

than to initiate a new order of things?"

The Prince is the ultimate self-help book for big shots, but literature, too, is full of books that deal in dramatic fashion with problems of leadership. Consider Joseph Conrad's *Typhoon* (1903), Theodore Dreiser's *The Financier* (1912), or F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon* (1941). Better yet, pick one of Shakespeare's tragedies at random. Or how about what the leaders themselves have to say? Surely Ulysses S. Grant's *Personal Memoirs* (1885) can teach us more, and more effectively, than yet

another book by a management guru. Alfred P. Sloan's *My Years with General Motors* (1964) is a classic that remains in print, and even Jack Welch's *Jack: Straight from the Gut* (2001) has many interesting things to say about leadership.

The fundamental question, of course, is whether this sort of thing can be learned at all. Machiavelli knew about that problem too. "It is an infallible rule," he wrote, "that a prince who is not wise himself cannot be well-advised."

—DANIEL AKST

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

ROBERT NOZICK.

By A. R. Lacey. Princeton Univ. Press.
248 pp. \$17.95

INVARIANCES:

The Structure of the Objective World.

By Robert Nozick. Harvard Univ. Press.
416 pp. \$35

Robert Nozick, the Harvard University philosopher who died in January at 63, earned his considerable public reputation with his first book, the libertarian manifesto *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974). He had mixed feelings about this reputation, because he never really considered himself a *political* philosopher. After *ASU*, he devoted almost all his attention to the big problems of philosophy: value, knowledge, rationality. Ambitious topics, certainly, yet with Nozick there has always been a sense of ambition not quite fulfilled, of expectations not quite met.

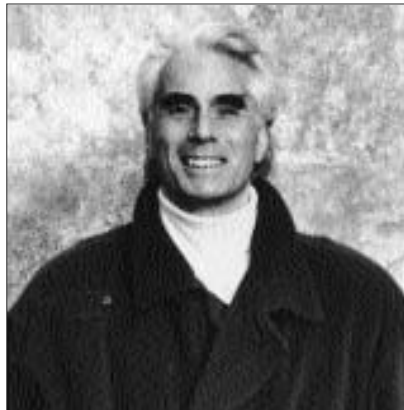
There are two reasons for this. The first is methodological. Especially in his later work, Nozick rejected the notion of "proof" as the aim of philosophy. He sought to say things that were "new and interesting," even if not, strictly speaking,

true—concocting inventive explanations for how it could be that there is something rather than nothing, for instance, or for why we might have free will. Second, his writing is not always accessible. *ASU* is rightly praised for the clarity and liveliness of its prose, but his next book, *Philosophical Explanations* (1981), is long, dense, and frequently unrewarding. As Nozick himself confessed, in some parts he was merely "thrashing about."

As a result, Nozick has long been in need of a critical expositor, someone to present his philosophy in a straightforward yet rigorous fashion. This is Lacey's goal, and the results are mixed. The book, clear if rather stiff, covers every major aspect of Nozick's thought, including his original contributions to epistemology, rationality, and metaphysics. Yet

by the end, even the careful and sympathetic reader may be left wondering just what Nozick was about.

Lacey begins each chapter with a short overview of the general nature of the philosophical problem to be considered, followed by a too-brief statement of Nozick's position and then a look at the objections



Robert Nozick

raised by critics. Lacey presents the critical response in all its breadth instead of focusing on a sustained and consistent line of criticism, so the book often reads like an annotated bibliography. The treatment of *ASU* is especially disappointing: That book was in many ways a direct response to John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971), but Lacey gives Rawls versus Nozick a mere two pages. In fairness, Nozick made a point of not responding to critics or revising his views in light of objections. He didn't want to become "defensive" about his work, and he often joked that he didn't want to spend his life rewriting *ASU*—a dig, perhaps, at his colleague Rawls, who made a career of revisiting *A Theory of Justice*.

Regardless, the philosophy that emerges from Lacey's study has an unfinished feel to it. That feeling persists in Nozick's last book, *Invariances*. He again tackles some big questions—necessity, objectivity, consciousness—and the book demands a lot from the reader. Nozick was a stupendously learned man, but that learning was not always lightly worn. In justifying once again his rejection of philosophical proof, he compares his method to that of physicists who use messy mathematics to make quick progress in a new area. He casually invites the reader to "recall the state of the calculus before [Karl] Weierstrass, and the path to renormalization methods in quantum field theory"—and this is only the introduction. Still, there is some great philosophy here. The discussion of evolutionary cosmology and how it might give us objective worlds is state-of-the-art metaphysics, both new and exciting.

Nozick is an important philosopher who led an interesting life. With his passing, what we need, and what he deserves, is an intellectual biography with the scale and scope of Ray Monk's book on Ludwig Wittgenstein.

—ANDREW POTTER

AS I LAY DYING:

Meditations upon Returning.

By Richard John Neuhaus. Basic.
168 pp. \$22

It would be nice to forget all the baggage that accompanies Neuhaus's lovely

new book. For some, the book will have to carry the weight of its author's famous conversions: from Lutheran vicar to Catholic priest, and from liberal social activist to one of our more temperate and stylistically gifted neoconservatives. For other readers, the weight of doctrinal purity implied by the nihil *obstat* and the imprimatur on the copyright page might compromise the book. The audacious literary allusion in the title could cause a few knowing heads to shake, and the book's willingness to present itself as a quiet and well-informed self-help volume might prompt others to ignore it.

Almost hiding in the subtitle is the best clue to the book's intent: meditations. Several years ago Neuhaus, whom the popular press labeled one of the most influential intellectuals in America, almost died. A misdiagnosed colon cancer ruptured his intestines, necessitating major surgery. During the operation, doctors unwittingly nicked his spleen, causing internal hemorrhaging that required a second operation a day later. One of his doctors later told him, "It was as though you had been hit twice by a Mack truck going 60 miles an hour. I didn't think you'd survive."

In the tradition of great meditations, in which momentous events throw life into focus and place its purpose, or lack of purpose, under intense scrutiny, Neuhaus reflects on the meaning of death. He invokes Augustine, Michel Foucault, Hamlet, and Big Daddy from *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, among many others. On one page, he moves from a poem by W. S. Merwin (which he summarizes as "poetically pleasing, but not . . . a rewarding line of inquiry") through Descartes to Cicero and Marcus Aurelius, and ends up most comfortable, not surprisingly for a priest, with Thomas Aquinas. Although one might disagree with one or another of his summaries (for instance, I find the Merwin more interesting than he does), Neuhaus's ease with a broad range of references can be breathtaking.

But the most vivid and memorable moments in *As I Lay Dying* come from his own experiences. Of course, there is his near-death experience, which he nicely