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Philosophical Practice. Lou Marinoff. San Diego: Academic Press, 2001, xxiv + 411 pages, \$69.95 hardcover.

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Lou Marinoff's *Philosophical Practice* outlines the rise of the new profession of philosophical practice and argues that philosophy should aim to be more applicable to issues people face in their everyday lives. Marinoff is the President of the American Philosophical Practitioners Association, and author of *Plato Not Prozac*, and he has arguably managed to draw more attention to philosophical counseling than any other person in America.

In Part I he sets out the kind of work one does as a philosophical practitioner. He explains that one can work as an individual counselor, as a facilitator for philosophical dialogue with groups, or as a corporate philosopher. He offers practical advice, and this makes *Philosophical Practice* a very unusual book, since so few philosophers attempt to tell other philosophers how they may make a career of their interests outside of the academy. Marinoff's advice is based on his own personal experience and from his extensive knowledge of the activities of the growing number of philosophical practitioners around the world.

Part II is on modes of philosophical practice, and comes closest to discussing how to make philosophy useful, but the discussion is schematic. Marinoff does not say much about how to do philosophical practice. Different practitioners have their own styles, their own theories, and they use different methods in different contexts with different kinds of clients. People generally learn how to be philosophical practitioners both through a training process and through the experience of working with clients. Part III sets out the making of the profession of philosophical practice, and examines the issue of licensure in detail. Part IV discusses the marketing of philosophical practice, and the last part spells out some of the political battles the new profession has fought and will have to fight.

Philosophical Practice aims to start a discussion about the way that modern academic philosophy has focused on philosophical theory to the neglect of philosophical practice, and conversely, the need of society for the help of clear thinking philosophers, and it is this that I want to highlight in this review. Marinoff is not against philosophical theory per se, although he is ready to acknowledge how abstruse and irrelevant to ordinary life is most of the research of contemporary

philosophers. A problem for Marinoff's criticism is that in order to make his argument he downplays the extent to which applied ethics has grown in the last thirty years. The most obvious example of this growth is medical ethics, but there is also a great deal of practical work on women's rights, animal rights, race, the ethics of war, the death penalty, the welfare state, individual liberty, sexual issues such as homosexuality, pornography, transgendered persons, environmental ethics, and, of course, my own area of specialization, philosophy of psychiatry. Marinoff pays very little attention to any of this work. One would imagine from Marinoff's writing that most philosophers spent their time writing obscure papers on Wittgenstein. (His mention of Wittgenstein is somewhat odd since it is rare for papers in major journals to even have footnotes referring to Wittgenstein these days.)

To an extent, Marinoff's neglect of some of this work may be due to his belief that applied ethics in its present form is worthless. He is appalled by the political correctness of the universities, and claims that in the North American academy, "whoever objects to neo-totalitarian suppressions of the canons of learning and their replacement by political indoctrination, or defies the suppressions with free speech and libertarian deeds, is liquidated economically or professionally, that is, summarily fired or institutionally ostracized" (pp. 11–12). A good deal of the work in applied ethics has been accused of being politically correct, although Marinoff himself does not make this accusation as far as I can tell. Conversely, a good deal of the work in applied ethics has been accused of being unphilosophical, although, again Marinoff does not explicitly level such a charge. He does give approving mention to both pragmatism and existentialism as systems of thought that often tried to deal with problems in living, but were approaches that received little attention in the first three quarters of the twentieth century. He is scathing about what he calls "post-modernism," although it isn't entirely clear to what intellectual movement he refers with the noun. He laments the destruction of high culture by "fanatical feminists, militant ethnocentrists, assorted neo-Marxists, postmodernists, deconstructionists, social constructivists, and the camp-followers or these tenured legions of boorish misologists and venomous misanthropes" (p. 12), in a list that seems to cover what he finds the most egregiously anti-intellectual movements in the academy, although he notes in a footnote that it is the way these studies or schools are promoted rather than the content of their views that he opposes. To some extent, applied ethics may, in Marinoff's eyes at least, have fallen in with this company.

It may also be that Marinoff does not discuss applied ethics in any detail because he is deliberately painting with a broad brush. After all, he is discussing trends in modern society, and so of course there are bound to be exceptions and subtleties that he does not mention. It could also be that applied ethics tends to focus on extreme cases — such as beginning of life, end of life, abnormality — rather than the everyday issues that arise for most people. If philosophy should primarily be about how to live, Marinoff may think that the discipline today is not addressing the central question of how to live as it arises for most people.

Whatever the reason for Marinoff's scant attention to the work of applied ethicists, it strikes me as a problem for his book. It would be more productive to show the commonalities between the philosophical practice movement and those who work in applied ethics, and also those who teach undergraduates and have to work hard to explain the relevance of philosophy to their students' everyday lives. Applied ethics, which has become at least a well-established part of the academy at this stage, even if it has not won universal respect from philosophers, is a natural ally and support for philosophical practice. Though applied ethics has to a large

that people seek philosophical practitioners because they have become interested in the issues raised by feminist theory, critical theory, the crisis of the individual in an alienating society, the politicization of the personal and the fragmentation of meaning in modern culture. More generally, while philosophical practice may be increasing in popularity because it is able to meet a previously unmet interest, that popular interest may well have been partly caused by the groups in which Marinoff expresses disapproval and disappointment. So it might be unwise for the burgeoning movement of philosophical practice to place itself in opposition to intellectual movements such as postmodernism.

