CHOICE
CURRENT REVIEWS FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

A publication of the Association of College and Research Libraries
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February 2008 Vol. 45 No. 06

HUMANITIES
Philosophy

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The following review appeared in the February 2008 issue of CHOICE:

45-3125 BD213 2006-38903 CIP
Gunkel, David J. **Thinking otherwise: philosophy, communication, technology.** Purdue, 2007. 228p bibl index afp
ISBN 9781557534361 pbk, $34.95

Thinking Otherwise promises more than it delivers, perhaps necessarily so. Gunkel (communication, Northern Illinois Univ.) provides endless documentation of how one is trapped within either/or thinking--only to conclude that it is inescapable. What to do? Throughout the author urges that one question the structure of various either/or controversies regarding information and computer technologies. Unfortunately, even according to Gunkel, escaping dualism is not possible. So all that questioning can do is to reconfigure the binaries, and that is not a negligible accomplishment if done well. To cite one example, machines are not limited to "things" but include a set of rules, instructions, and messages. The inference the author makes, however, is not justified: namely, that "moral philosophy has been and is mechanic." It is untrue that "Western conceptions of morality customarily consist in systematic rules of behavior that can be encoded, like an algorithm." This is untrue of any of the great moral traditions in Western moral philosophy, even rule utilitarianism. This said, *Thinking Otherwise* is clearly and accessibly written from a deeply responsible postmodernist perspective. Even where one disagrees, one will learn from this book. **Summing Up**: Recommended. Lower-/upper-level undergraduates and general readers. -- *H. Oberdiek, Swarthmore College*