

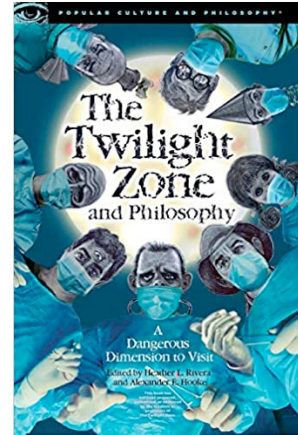
The Twilight Zone and Philosophy: A Dangerous Dimension to Visit, Heather L. Rivera and Alexander E. Hooke, eds.



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Heather L. Rivera and Alexander E. Hooke, eds. *The Twilight Zone and Philosophy: A Dangerous Dimension to Visit*. Popular Culture and Philosophy: Volume 121. Open Court, 2019. Paperback. 247 pg. \$19.95. ISBN 9780812699890.

This book is a concise view of philosophical topics using the classic television series *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964) as the basis of its explorations in 21 short essays. It follows the standard format for the series by having various authors explore concepts in short 9-14 page essays that allow the reader to delve into heavier material. Although being familiar with the series helps, it is not necessary, as detailed examples from the series are given to provide clarity for the reader. Readers will also find many episodes are discussed repeatedly, as they apply to numerous topics and concepts. Most of the chapters include direct references to the philosophers and their writings, documented and indexed for ease of reference. These essays are well divided into subsections under headings offering expansions on ideas from the main premise: “First Dimension: Facing the Zone”; “Second Dimension: Beyond the Boundaries of You and Me”; “Third Dimension: The Wondrous Land Called Truth”; “Fourth Dimension: As Vast as Space and Timeless as Infinity”; “Fifth Dimension: Our Twisted Imaginings”; and finally “The Dimension that Can’t Be Named or Numbered.” Most readers should enjoy the bite-size nature of the information which is designed to make it more accessible to the general public and specifically to the fans of the series. This format is the same as has been used for other volumes of the Popular Culture and Philosophy series, giving continuing readers greater context and understanding.



What I found most interesting were the chapters that asked questions about the concept of the *Twilight Zone* as a shadow of our own world. *The Twilight Zone* was written by a group of horror writers from southern California in the late 50's and early 60's that as Matt Cardin says, “founded their sense of the fantastic in everyday reality and the experience of characters that might live next door” (quoted in “No Place Like a Non-Place,” by Fernando Gabriel Pagnoni Berns, Juan Ignacio Juvé and Emiliano Aguilar, pg. 131). We also learn that except for just a couple of episodes, an element of supernatural, the future or aliens, was used to create twists or surprise endings. These thought plays provide ideal bases for the philosophical thought exercises in this book. The pairing is as natural as that between *Candid Camera* and sociology. Rod Serling and his associates created

a series that created thought experiments that illustrate the great theories of the philosophers, although not by design.

The chapters exploring specific theories are more interesting than the others, providing as they do a detailed framework including examples to aid the readers' comprehension. Philosophers discussed range from Aristotle to recent philosophers so current that the writers provide timelines indicating when episodes came out between major works by these contemporary figures. Many of the essays require the reader to invest time to absorb and work through the ideas expressed after reading. My favourites include "No Place like a Non-Place," by Fernando Gabriel Pagnoni Berns, Juan Ignacio Juvé and Emiliano Aguilar, in which they explain Marc Augé's *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology Of Supermodernity* via the episodes "Will the Real Martian Please Step Up?," "The Four of Us Are Dying," "The Hitch-hiker," "The After Hours," "The Passersby," "Passage on the Lady Anne," and the classic "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet"; "The Twists and Turns of Second Chances," by John V. Karavitis, describing Søren Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* (which is about the aesthetic versus the ethical world) in episodes including "A Nice Place to Visit," "A Game of Pool," and "Devil's Printer"; and "The Pleasure of the Twist," by Stephen Scales, discussing Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* with references to "The Hitch-hiker," "The Lateness of the Hour," and the classic "To Serve Man." The essay "The Science of Alternative Realities," by David Morgan, is a wonderful treat for this science fiction and comic reader as it explores the theories of alternate dimensions and timelines. The book has enough layers to be read multiple times and remain on your bookshelf for years of reference and enjoyment.

"Memories Are Made of This," by Clara Nisley, mentions David Hume's belief in continued existence briefly before moving into a consideration of "And When the Sky Was Opened" and "The Trouble with Templeton"; the relevance of Hume could have been explored in more detail. Other chapters work better, such as "Lost in Time," by Elizabeth Rard, which discusses the time travel paradox with examples from the episodes "The Rip Van Winkle Caper," "Last Flight," and "No Time Like the Past." "The Twilight Zone on Our Doorstep," by Tim Jones, is most intriguing in its exploration of where *The Twilight Zone* actually existed. "A Shadowland Called the Twilight Zone," by Trip McCrossin, on how Serling's art mirrored the events of his time, showing his own opinions, will be of interest to film historians. Serling's contribution to later movies is discussed in "The Science of Alternative Realities," by David Morgan, as Serling's ideas can be seen in blockbusters and feature length movies, although Serling's contributions were unaccredited. Many of the essays are well-developed persuasion pieces on the theory and the related episodes, and they serve as fine examples of how to form an argument.

Given *The Twilight Zone*'s popularity and reputation, I am surprised it was not covered earlier in the series. This book would be a great companion piece for any philosophy course if the instructor uses an episode or more to illustrate some philosophical theories. As someone who watched *The Twilight Zone* recently, I found that this book provided a great opportunity to explore theories in philosophy more easily than the complexity of the theories would indicate. Reading these essays will encourage the reader to find the episodes online, or set up their PVRs. For those

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who enjoy some of the reincarnations such as *Black Mirror* and others, including the recent reboot of *The Twilight Zone* itself, this book connects well to a more innocent time in television that explored many concepts long before these recent imitations began to do so.