

morally relevant that Rosenthal's wife would not be able to handle revelations of his infidelity?

It might be objected that answering such questions is more of an exercise in film criticism than ethical reflection. Indeed, any use of a film to discuss ethics runs the risk of turning into an exercise in criticism. But it does not have to, and in my experience, discussion is not likely to take that direction. On the contrary, my students tend to dismiss claims about an author's intentions if they do not think them independently true. To a degree that surprises me, they are disposed to think about the events of the film as real. Hence, they are willing to reflect on the film's details, and one can get them to consider which may or may not be morally relevant. So interpreting the film becomes, for them, an act of looking for morally salient features. Understanding Allen's intention is important for leading a discussion because it helps one to direct the student's attention to details that play a role, but it is best left to the students to discover or invent a role for the details. In the end, one wants them to think about ethics rather than the aesthetics of the film. By vividly presenting a concrete set of circumstances, a film like *Crimes and Misdemeanors* provokes questions about right and wrong that students in any ethics class should ask.

IV

As for the more practical side of using films as ethical examples, I screen the film in the evening because there is not enough time to see it all in one class period and because I do not want to give up precious class time. The extra evening meeting can be more relaxed than usual, and it often generates an *esprit de corps* as students get to know each other better and appreciate the professor's efforts. Indeed, this alone might well justify showing a film. I sometimes ask the students to write a page or two on the film or on how the film relates to the particular philosopher we are discussing when it is shown—this assignment counts for a very small percentage of their grade, no more than 2½%. Sometimes I ask the students on the final to consider whether the philosophers read would judge Rosenthal immoral and why. So the film plays a relatively small part in the course. It, and sometimes other films, provide a common stock of examples, a sort of shared experience from which to draw, when reflecting on the problems of ethics. They make ethical theories alive and urgent.

It is a short step from applying ethical theories to characters in films to applying them in one's own life. For many students it comes as something of a revelation that what they do in the classroom *could* connect with their lives. For them and even for students who already recognize this possibility, seeing and discussing a film could be a path to making philosophy meaningful.

Endnotes

1. This is perhaps Allen's most discussed film. It is the subject of eight of the eleven essays in *Film and Philosophy's* recent *Special Issue on Woody Allen*, guest editor Sander Lee, special edition (2000). There are also substantial discussions in: S. H. Lee, *Woody Allen's Angst: Philosophical Commentaries on His Serious Films* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co.), Mary P. Nichols, *Reconstructing Woody: Art, Love and Life in the Films of Woody Allen* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), and Sam B. Girgus, *The Films of Woody Allen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
2. Gary Colwell, "Plato, Woody Allen, and Justice," *Teaching Philosophy*, 14 (1991): 399-407, has discussed using the film to illustrate the *Republic*.
3. See also, Thomas J. Regan, "Sartre, Woody Allen, and Authenticity," *Teaching Philosophy*, 14 (1991): 409-19.

BOOK REVIEWS

Richard A. Posner, *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* (Harvard, 2002) Cloth, 410 pages, Price \$29.95.

Peter Singer, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* (Yale, 2002) Cloth, 240 pages, Price \$21.95.

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The Intellectual's New Clothes

Before examining the specific contents of these books, we need to acknowledge the elephant in the room. Those familiar with the authors who penned them, and of their respective areas of specialization, might already have surmised that these new titles, to their credit are perfect examples of books written by public intellectuals *as* public intellectuals. That is to say, imminent scholars writing on academic subjects falling outside their own realms of expertise. It is thus unlikely that such prestigious university presses as Harvard and Yale would have published these two works if it were not for the celebrity of their authors. Crystallizing this deepest of ironies is the fact that the one released by Harvard offers "the first systematic analysis of the contemporary American public intellectual" (inside sleeve). Thus we have a book *by* a public intellectual writing *as* a public intellectual *about* public intellectuals! This strangely absurd phenomenon immediately raises at least four questions of paramount sociopolitical importance:

1. Are public-intellectual works, published by reputable academic presses, adequately peer-reviewed by appropriate specialists before being accepted for publication?
2. If not, how can the integrity of academic publications be preserved in a competitive economic environment in which public intellectuals draw the lion's share of readers?
3. What societal consequences might this conflict of interest potentially engender?
4. Are there any realistic means of holding dilettantish public intellectuals and those who publish them accountable for flagrantly disseminating misinformation?

