

This is a preprint of an article whose final and definitive form is published in *The Australasian Journal of Philosophy* [2005]; *The Australasian Journal of Philosophy* is available online at: <http://journalsonline.tandf.co.uk/>

Review of Hetherington, Stephen, *Reality? Knowledge? Philosophy! An Introduction to Metaphysics and Epistemology*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003, pp. 164, US\$60 (cloth), 19.50 (paper).

Stephen Hetherington's new text is an innovative introduction to metaphysics and epistemology well suited for undergraduate students. The book introduces philosophical thinking on a wide range of topics: the nature of persons, free will and moral responsibility, God and evil, the meaning of life, death, properties, truth, epistemic rationality, knowledge, empirical knowledge, reason, and scepticism. Its pithy, conversational style, numerous parenthetical asides, and provocative questions linking theoretical issues to personal, ethical, religious, and socio-political interests evoke in the reader the sense of a process of thinking through issues on the go.

Hetherington's book is remarkable for getting to the heart of perennial philosophical problems in ways that allow students to discover why philosophy matters. It will almost certainly engage even the more pragmatic-minded non-philosophy majors who often wonder 'Why must I take a philosophy class?'

Although the book does not delve as deep or as wide into the various metaphysical and epistemological theories and arguments as do some other introductory texts, few leading views suitable for introducing metaphysics and epistemology are left out. Most chapters are developed as follows: first, the main topic is introduced with a stimulating contemporary example or question; second, important historical viewpoints on the topic are discussed (e.g., Epicurus and Lucretius on death, the early moderns on personal identity, Aristotle on the good life, Hume on induction, Plato's cave and the forms, Berkeley's idealism, Descartes' method, etc.); and third, contemporary viewpoints are introduced and standard problems raised. Rarely is there a hard

sell on any particular theory, although a happy exception occurs in the chapter on truth in which Hetherington masterfully rebuts pragmatic, coherence, and social constructivist theories while helping students to understand what is of interest about those views. The chapters contain three to ten question sections each, and the questions often relate philosophical issues to familiar situations (e.g., working at a computer, getting a medical report, thinking about what makes one a good person, etc.). These thought-provoking questions could easily be used to stimulate class discussion or to serve as motivators for online discussion boards.

Hetherington does a fine job of maintaining a relaxed, informal tone without an appreciable loss of clarity with respect to the views and arguments he discusses. His book is consistently fair, accessible, and interesting. It is just the thing to hook reluctant students in an introductory course on metaphysics and epistemology.

Todd R. Long
Assistant Professor
Philosophy Department
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407 (USA)