

Reason and Practice

A Modern Introduction to Philosophy

by [Kai Nielsen](#)

reviewed by [Jim Farmelant](#)

Early last June, I found in a used bookstore Kai Nielsen's 1971 philosophy textbook *Reason and Practice: A Modern Introduction to Philosophy*. As far as I can tell the 1971 edition is the only one ever published.

The book itself is probably the best introductory philosophy textbook that I have ever run across. It is clearly and lucidly written, and does not talk down to the reader. Although it starts out by presenting arguments that are fairly easy to comprehend, as the reader proceeds through the book, she will find herself confronted with increasingly sophisticated argumentation and analysis. Nielsen writes as an analytical philosopher, and finds nothing to be ashamed about on that score. In the first part of the book he takes on what else, but the issue of free will versus determinism. Nielsen, as he himself makes clear, is a determinist and a compatibilist. But in the book he approaches the issue in a Socratic manner, first presenting Holbach's case for hard determinism, then in the following chapter presents Dostoyevsky's case for free will as irrational choice, then in the chapter after that William James' case for free will. In the following chapters, Nielsen argues that determinism, while not conclusively demonstrable, constitutes a genuine hypothesis (that is, it is in principle falsifiable) and states why he considers it to be a reasonable hypothesis. He argues for compatibilism, and uses that to defeat some standard objections to determinism. He discusses the implications of determinism for issues concerning responsibility, including implications for criminal justice.

Indeed, he devotes an entire chapter to assessing the implications of determinism for criminal justice, titled appropriately enough

Reason And Practice A Modern Introduction To Philosophy

Kai Nielsen



Reason And Practice A Modern Introduction To Philosophy:

Reason and Practice Kai Nielsen, 1971 *Reason and Practice* Karl Nielsen, 1971 **Dictionary of Modern American Philosophers** John R. Shook, 2005-01-01 The Dictionary of Modern American Philosophers includes both academic and non academic philosophers and a large number of female and minority thinkers whose work has been neglected It includes those intellectuals involved in the development of psychology pedagogy sociology anthropology education theology political science and several other fields before these disciplines came to be considered distinct from philosophy in the late nineteenth century Each entry contains a short biography of the writer an exposition and analysis of his or her doctrines and ideas a bibliography of writings and suggestions for further reading While all the major post Civil War philosophers are represented the most valuable feature of this dictionary is its coverage of a huge range of less well known writers including hundreds of presently obscure thinkers In many cases the Dictionary of Modern American Philosophers offers the first scholarly treatment of the life and work of certain writers This book will be an indispensable reference work for scholars working on almost any aspect of modern American thought *Catalog of Copyright Entries. Third Series* Library of Congress. Copyright Office, 1976

Naturalism and Religion Kai Nielsen, 2011-04-29 This elucidation and defense of naturalism argues that an uncompromising secular orientation is the best framework for the search for meaning and interprets religion in purely naturalistic terms Part One seeks to demonstrate that religious symbols arise from facts about human beings and the societies in which they live specifically our needs fears and aspirations Part Two examines arguments for and against naturalism including the defenses of naturalism by Sidney Hook Ernest Nagel Antony Flew and critical reactions to their views The forceful and rigorously analytical case made by Jean Hampton against naturalism is also examined resulting in a clarification of the substantial and sound methodological grounds for naturalism and atheism Part Three considers the strongest intellectual challenge to secularism and naturalism namely that of Ludwig Wittgenstein and some of his followers Norman Malcolm D Z Phillips Hilary Putnam Rush Rhees and Peter Winch Nielsen concludes that none of these critiques diminish the cogency and viability of naturalism as the most reasonable basis for viewing our world today **Icons of Unbelief** S. T. Joshi, 2008-10-30 Discusses the ideas and impact of 27 atheists agnostics and secularists whose ideas have shaped society over the last 200 years In the opinion of many critics and philosophers we are entering an age of atheism marked by the waning of Christian fundamentalism and the flourishing of secular thought Through alphabetically arranged entries written by expert contributors this book profiles 27 iconic figures of unbelief whose ideas have shaped American society over the last 200 years Included are entries on influential figures of the past such as Albert Einstein and Voltaire as well as on such contemporary figures as Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris Each entry discusses the ideas and lasting significance of each person or group provides sidebars of interesting information and illuminating quotations and cites works for further reading The volume closes with a selected general bibliography Students in social studies and history classes will

welcome this reference as a guide to the ideas central to the American separation of Church and State and to many of the political debates at the heart of society today Each entry discusses the ideas and lasting significance of the person or group provides sidebars of interesting information and quotations and closes with a list of works for further reading The volume ends with a selected general bibliography Students in history and social studies classes will welcome this reference as a guide to the American separation of Church and State and to the ideas central to contemporary political debates

