

Motivated Irrationality. David Pears. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, 256 pages, \$18.95.

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The rationality of judgment has traditionally been a central issue within the field of philosophy, whereas the field of psychology has historically ignored this issue, regarding it as nonscientific. More recently, the debate surrounding the rationality of judgment has gained renewed attention in the psychological literature as a result of the work of Kahneman, Tversky, Nisbett and others. Therefore, the publication of *Motivated Irrationality* by David Pears offers the potential to become an important resource for both the philosopher and psychologist as suggested by the jacket statement that the book "steers a course between psychology and philosophy." Unfortunately, this book fails to achieve this potential because it does not fulfill several promises that it makes early in the book.

Pears begins by attempting to define irrationality inductively "with the minimum load of theoretical commitment" (p. 5). Although both this reader and Pears himself are somewhat skeptical of a complete atheoretical definition of irrationality, Pears does avoid blatant theoretical commitments throughout the book. Pears defines irrationality as the "incorrect processing of information" (p. 11). This definition is clearly something to which a psychologist can relate. However, from the very first chapter, Pears hastily dismisses the utility of psychological evidence suggesting that psychologists "are influenced by the latest theory" (p. 4). As a consequence, Pears's own use of psychological research is scant and unsystematic. Only three major psychological theories are briefly discussed: attribution theory, psychoanalytic theory, and functional theory. Pears presents the original versions of attribution and psychoanalytic theory, for which there are currently few remaining adherents. Furthermore, he oversimplifies and distorts the findings of attribution theory. The psychoanalytic theory of irrationality is discussed as being representative of the psychological perspective. While psychoanalytic theorists have commented extensively on the role of motivational factors in judgment, there has been an enormous amount of recent research on the psychology of judgment. However, Pears only footnotes this work (i.e., Nisbett and Ross) and consequently there is no discussion of the extensive recent work in cognitive and social psychology. Davidson's functional theory receives the most favorable treatment, probably because of its similarity to Pears's theory and as a result of Pears's extensive discussions with Davidson. It is unfortunate that Pears did not attempt to integrate the philosophical and psychological literature—a synthesis of these two divergent perspectives is desperately needed for both fields. Unfortunately, interdisciplinary theorists too frequently exhibit this cursory knowledge of one field or the other.

Although Pears begins the book by suggesting that either a psychological or

philosophical approach to rationality "ought to lead to the heart of the matter with the maximum speed and the minimum risk of entanglement in irrelevant details" (p. 1), his approach does neither. Excessive examples and counterexamples make the reading slow and laborious. Pears obviously recognizes some of these difficulties. He comments late in the book that "The territory traversed in the last two chapters has been a little arid and low in human interest" (p. 183). Consequently, this book may be inaccessible except to the most sophisticated philosophical reader.

From a philosophical perspective, the book does provide a scholarly and tenacious examination of the conditions under which irrational belief-formation can occur. Pears argues quite forcefully that other non-cognitive factors (e.g., values, desires, etc.) can influence human judgment. Furthermore, rather than redefining motivational factors in cognitive terms, Pears painstakingly shows that these factors can have independent access to our judgments and behaviors. Pears demonstrates that if cognitive explanations can be ruled out, other non-cognitive factors must be responsible for irrational belief formation. The author argues that irrational belief formation can be motivated by some desire or wish, and Pears adheres to an internal view of irrationality. Specifically, he argues that decisions about the rationality of judgment are relative to the individual's belief system. Although this idea is similar to the cognitive view that irrationality must be judged with reference to the individual's cognitions, Pears asserts that one's wishes and desires can exploit the cognitive system, resulting in irrational beliefs. In addition, Pears also distinguishes between the different possible types of irrationality. For example, he notes that rational beliefs may be developed through irrational factors and that rational beliefs may lead to irrational judgments. This type of distinction among the various types of irrationality is often neglected by cognitive researchers.

Having arrived at this position enables Pears to maintain the importance of the "cold" cognitive system in human judgment while integrating the "hot" motivational factors. Although these issues have been debated in the cognitive literature during the last twenty years, Pears offers a new challenge for cognitive psychologists to respond to these criticisms of the current cold cognitive view of irrationality. For these reasons Pears's thesis is important and worth the attention of both the psychological and philosophical reader. Cognitive psychologists studying human judgment and reasoning should read Pears's book carefully and should not dismiss his arguments as merely philosophical, too quickly. But for the philosopher interested in the psychology of irrationality, this book does not offer a systematic presentation of the psychological literature, nor will it serve as an introductory text. Therefore, the reader should have some background with the issues surrounding the concept of irrationality before attempting to read this book.