

***Within Nietzsche's Labyrinth.* By Alan White. New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, 1990. ISBN 0-415-90327-0. Pp. vii+188.**

Anyone looking for a clear, one-volume introduction to the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche need not search further than Alan White's new work. The image of a labyrinth may initially give the impression of confusion; it refers, however, to the complexity of Nietzsche's philosophy which one appreciates more as one discovers its nuances and its resistance to generalities. White has managed to preserve this latter quality without leading the novice astray. He has done so by centring his presentation on Nietzsche's self-proclaimed gift to humanity, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

This is not to suggest that the reader will miss the larger context of Nietzsche's work. By dividing his book into three main parts, White covers a lot of ground. The reader is first introduced to important expressions that can, unfortunately, misrepresent Nietzsche. "Nihilism," a word Nietzsche re-introduced to modern vocabulary, may not have been as significant to Nietzsche as we are so often led to believe. *Beyond Good and Evil*, White tells us, "... is the first published work in which [the word] even appears" (15). And he reminds us further that in the standard version of *The Will to Power*, where nihilism is a central term, one finds so many "types" of nihilism that one is forced to conclude that Nietzsche had no definitive model. Rather than being the "source" of definition, *The Will to Power*, White warns, is not so systematic. There is no evident relation between Nietzsche's "types" of nihilism.

By such comments the reading audience is assured that even as an introductory text, White will not simplify Nietzschean scholarship. On the contrary, the labyrinth is introduced on honest terms; we are always kept abreast of problems inherent in translation and interpretation.

If the first section of *Within Nietzsche's Labyrinth* works to clear the ground of many misconceptions, the second part moves into the heart of the labyrinth. We are no longer dealing with specific academic questions, but now experience Nietzsche as the poet and philosopher of life. Again it is difficult to avoid the prejudices that surround such phrases as "the death of God," which today are subject to so many perversions. White gives us a moving account of Nietzsche's philosophy while avoiding contemporary interference. He does this by remaining a spectator, using commentary rather than criticism to display Nietzsche's meaning. This is not at all a bad choice, given that Nietzsche is one of the more dynamic writers of the nineteenth century. Nietzsche writes with a mission, and White has done a commendable job of not getting in the way. Instead, he highlights key parts of *Zarathustra*. He then offers a rather enlighten-

ing set of comments. In such a manner we are constantly encouraged to be challenged by the text, to confront its characters and its phrases. Even the experienced reader of Nietzsche will find here the basis of new thoughts and interpretations.

In his final section White enters the critical part of his work. He moves from commentary to application. At this point it is no longer a question of who is Nietzsche (as in Part 1), or what did he say (as in Part 2); it is now a question of what does he mean? White is able to apply this question personally to the reader by posing the challenge of Nietzsche: can you live in the labyrinth? can you be a yes-sayer? can you be a dancer? We are aided in such considerations by reference to Alexander Nehamas, Milan Kundera and Marcel Proust. These three personalities help define the contemporary age that an interpreter of Nietzsche must consider. They also raise the challenge to a level above the mere individual. Nietzsche's questions both include and surpass us. They hold political implications and raise several ethical concerns. Still, the point is that the doctrine of the eternal return, which by now the reader knows as the central piece, can be maintained in the contemporary world.

There is much to be applauded in White's volume; considering its size, he has accomplished a lot. A critical introduction, an enlightening commentary, and an application to contemporary issues. The problem lies in classifying the book. It is too simple to be used in graduate courses, but too detailed for introductory survey courses. It will, therefore, likely end up on lists of "Further Reading" without being given much attention. This is a shame, for the volume is capable of drawing the novice to reading Nietzsche's works for themselves, and of enticing the experienced reader to take a new look. The book will not, however, satisfy those in need of a commentary on the complicated questions of genealogy, hermeneutics and history.

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***Descartes Among the Scholastics.* By Marjorie Grene. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1991. ISBN 0-87462-158-5. Pp. ii+50.**

This volume presents the 1991 edition of the annual Aquinas Lecture at Marquette University. The prominence of the Aquinas lectures is indicated by its distinguished roll of previous lecturers, including *inter alia*, Alasdair MacIntyre, Paul Ricoeur, Alvin Plantinga, Charles Hartshorne, Roderick Chisholm, Bernard Lonergan, Etienne Gilson, Emil Fackenheim, and Jacques Maritain.

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