Does God Exist? Stan W. Wallace, 2020-09-23 This book presents the most recent debates by leading contemporary philosophers of enduring themes and issues concerning the question of God's existence William Craig and Antony Flew met on the 50th anniversary of the famous Copleston Russell debate to discuss the question of God's existence in a public debate The core of this book contains the edited transcript of that debate Also included are eight chapters in which other significant philosophers Paul Draper R Douglas Geivett Michael Martin Keith Parsons William Rowe William Wainwright Keith Yandell and David Yandell critique the debate and address the issues raised Their substantial and compelling insights complement and further the debate helping the reader delve more deeply into the issues that surfaced In the two final chapters Craig and Flew respond and clarify their positions taking the debate yet one step further The result of these many contributions is a book which provides the reader with a summary of the current discussion and allows one to enter into the dialogue on this central question in the philosophy of religion

Human Needs and Politics Ross Fitzgerald, 2016-06-21 Human Needs and Politics is a collection of papers that examines the intercorrelation between political trends and the fulfillment of society's human needs The title discusses the concepts of human needs wants and politics Next the selection details some theories that will shed light into the mechanisms of human needs politics interaction The text also reviews Maslow's hierarchy of needs along with Marx's opinion on human needs The book will be of great interest to political scientists sociologists and behavioral scientists

The Case for Faith Lee Strobel, 2021-12-14 This timeless compelling and thought provoking book on the Christian faith now updated includes two all new chapters a current list of recommended resources for further study and a new discussion guide In The Case for Faith bestselling author journalist and former atheist Lee Strobel turns his investigative skills to the most persistent emotional objections to belief in God the eight heart barriers to faith Since evil and suffering exist a loving God cannot Since miracles contradict science they cannot be true Evolution explains life so God isn't needed God isn't worthy of worship if he kills innocent children It's offensive to claim Jesus is the only way to God A loving God would never torture people in hell Church history is littered with oppression and violence I still have doubts so I can't be a Christian This bestselling book is for those who may be feeling attracted to Jesus but who are faced with difficult questions standing squarely in their path For Christians it will deepen their convictions and give them fresh confidence in defending their faith to skeptical friends or during the hardest of times when they have to defend their faith to themselves in moments of doubt Also available The Case for Faith Spanish edition kids edition and student edition Plus be sure to check out Lee

Strobel's entire collection of Case for books: The Case for Christ investigates the historical evidence for Jesus; The Case for a Creator explores the scientific evidence for God; The Case for Grace uncovers the how and why behind God's amazing grace and more.

Why People Stop Believing Paul Chamberlain, 2018-01-12

This book addresses a growing need in apologetic literature. It is a response to the growing wave of Christian leaders who are rejecting Christianity and becoming some of its most ardent critics, often supported by a plethora of new organizations arising to encourage such people to cut ties to their faith. This is a new challenge from a different breed of critics who are using their instant credibility and insider's knowledge of theology, the Bible, church history, even apologetics to debunk the faith they once believed and promoted. They have taken aim at the foundations of Christianity, including God, the Scriptures, miracles, and the supernatural, and Christianity's perceived inherent prohibition on free enquiry. Readers will be introduced to arguments against Christianity by these critics, which they claim compelled them to leave, followed by responses that use examples, questions, and nontechnical language to make the reasoning accessible. Every issue addressed has been raised by a former Christian leader, and special attention has been paid to their precise formulations. The book makes the case that however convincing the critics' arguments may appear at first glance, further analysis reveals them to be weaker than they appear, and in many cases entirely unpersuasive.

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