Posner, of course, raises such concerns in his book, though obviously not about the book itself. But the delicious irony of reading it alongside Singer's is that, together, they offer a wealth of inroads for contextual analysis based on pertinent contemporary examples—indeed their very own contents, which can make for riveting classroom discussion. In what follows, I will mention but a few.

Last fall, I used Singer's *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* as the main textbook for the latter half of my Freshman-level class on "Philosophy and Society" at the University of Colorado at Boulder. The core of the book is from Singer's Dwight H. Terry Lectures, given at Yale in 2000. But the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 reinforced Singer's conviction of the importance of discussing the ethical dimension of globalization and provide the book with added focus and relevance, especially as the connections are made explicit here and there throughout the text.

Essentially, this new book expands Singer's past treatments of the question of the degree of ethical responsibility people of relatively affluent nations might arguably have toward those living in dire poverty elsewhere in the world. This is clearly a subject upon which Singer has already authoritatively written as a philosophical expert in the field. However, what makes this latest effort a truly public-intellectual work (perhaps Singer's first) is that he spends most of his time discussing various subjects outside his own area of expertise, namely, environmental science, politics, economics, and law—fields in which until now, he has worked precious little. Ironically, this academic flaw may in the end turn out to be a pedagogical virtue. For his characteristically effortless prose and gift for making important and difficult ideas accessible to non-specialists is rendered all the more effective by the exclusion of details that, though surely important, may often have compromised the readability of the text. But predictably, his sweeping criticisms of international policy do at times smack of intellectual naiveté. And at other times, it will likely be evident to many a genuine expert that his analysis could have been more trenchant if supported by a more thorough background in the relevant fields. For example, one glaring omission lies in his lengthy investigation of the overall impact of globalization on wealth distribution. He finally concludes that the answer to the question of whether globalization ultimately promotes or reduces economic inequality is, as of yet, undetermined (pp. 89-90). Most likely, he says "it has helped some to escape poverty and thrown others deeper into it." But this seems entirely to neglect the distinction between free-market globalization, which is clearly the example at hand, and globalization in a more regulated form. If we treat the U.S. as a microcosm of the former, there is plenty of evidence available to answer the question. For example, fresh U.S. census reports from 2001 clearly show a continuing rise in inequality of aggregate family income over the last thirty years, concentrating wealth exclusively in the top fifth, particularly in the top five percent of the population (<http://www.census.gov>).

I should also point out that these data were apparently ignored by another public intellectual, the staunchly conservative Gregg Easterbrook, in his highly misleading review of Singer's book for the *Washington Monthly* (November 2002). There he claims, without providing evidence, that statistics on rising U.S. inequality of income are the result of first-generation immigrants, and that if these are taken out, the numbers show decreasing inequality. But this is clearly false, since the above census data show that every segment of the population excluding only the richest fifth, has seen its share drop. But what is much worse, Easterbrook's review launched a blatant lie, reappearing in conservative columns around the world such as in one by Miranda Devine of the *Sydney Morning Herald* (November 21, 2002). Their take is that Singer actually argues that free-market globalization is undoubtedly good for the world's poor! It will thus have been obvious to anyone having actually read the book that Easterbrook et al. had not. Nevertheless, I do not suspect the status of any of these public intellectuals has, as a result, suffered even in the slightest.

Singer's *One World* is divided into six chapters, the first of which presents a rather brief but effective introductory argument for seeing globalization through the ethical lens. The last chapter is actually a concise 5-page conclusion on the importance of acquiring this perspective in order to secure long-term stability and equality across the globe. The four other chapters are much more thorough, each covering one specific aspect of global concern, namely, the atmosphere, the economy, the law, and the notion of community. The chapter on community is by far the most ethically penetrating, and is clearly where we see Singer at his philosophical best. It contains probably his most persuasive critique of Rawls to date—whose

contractarian approach he seems to take as possibly the greatest intellectual obstacle to achieving an appropriate ethical world view.

