
Paul Edwards’ encyclopedia was later published in a compact edition. That edition contained the full content of the original eight volumes in four. By contrast, Professor Edward Craig and Routledge have released a shorter edition of the REP: the edition under review pares the full 2,000-plus entries down to 957, a significant percentage of these being word-for-word transcriptions of their counterparts in the larger encyclopedia. The subject matter runs from an initial article A Posteriori, through a final one on Zoroastrianism. Here you’ll find a brief article on Vagueness by Michael Tye; another on Moral Relativism by David Wong; one on Reference by Michael Devitt; another on Truthfulness by Sissela Bok. Some are a mere paragraph in length; others are rather full expositions on key topics or figures in the history of philosophy. For example, the article on Kant by Paul Guyer is nineteen pages long and covers Kant’s biography and philosophical development, as well as the range of his thought. Immediately following Guyer’s article, a more focused four-page article on Kant’s ethics by Onora O’Neill appears. Both articles are suffixed by a brief bibliography ‘For Further Reading’.

The subject matter of the encyclopedia is not confined to the perimeters of Western philosophy either: here you will find Roger Ames, Antonio Cua, Dan Lusthaus, et al., supplying articles on Daoist Philosophy, Xunzi, Sankya, etc.

I spent many a productive and entertaining hour with Edwards’ venerable 1967 encyclopedia – a work I distinctly remember gleefully finding in a used bookstore in 1985 for the bargain price of $100. And barring an ability to pay the $5,400 list price for the full REP, as only the wealthiest of libraries can do, this shorter version of Routledge’s encyclopedia is a good, affordable alternative: it’s a great way to inject the writings of an extraordinary cohort of current philosophers on a comprehensive range of topics into even the smallest public library, the most eclectic and idiosyncratic departmental library, or even onto your own nightstand.

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