Marinoff admits that there can be a diverse range of varieties of philosophical counselors, and there is a tension in *Philosophical Practice* between two lines of thought. On the one hand, Marinoff argues that it should be left up to individual philosophical practitioners how they do their counseling. On the other hand, he roundly condemns certain approaches, grouped under the heading of postmodernism, which he considers to be anti-intellectual. A parallel difficulty exists for those who run certification programs in philosophical counseling: on the one hand they need to maintain high standards, and on the other hand they must allow their trainees to hold whatever beliefs they want. A tension is not necessarily a contradiction, and the motto of the American Philosophical Practitioners Association is "Nobody rules truth," so the APPA is bound to be aware of the difficulties of dealing with the tension. The problem arises if Marinoff is identified strongly as the voice of the APPA and his message of tolerance is undermined by his vehement disagreement with views he does not share.

I have argued that as a burgeoning approach, philosophical practice would do well to establish credibility for itself with philosophers and other kinds of counselors. But in a good deal of *Philosophical Practice*, Marinoff describes the stupidity, unfriendliness and the attacks he has experienced and observed from psychotherapists, philosophers, and even some philosophical practitioners. It seems that he has come to the conclusion that life is too short to convince everyone of his good intentions, and if the movement of philosophical practice is going to seize the moment and succeed, it cannot wait to build bridges with related professional groups. While not wanting to make trouble, Marinoff is clear that he is very willing to fight for his cause if necessary. This book in many ways reads like a manifesto — a long detailed one to be sure — but ultimately it is a book with a sense of political purpose: the declaration of intent to set up practice. The broad strokes with which Marinoff paints his picture of the contemporary scene are fitting for a manifesto, and academics might find the book more palatable if they understand it as such.

If Marinoff is aiming at professional philosophers, he may be disappointed to find that his manifesto approach does not win many converts from that group. *Philosophical Practice* will resonate better with a wider audience with an interest in philosophy who is not so enthralled with the minutiae of current debates in epistemology, metaphysics, or the subtleties of interpretations of the great philosophers. This book deserves to get a wide readership and it should spark more debate about the nature and direction of contemporary philosophy. For the most part, this is the kind of discussion that philosophers have between themselves after hours but rarely put in print. Marinoff has provocatively argued that the profession of philosophy has failed in its duty to be applicable to ordinary problems in living, and he makes a convincing case that philosophical practice has the potential to be an exciting movement that could be of great benefit to the profession.

extent examined issues of policy and law, it has also been involved in helping individuals facing ethical dilemmas to make decisions. This is most obvious in medical ethics, where family members have to make hard decisions such as when to turn off life-support machines, or whether it is ethical to use new reproductive technology to carry a fetus for a family member incapable of pregnancy. Ethics consultants have sometimes helped to explain to the concerned individuals their options and have guided them through their decision-making process. It is in cases such as these that the individual use of philosophy is most obviously of practical benefit, and it is through uses such as these that philosophical counseling is likely to gain credibility.

While the central idea of philosophical practice, that philosophy can help people in their everyday lives, is an important claim, it is also clear that for the most part, the difficulties of the project are swept under the carpet by most advocates of philosophical practice. One of the reasons that philosophers in the twentieth century turned away from that use of philosophy is that they saw the difficulties and turned to more manageable projects. Maybe this was a failure of vision and courage, as Marinoff charges, but it has to be admitted that it is difficult to do better than proffering banal platitudes or highly controversial claims when applying philosophy to ordinary life. Most of the literature on philosophical counseling does little to show that the movement has made much progress on this central problem. Maybe the methods of Socratic Dialog, Marinoff's "PEACE process" (set out in Marinoff's earlier book *Plato Not Prozac* and here briefly recapitulated), and the other approaches he mentions are powerful and productive, but Marinoff does not set out the evidence. So philosophical practitioners need to be searching for help where they can find it, and they need to be building bridges with clinical ethicists. What is more, the same is true for their relationships with psychotherapists, or at least those therapists who are ready and capable to engage in productive dialog.

Where Marinoff has underplayed the overlap and possibility of productive exchanges between philosophical practice and applied ethics, he has overplayed the extent to which the academy is overrun by scheming postmodernists. Marinoff asserts that, "alone in the humanities and social sciences wing of the academy, philosophy majors are obliged to read, write and reason. They can therefore comprehend their jobs and communicate effectively with others. Whereas graduates of programs in political indoctrination comprehend little beyond the ideologies with which they have been brainwashed, and communicate little beyond the slogans, euphemisms and jargon with which their washed brains have been infused" (p. 45). He also claims that a great deal of American K-12 education is ideologically driven, which had led to so many "functional illiterates or dysfunctional acculturates" (p. 45). Marinoff provides no evidence for these claims and they are obviously simplifications and perhaps even distortions of the truth.

It may well be true that much of American education in middle and high schools is a disgrace, and that the training of teachers in education schools and the curriculum in schools today is heavily politicized in ways that have led to a lowering of standards. Many critics of education have charged that too many students are graduating with high school diplomas even though they lack basic skills of literacy and elementary knowledge of science, mathematics, and culture. Sometimes the same is true of students graduating from education schools. The question is what has led to this state of affairs. Marinoff ties it to a collection of politically correct policies and postmodernist thinking, but he provides little in the way of sustained argument for this view.

While Marinoff says that the appeal to the general public of philosophical practice is a reaction against the irrationalism of postmodernism, it is equally plausible