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Philosophical Problems and Arguments. by James W. Cornman; Keith Lehrer

Review by: John Perry

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BOOK REVIEWS

Herbrand's writings have influenced the subsequent development of logic in several ways. The strategy of finding cut-free proofs of the theorems of a formal system, which gained prominence through Gentzen's papers and lies at the heart of much work in proof theory, is in fact due to Herbrand; the Herbrand expansion method provides such proofs for theorems of quantification theory. Second, the idea of reducing quantified provable formulas in some manner to quantifier-free, finitistically provable ones formed the basis of the ϵ -theorems of Hilbert and Bernays and, in turn inspired by these, the theory of interpretations as developed by Kreisel. More technically, Herbrand's specific ideas, in particular the use of Herbrand expansions, have been extended; a forthcoming monograph by Dreben, Denton, and Scanlon, *The Herbrand Theorem and the Consistency of Number Theory*, is a detailed study of this. Finally, Herbrand's method provides much material regarding proof procedures, elimination of quantifiers, and so on, and suggests questions which have not yet been explored.

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PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS AND ARGUMENTS. By JAMES W. CORNMAN and KEITH LEHRER. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1968. Pp. xii, 462. \$5.95.

Texts for introductory philosophy courses fall roughly into three classes: anthologies, introductory surveys, and classics. Each approach has its advantages and problems. In an anthology views are presented by the philosophers who really hold them. Students are introduced to thinkers they may study more deeply later. But the papers are often intended for a sophisticated audience; variations in style, terminology, and approach put irrelevant difficulties in the way of understanding. Classics have the advantage of being classics: they are worth reading for themselves, and not just as introductions to something else. But as introductions they are often one-sided. The philosophical level of introductory surveys is often low. Even the best are dull.

Cornman and Lehrer have written a text that has some of the advantages of anthologies and classics, and avoids some of the shortcomings of the usual introductory survey. The authors present the material dialectically, enabling them to state in a very thorough and generally fair way the main positions on each problem discussed, so the student

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is offered the variety of viewpoints he would get from an anthology. But the authors do take positions; they arrive at a view they consider to be the most plausible in the light of the arguments and difficulties surveyed. They thus reveal themselves to the students not just as expositors of other men, but as real philosophers, with ideas and positions of their own.

The problems discussed are skepticism, freedom and determinism, mind and body, God's existence, and the justification of ethical standards. Chapters on the first two problems are Lehrer's work; the last three are by Cornman. There is a useful introductory chapter by Lehrer in which some basic concepts (necessity, analyticity, reference, denotation, and so forth) and modes of argument are discussed. Each chapter is followed by questions and a good bibliography.

Lehrer concludes that skepticism is a sham and a delusion, and that free action and causal determinism are after all compatible. Cornman argues that no alternative is as reasonable as our intuitive dualistic interactionism, and that the problem of evil leads reasonable beings to conclude that God does not exist. He tentatively puts forward, as a satisfactory ethical theory, a "Kantian utilitarianism."

For the student who is intrigued by philosophical problems, this text is very satisfactory. It should lead such a student into philosophy, rather than cause him to turn away in disgust. The authors never offer useless summaries or pallid statements of various positions, but argue for each. The student who reads through this text carefully will have a thorough knowledge of the important positions on five of the most basic problems of philosophy.

It would be out of place to detail disagreements with the authors' philosophical views, many of which they have argued for elsewhere. The general level of philosophical argument is very high; each chapter contains original arguments and original statements of old arguments. There is one place where I think the authors have failed to treat a main contender quite fairly. Cornman does not do justice to the most plausible version of the identity theory. This view, put forward independently by David Lewis and D. M. Armstrong, is roughly that philosophical analysis reveals mental states to be definable by their causal roles. Physical states turn out to have these causal roles, and so are the mental states by virtue of being those states that satisfy the definitional formulae. Cornman would classify this view as one that holds that mental states are to be "relegated to the limbo of discarded theoretical entities" and thus open to obvious objections. But these philosophers hold a view about theoretical terms different from the one

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presupposed by Cornman's criticisms. They do not hold that mental states should be so relegated just because we now know what they are, any more than we should so relegate genes, now that we know what they are. I mention this not because I think the authors of an introductory text are obligated to discuss every possible position, but because I think that the identity theory, combined with a realistic treatment of theoretical entities, comes about as close to being a common-sense view as dualistic interactionism.

Other sundry complaints: it is not clear that most men naturally assume that no one has knowledge of mathematics or of justice (p. 43). If two equally evident but inconsistent assumptions make a paradox, there are more paradoxes than philosophers have dreamt of (p. 120).

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ART AND ITS OBJECTS: AN INTRODUCTION TO AESTHETICS. By RICHARD WOLLHEIM. New York, Harper & Row, 1968. Pp. 152. \$2.95 (paper).

Rather than an introduction to aesthetics, this book serves as a breviary of questions and answers about art, modeled perhaps on Croce's *Breviario di estetica* (1913). Indeed, as the author informs us, his book is an expanded version of an essay to appear in *The Harper Guide to Philosophy*.

Because of its format the book is comprehensive and condensed: more a distilled summary of positions and subtle suggestions than a sustained, detailed argument about art.

Wollheim distinguishes between "What is art?" and "What do works of art have in common?" Conceding to certain contemporary anti-theorists that the first question may not yield a definitional answer, he concentrates on the second in an effort to ascertain the "overlap" of works of art. Traditional theories of art, he says, can be interpreted as hypotheses about the shared properties of art, to be assessed in terms of falsification, rather than as real definitions of the unitary character of art, to be assessed in terms of necessary and sufficient properties. This reading of traditional theories—or perhaps, more correctly, this generous misreading of traditional definitions—allows Wollheim ingeniously to discuss some important problems of aesthetics.

Three main hypotheses are considered: that works of art are physical