The chapter on the atmosphere mainly consists of an interesting and informative defense of the Kyoto Protocol. In it, Singer rightly takes Bjorn Lomborg to task for the highly suspect economic arguments made in his notorious book, *The Skeptical Environmentalist* (Cambridge, 2001). Lomborg argues that environmental preservation is often a waste of money since we could safely invest most of it elsewhere instead and get a much higher return, say, in 100 years than the value of the natural land preserved by that same initial investment. Lomborg claims that this is due to inflation, which will make it only worth \$14.50 today to save land worth \$100 in 40 years' time. Clearly, this will seem entirely ridiculous to anyone not already under the crippling grip of dogmatic free-market ideology. Of course, it should be acknowledged that Lomborg, a Danish economist who has appeared in the popular magazine *The Economist*, has himself offered us, with the help of Cambridge University Press, another perfect example of a public-intellectual work, by writing outside his own area of expertise. But unlike Singer's book, which strives to provide a balanced assessment of the facts, Lomborg's has been exposed in countless reviews by environmental scientists as retaining barely a shred of academic integrity. Indeed, it seems to be the prevailing opinion among experts that *The Skeptical Environmentalist* was never actually peer-reviewed. Nonetheless, and I dare say as a result, it is a bestseller. One consolation is that earlier this year, the Danish government deemed the book scientifically misleading—suspecting Lomborg did not adequately understand the field. Cambridge University Press was not available for comment.

Singer's book also raises little-known, but very important ethical implications of globalization as dictated by the World Trade Organization (WTO). For example, the "product/process distinction" makes it difficult for countries to ban imports of products based on the mere *process* of production such as child labor, pollution, and animal abuse, instead of on the quality of the *product* itself. He also emphasizes the positive impact large-scale protests have had on reforming WTO agreements. Also valuable are discussions of international legal policy such as the question of when humanitarian intervention is justified, and the function of the International Criminal Court. On the latter, Singer points out that the U.S. has consistently sought to exempt its own soldiers and government officials from international prosecution. The U.S. even voted, along with Libya and China, against using the International Criminal Court to try people accused of genocide and crimes against humanity. Yet the U.S. recently went so far as to demand the right to try alleged terrorist foreigners in its own military courts. Singer thus ultimately calls the U.S. "the world's rogue superpower"—an expression we're likely to hear more often in the wake of this year's invasion of Iraq.

On the whole, Singer does an exemplary job of presenting a strong utilitarian position on central ethical concerns of globalization (it should be noted that the text does assume basic working knowledge of utilitarianism, which should therefore be provided through other material and/or lecture if used as a course book). In so doing, he provides a wealth of analysis and insightful suggestions on global political reform. His overarching thesis on this is that nothing short of a genuinely democratic global government can offer the Earth's present and future populations any hope of attaining an equitable, secure, and sustainable world. He even offers some convincing and original ideas for realistically achieving this goal even with the continuing presence of repressive authoritarian regimes. Despite its obvious shortcomings as a public-intellectual vulgarization, *One World's* fresh ethical analyses of crucial global

issues should make it required reading for most any intellectual today.

Posner's *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* however, is decidedly less successful. Besides calling attention to the important and potentially nefarious social phenomenon of the public intellectual, it is little more than a self-indulgent and seemingly exhaustive (and exhausting) rant on the author's every pet-peeve. As an illustrious judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, Posner is surely an authority on matters of legal interpretation. However, in the last few years, he has taken to penning books for a popular audience. And although until now, these have generally been entirely devoted to legal theory, they have often been criticized as espousing a rather pronounced libertarian bias—perhaps Posner has found himself a niche in the vast American market for self-satisfied conservatism. His bias is again all too evident here in entirely one-sided negative assessments of tenure as breeding aloofness and complacency. One of course cannot refrain from speculating, while reading such passages, on how this criticism might well apply to federal court judges. Conspicuously absent is any criticism of capitalism as being arguably much more responsible for the decline of public-intellectual discourse. Regrettably, the text is replete with long-winded digressions, sometimes filling entire chapters, betraying extreme political bias, if not profound incompetence on the subject matter under discussion.

However, parts do subsist, once sifted of their extravagant generalizations, over-simplifications, and *ad hominem*s that provide some measure of authoritative analysis. And here, Posner's pungent style shines to the fullest. The chapter on the socially arch-conservative "Jeremiah school" of political theory, for example, seems on-target when criticizing Robert Bork's interpretations of U.S. law. But unfortunately, as is the case with every single chapter without exception, it inevitably digresses here and there into cheaply divisive characterizations of the views of public intellectuals toward which Posner feels animosity. The book does offer penetrating observations, complete with lists, graphs, and tables, of the massive sociopolitical problem the public intellectual phenomenon poses, emphasizing a lack of accountability across the world of publishing. But it is profoundly frustrating—even maddening, to see Posner obviously personify this very problem in his own pompous and highly ideological writing.

