

John Patterson, *Exploring Maori Values*. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Dunmore Press, 1992. Pp. 191. US\$13.95.

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Twenty-five years ago New Zealand complacently congratulated itself for harmonious race relations. Then the Maori people loudly denounced the discrimination they were suffering and demanded a better place in society. Many Pakehas (as New Zealanders of European descent are called) have been attentive to these Maori demands and have made honest efforts to incorporate Maori people and Maori culture more fairly and fully into New Zealand society and into their own lives.

John Patterson's book about Maori values will help Pakehas in these efforts. By examining Maori attitudes toward the environment, work and artistic creation, spirituality, and rights and responsibility, Patterson (a philosopher who teaches at Massey University) outlines a set of values that he claims are quite different from Pakeha ones but that can be useful to Pakehas not only for understanding their Maori compatriots but also for enriching their own lives and relationships.

The exposition is uneven. In my opinion the narrative falters in chapter 2, when Patterson teases sundry values out of a large number of Maori proverbs but does little to organize them into coherent themes. A similar problem is found in chapter 7, where values are extracted in a rather pedestrian way from Maori myths and folklore. On the other hand, chapters 5 and 6 contain very interesting discussions of Maori

values of reciprocity, balance, and collective responsibility, and illuminating contrasts of these with Pakeha notions of individuality and justice.

Probably it is fair to conclude that an author is particularly wedded to points that are repeated in a text several times. One such point for Patterson is that values are ideals toward which people more or less strive, but which are anything but perfectly realized in social life. Thus it is, in Patterson's text, with the value of respect for all persons. He acknowledges that in traditional Maori society people from hostile tribes were "eagerly" enslaved, killed, and eaten. He declines to account for this in terms of changes in Maori values between then and now, preferring to say that respect for all persons was only an ideal, and one that it has never been easy to live up to (p. 27). This leaves one with the curious picture of historical Maoris eagerly killing, enslaving, or eating enemies while deep down they knew they shouldn't be doing that, an image that scarcely fits with Patterson's later discussion of how one's *mana* could be enhanced by perpetrating insults and injuries against people from other tribes (p. 129).

Another reiterated contention is that values can be grasped without worrying about the metaphysical principles associated with them. Patterson's recommendation that we do this stems from his concern that, in Maori studies, overmuch attention has tended to focus on metaphysics, at the expense of values and ethics. Perhaps, but surely deeper understanding is achieved when values are seen not as standing by themselves but as systematically connected through the mediation of general metaphysical principles. While Patterson's account sometimes does take the disjointed form of an inventory of isolated values, his most illuminating and interesting contributions come when he considers values and metaphysical principles together. A good example is his linking of the notion of collective responsibility with Maori concepts of collective identity, kinship, human nature, spirituality, and the structure of the natural world (see p. 154).

The book contains a good bibliography. Unfortunately, there is no index.