**Sentience and Sensibility:
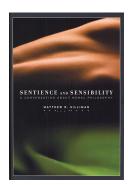A Conversation About Moral
Philosophy**
Matthew R. Silliman, Ph.D.
$32 HC, 9781930972070, 327 pages,
6" x 8", Parmenides Publishing,
888/727-6364, www.parmenides.com

How to make philosophy with its classical origins, theological twists, linguistic cul-de-sacs, existential and phenomenological dilemmas, and dry analytics relevant to the 21st century has been a conundrum for the thoughtful.

Dr. Matthew Silliman, employing a Socratic encounter and friendship between characters Harriet and Manuel, deals with such issues as racism, the origins of morality, animal rights, vegetarianism, and moral relativism. Through dialogue that is as lively and readable as a fine novel, he tackles the issues without creating more questions than possible answers. Included is a 19-page addition entitled "Cast of Concepts and Characters," within which are 12 pages of well-defined philosophical terms. Together, readers have an easy reference for the often playful and witty conversation of Harriet and Manuel.

While intuition, emotion, instinct, and other processes might provide a basis for making a choice, almost everyone attempts to ponder and reflect on moral principles in choosing. Silliman goes to considerable length to examine and incorporate moral principles from environmentalism to community responsibilities in the bright, sharp dialogue so that by the end of the volume, we are not given absolute answers to any of the great moral questions. Instead, we emerge with a feel for how an informed person would weigh the subtleties of various moral positions.

In the epilogue, Harriet states we can't "intellectualize away our emotional lives," to which Manuel replies, "nor can we emote away our intellectual passions." It is refreshing to read through a book of this scope without the sense one has been preached to. Display this work in philosophy, ethics, society, and politics sections.

Thomas Peter von Bahr, Pacific NorthWest Group, Lopez Island, Wash.

new age
RETAILER