507 str.

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Views differ on how to teach an introductory course of philosophy and how an introductory book to philosophy should look like. Boran Berčić, full professor of philosophy at the University of Rijeka, and, let us put the cards on the table, a colleague of mine, with this first volume of a two volume book answers resolutely to these problems. The answer is that the best way to introduce someone to philosophy is to teach her to philosophise. Of course, this good answer is easy to give; writing a book consistent with it is surely harder. Berčić has succeeded in the task.

The guiding principle of the book is that philosophy aims at offering well informed and convincing arguments to support or criticise attempted solutions to philosophical problems. Moreover, learning to philosophise requires understanding the philosophical problem at issue, knowing the most relevant attempted philosophical solutions (or dissolutions) of this problem, and mastering the more relevant arguments used to support or criticise these solutions. Finally, and hopefully, this knowledge would enable the reader, who is armed with a bit of theoretical courage and will, to jump responsibly into the philosophical debate.

The book, thus, is structured around a good selection of problems that are currently debated by analytic philosophers around the world. Moreover, the author in many places argues for his views. So, although the relevant positions and arguments of some “mighty dead” are covered, the reader who wants to know about the history of philosophy, understood as a chronology of authors, books, and movements seen in a wider socio-cultural context, if she really has to, might like to read another book.

The first chapter deals with the problem of the meaning of life. According to the author, we get to this problem if we ask what should be the more general considerations that should guide all our actions. While it is relatively unproblematic that catching the train for a certain destination makes sense, given that we want to reach that destination, it is difficult to answer the general question of what confers sense to the complete series of the actions that preceded our taking the train and all those that will follow it. The author offers carefully crafted arguments for concluding that happiness, caring for the others, submitting to the plans of some god, the advancement of the species, cannot confer this sense. However, the overall conclusion of the chapter is not too disparaging. The fact that there is not an ultimate, foundational, “Meaning” of life does not imply the specific actions that constitute our lives are without sense.

The second chapter concerns the problem whether death is bad for us. Berčić thinks that it is. Against Epicurus, who maintained that nothing bad can happen to the deceased, he argues that death is bad because it deprives us of possible experiences. Lucretius argued that we should not worry about our death because we do not worry about our inexistence before our birth. Berčić replies that our past and future inexistence differ significantly. First, an individual's lack of existence before her birth differs from her *ceasing* to exist after her death. Second, we are very concerned about events that will happen to us in the immediate future. Thirdly, delaying the date of death is a feature of the life of a certain individual, while anticipating her birth would concern a different individual.

The third chapter considers fatalism, the view that we cannot produce any event or prevent it from taking place. Let us consider here Berčić's treatment of the traditional *idle argument* that has been revamped by Michael Dummett. Given that *x* stands for a certain event, this argument goes as follows: (1) Either *x* will happen or *x* will not happen. (2) If *x* will happen, *x* it will happen no matter what is done to prevent *x* from happening. (3) If *x* will not happen, *x* it will not happen no matter what is done to produce *x*. Therefore: (4) I cannot determine whether *x* will or will not happen.

Berčić thinks that the argument is vitiated by the ambiguous epistemic status of premises (1) and (2) (78). If these premises are empirical, they are false. In fact, it is an empirical fact that bringing about a certain event will increase or reduce the probability of another event. On the other horn of the dilemma, if the premises are a priori, they are true, being instances of (*P* implies *P*). But they are irrelevant for the problem at issue, given that, by being tautologies, they are true independently of how the world is, and thus cannot tell us anything about how certain events would prevent or promote others.

Besides dismantling some arguments for fatalism, as the one concerning the so called future contingents discussed by Aristotle, Berčić argues that, not knowing whether fatalism is true or not, it is rational to behave as if it were false. In fact, if our actions make a difference, not acting would bring worst results than acting when the outcome is in any case determined and independent from our actions (90).

The discussion of the problem of free will occupies the long and detailed fourth chapter. Notoriously, the problem is that of reconciling determinism, roughly, the idea that every event in the world is caused, determined or has its probability fixed by previous events in accordance with some laws, and the idea that we are free. Freedom is, roughly, understood as involving events that do not take part in the chain of determination that extend well beyond our birth. After exploring different versions of

the thesis of determinism, the reasons for endorsing them, and the specific problem of free will that they generate, Berčić sets out the possible solutions to these problems. Incompatibilists maintain that determinism and freedom are incompatible, amongst them libertarians think that we are free, while determinists think that we are determinate. Compatibilists think that determinism and free will are compatible, some amongst them go even further and say that we cannot be free unless determinism is true, others, contenting themselves with the mere compatibility, do not engage with the issue whether or not determinism is true or has to be true. After his critical discussion of libertarianism and determinism, it emerges that Berčić's sympathies go to compatibilism. The hard task for this doctrine is to carve out a class of deterministic events that we can call free. Following an account set out by Gary Watson, Berčić settle for the idea that certain events, such a deliberations and actions, that are determined in accordance with our judgements about what we ought to do, are free (186–187).

Berčić tackles the topic of moral responsibility in the fifth chapter, so correctly running it separately from the issue of free-will. In fact, it is a philosophically contentious problem whether freedom is a necessary requirement for moral responsibility.

