

THE PHILOSOPHER

RAPHAEL REUVENI, Self Made Soul Publishing, New York, hardcover, (323p)
ISBN: 0-9742669-0-6

Raphael Reuveni's "The Philosopher" is an introspective book that examines the author's growth as a philosopher and a knowledge seeker. This book explores an individual's attempt to examine philosophy, religion, and social systems critically.

The novel begins as a landlord shows the author around an apartment. Raphael Reuveni, who is also called the Philosopher, works as a salesclerk in the women's shoes department of Dillard's Department Store located in Las Vegas. He believes in seeing and understanding the world on his own terms, and the Philosopher is reprimanded for his non-conformity with the shoe store's policy of using only black ink on price tags. At the same place, he meets Diana Pares. Diana is a Mexican woman who is engaged to her childhood friend Carlos. Her meeting with the philosopher changes her lifelong religious and moral beliefs. The philosopher talks with her about how individuals are made to blindly believe everything they are told from childhood. The philosopher says that the present world is one where individual freedom is curbed and conformity forcibly enforced by social systems. Moved by his words, Diana decides to examine her life closely. She finds that she has been living her entire life seeking the approval of her family, community, and society. She realizes that, in fact, her life has no room for herself. As an act of rebellion against her selfless life, Diana refuses to marry Carlos. Claiming that Diana has abandoned her values and religion, her mother objects to Diana's decision.

Will Diana evolve into an independent individual guided by logic and reason? Or will she return to religion and social norms and allow her family to influence her decisions? The rest of the book deals with Diana's struggle with the Philosopher's ideas, as she tries to make changes in her life.

"The Philosopher" raises questions regarding conventional beliefs and practices that discourage free thought and suppress individual freedom. Reuveni argues that because people are forced to conform to social and religious norms, they fail to discover true knowledge about the world and live life on their own terms. Though controversial in many ways, this book opens new avenues of thought and explores fascinating secular ideas. It is an intriguing exploration of convention versus new ideas, and it will be well received by discerning readers.

BookWire Review
May 19, 2005