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Review : Mozart and the nightingale

Review of: An Intelligent Person's Guide to Philosophy
(Allen Lane, ISBN 0713992263)

By **Ray Scott Percival**

ROGER SCRUTON's *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Philosophy* takes a personal and provocative look at the subject—those abstract, but nevertheless practical, problems that concern anyone who has reflected on his or her life. Of special delight is his discussion of sex and music.

He looks at the inextricable connection between sex, love and the subtle embedded webs of interpersonal perceptions. Scruton asserts that romantic sex emerges from each seeing the other through the other's eyes, and in regarding the other as unique and indispensable. Romance is sometimes seen as the preserve of poets, but some scientists disagree. Various economists have tried to extend their analysis beyond a financial context to interpersonal relations, including romance—for example, the fascinating work of Gary Becker, Richard Posner and Gordon Tullock. Scruton points out that if the value of each romance lies in its uniqueness, then the economist's presumption of the "sustainability of units of a good" fails to apply. The same point might be made about patriotism or loyalty to a friend.

Another major theme is the difference between human beings and the rest of the animal kingdom. Music creates a rich and distinctive world that cannot be understood by analogy to the phenomenology of visual perception: "this patch of green here now". Scruton explores the "how it seems" of music—the way in which it creates the illusion of "space", for example. He shows that there is a world of difference between the nightingale's song and Mozart's Exultate Jubilate.

This is a book with which a student of, or newcomer to, philosophy can have pleasure, wrestling with its ideas and exploring and building their own.