The sixth chapter is dedicated to ethics and firstly addresses the debate between consequentialists and deontologists. The former think that the moral goodness of an action, deliberation or character trait, depends on that of its consequences. In particular, utilitarianism establishes the moral goodness of consequences in terms of a measurable maximisation of happiness. The common criticism is that the maximisation of happiness for a larger group of individuals might recommend serious violations of the rights of few; for example, as sacrificing a scapegoat to avoid social unrest. On the other hand, deontological approaches to ethics recommend that we should establish what we should do in accordance to certain principles, irrespective of the consequences. Berčić offers a very lucid presentation of Kant's fascinating brand of deontological ethics. The third option taken into consideration is the virtue ethics of Aristotle. Instead of focussing on the consequence or the reference to principles, the sources of morality should stem from a certain type person with certain features or virtues.

Issues of political philosophy are addressed in the seventh chapter. Specifically, Berčić discusses in depth the social contract account of the justification of the state. The most promising formulation of this approach is the hypothetical version, according to which the state or better a certain specific configuration of it is justified insofar a rational individual would voluntarily and freely commit to the relative contract. Thus, Berčić explores in detail the complexities of the rationality of cooperation as studied in relation to famous theoretical cases, such as the prisoner's di-

lemma. Specifically, he offers a very exhaustive and lucid treatment of John Rawls's celebrated method to work out the ideal requirements of the social contract. These are the principles that would be chosen by rational agents who do not know, amongst other things, their socio-economic position in the society that will be regulated by these rules. In particular, Berčić is convinced, and surely will convince many readers, that a contract underwritten by fully rational individuals will deliver norms that are objectively valid because they are exactly those that take into due account the objective interests of these individuals (378–382).

Moral objectivism is further explored and defended in the closing chapter. This chapter concerns a more esoteric problem than those approached in the previous chapters: what are values? However, this appears an apt closing of the book, especially if the readers get there after reading, and thinking through, whichever of the other chapters, where values play a significant role. In fact, thinking about the materials in this last chapter can really fire back nicely on whatever the reader might have come to conclude about the previously encountered problems.

So, the book offers a problem-oriented approach to philosophy, a good selection of problems, and an accurate and informed rendering of relevant past and contemporary positions and arguments. This would not make this introduction outstanding. For instance, also to the Croatian public are available the introductory books by philosophers of the highest calibre such as Thomas Nagel or Simon Blackburn.<sup>1</sup> However, the presentations of these authors are quite condensed. In addition, more than offering a fair amount of alternative theories and arguments, they wrote these books principally as vehicles for their views. Berčić, instead, in a real pedagogical tour de force, introduces the main philosophical problems, theories and arguments in a very detailed, intuitive and progressive way.

Surely the curious seasoned philosopher, who has not specialised in the fields covered in the book, might feel that he could have found her way without the carefully crafted introductory materials. Nevertheless, the teacher in her will surely admire and appreciate the rich variety of stylistic and rhetorical tools employed and, above all, the brilliance, and in some case the humour, of many examples. These devices will surely make the issues accessible to beginners and then lead them to the quite sophisticated materials that are contained in this volume. In addition, going through the batteries of thought provoking questions at the end of each chapter, that might appear to be directed at students, can be a rewarding (and sometime frustrating) experience also for more advanced readers. This book really

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<sup>1</sup> T. Nagel, *Što sve to znači?*, prev. B. Berčić, Zagreb: Kruzak, 2002; S. Blackburn, *Poziv na misao: poticajni uvod u filozofiju*, prev. L. Jurica, Zagreb: AGM, 2002.

shows that it derives from almost twelve years of experience in teaching introductory courses of philosophy.

So, to sum up, this book is a major achievement in itself and even more so when compared with what is presently available in Croatian. So, who should buy this reasonably priced book (presently 23 lipas per page)? Surely anyone interested in being correctly informed about what contemporary philosophers are up to and who would like to join their debates. Therefore, it seems that general readers and undergraduate philosophy students might be the ideal target. However, teachers of philosophy, who worry seriously about teaching their subject starting at an introductory level, will find a lot to learn from this book and should seriously consider adopting it for their courses. Professional philosophers who are not too familiar with the covered problems will surely find the volume useful. Finally, specialists might like to engage with Berčić's own original positions.

**Luca Malatesti**

Sveučilište u Rijeci  
Filozofski fakultet  
Odsjek za filozofiju  
Slavka Krautzeka bb  
51 000 Rijeka  
lmalatesti@ffri.hr

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Dan Zahavi, *Husserlova fenomenologija*, preveo Nebojša Mudri, priredio Damir Barbarić, Zagreb: AGM, 2011, 252 str.

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Ova opsegom mala knjižica vrlo je dobar i suvremen uvod u fenomenologiju Edmunda Husserla, kako autor knjige Dan Zahavi u Zaključku kaže: središnje figure filozofije 20. stoljeća. Osim toga ta je knjiga i dobro i s razumijevanjem prevedena – što je pretpostavka da ju se s razumijevanjem može i čitati. Kao osobitost te knjige može se spomenuti i to da se taj uvod u Husserla ne temelji samo na spisima koja je sam Husserl objavio, nego uzima u obzir i tekstove iz ostavštine i rukopisne te one koje su već objavljeni u ediciji Husserliana.

Knjiga se dijeli, prema opće prihvaćenoj podjeli Husserlovog filozofiranja, na 1. ranog Husserla, 2. Husserlov okret transcendentalnoj filozofiji i *epoché* i 3. kasnijeg Husserla. U okviru te osnovne podjele razmatra