One sin, however, that he is surely not guilty of, is the common public-intellectual weakness for prophesy. But he devotes entirely too much space (the forty page chapter "Prediction and Influence" was not even enough for him) lamenting the fact that one's public-intellectual standing is not compromised by the inaccuracy of one's predictions. Posner places entirely too much importance on this rather trivial issue. For the ability to accurately predict the future is usually not the best general measure of the value of one's intellect. The fact that most public intellectuals engage in prediction now and then does not automatically discredit their thinking on other more apposite matters. Perhaps it would if most of their attention were given to prophesizing. But this is far from being the case. So when Posner persists in cataloguing *ad nauseam* every false prediction each one of his public-intellectual pariahs made, it quickly becomes evident that this is so much more than a red herring—it is a palatial refuge of curmudgeonliness.

Somehow, Posner feels qualified to comment on a vast array of academic disciplines from literary to evolutionary theory to ethics, on which he clearly has only the most superficial, one might even say popular, understanding. One characteristic example is his likening of Singer's brand of utilitarianism to that of the Nazis who "liked to blur the line between the human and animal kingdoms, as when they described the Jews as vermin"

(p. 159). Posner is right to point his finger at public intellectuals, but if so, he is himself surely one of the most dangerous. His book would nevertheless suit one course, and I could hardly think of another text more fitting or more timely for it. Indeed, provided it appears in paperback, it would be absolutely perfect for an upper-division undergraduate course in critical thinking, in which it was itself the main object of analysis. And given the fact that such courses have now been added to most required college curricula, it may in the end help attenuate the problem it seeks to expose.

Alex Orenstein, W. V. Quine. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002. Pp. 209 + ix. ISBN 0-691-09605-8 (cloth), \$55.00. ISBN 0-691-090606-6 (paper), \$17.95.

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The cover blurb suggests that Alex Orenstein's aim in *W. V. Quine* is to provide an "introduction to Quine's philosophical ideas [for] philosophers, students, and generalists." Orenstein succeeds admirably in this aim. His book is well suited to be used, together with appropriate primary and secondary source readings, as an assigned or a supplementary text in a course on 20th century analytic philosophy, or as a preparatory resource for a teacher of such a course.

In his preface to an earlier book, of which *W. V. Quine* is a welcome revision and expansion, Orenstein said that "in addition to clarifying Quine's position, [the book] provides a vantage point for viewing contemporary philosophy" (*Willard Van Orman Quine* [1977], p. 9). The same can be said now of the present book. Chapter 1 provides a thematic overview and a biographical sketch. Subsequent chapters then each give both sympathetic explanations of, and critical responses to, a judicious selection of Quine's views on specific topics in metaphysics, epistemology, logic, and philosophy of language. Critical discussions are helpfully separated from expository material, under subheadings that begin with the words "Challenging Quine." Throughout, Quine's views are placed in appropriate historical and contemporary contexts.

The contents of the remaining chapters are as follows. Chapter 2 explains "the Frege-Russell-Quine tradition of explicating existentials in terms of quantification" (p. 34). The challenge to Quine in this chapter is the alternative Kant-Lesniewski-Lejewski tradition of explicating existentials in terms of the copula. Chapter 3 explains Quine's ontology of physical objects and sets, and his acceptance of that ontology on the ground that quantification over those sorts of entities is indispensable for a scientific world view. Challenges to Quine include Field's, Sober's, Maddy's, and van Fraassen's various doubts about the legitimacy of inference to the best explanation as a form of philosophical argument. Chapter 4 explains Quine's "Duhemian-Holistic empiricism," which denies that we have any *a priori* knowledge at all (p. 79). Challenges to Quine come from Rey, Bonjour, and Field, each of whom argues that we do have some *a priori* knowledge. Chapter 5 explains Quine's view that "logic is first order predicate logic and quantifiers are limited to its singular terms" (p. 114). Challenges to Quine come from some logicians – such as Boolos, Mates, Church, Prior, and Orenstein himself – who urge that "logic should also include quantifiers for other parts of speech such as predicates and sentences" (p. 114). Chapter 6 explains Quine's rejection of the analytic-synthetic distinction and what Orenstein has called Quine's "conjecture" of the indeterminacy of translation (p.