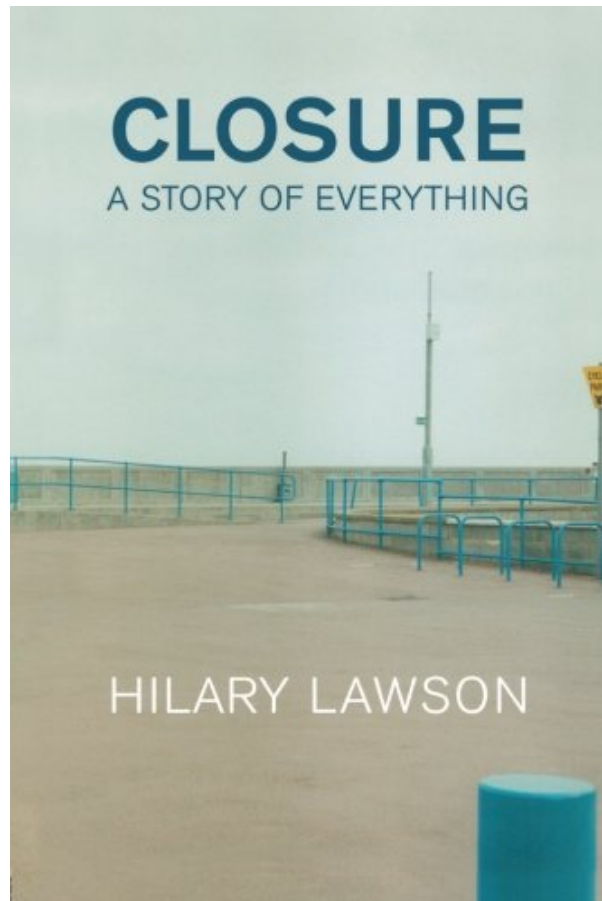
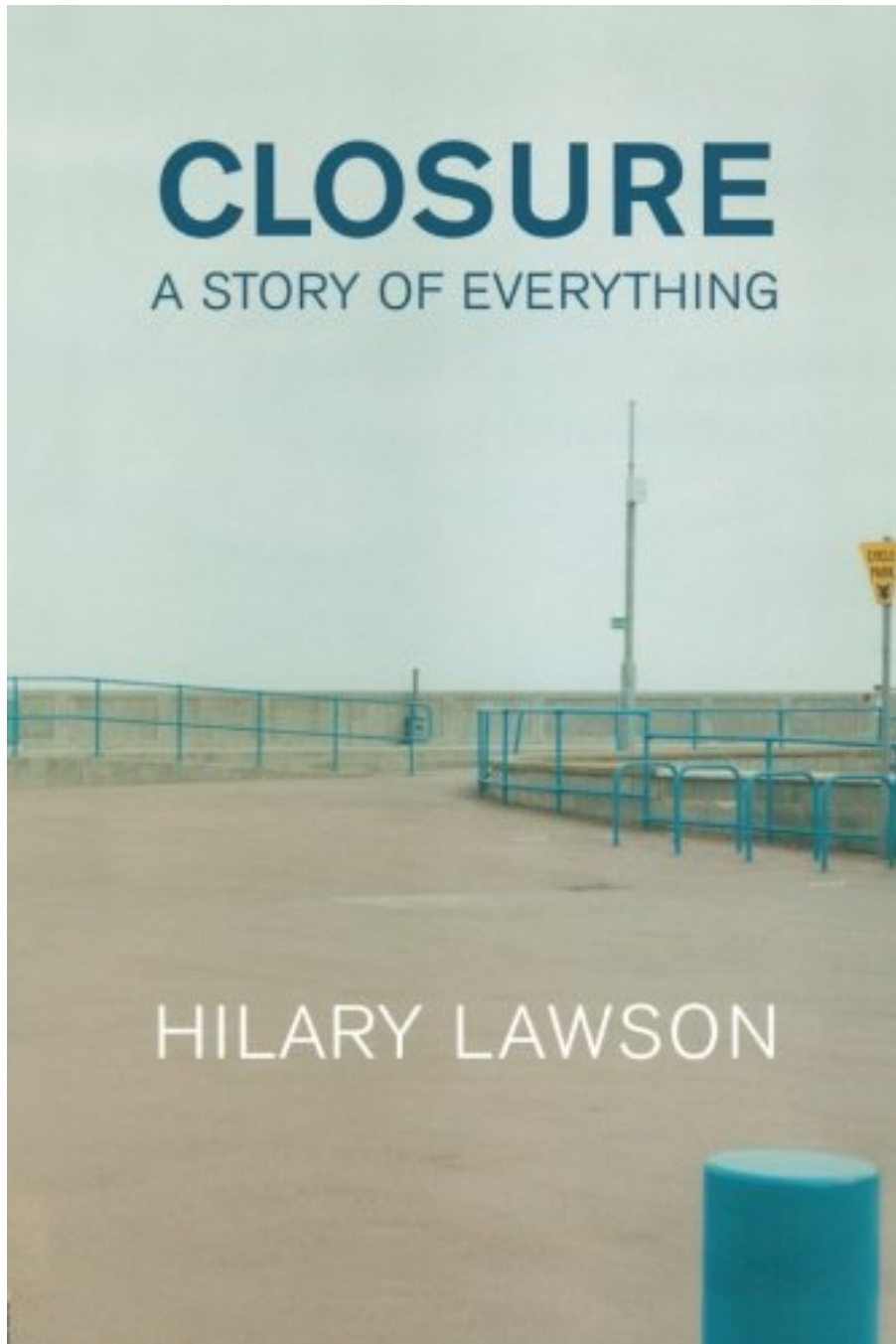


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Review

'Hilary Lawson shows himself to be a latter-day 'metaphysician' on the grand scale ... a quite astonishing achievement.' - Alan Montefiore, University of Oxford

About the Author

Hilary Lawson runs TVF, a major TV production company which produces documentaries and shows for Channel 4 and the BBC. He has a philosophy background

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Closure: A Story Of Everything By Hilary Lawson. In undertaking this life, many individuals always aim to do and get the most effective. New understanding, encounter, lesson, and also every little thing that could enhance the life will certainly be done. Nonetheless, many individuals often really feel confused to obtain those things. Feeling the limited of encounter and also sources to be far better is one of the lacks to possess. However, there is a very straightforward thing that could be done. This is exactly what your educator consistently manoeuvres you to do this. Yeah, reading is the solution. Reviewing a book as this Closure: A Story Of Everything By Hilary Lawson and also other recommendations can improve your life quality. Exactly how can it be?

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For over 2000 years our culture has believed in the possibility of a single true account of the world. Now this age is coming to a close. As a result there is a deep unease. We are lost both as individuals, and as a culture. In the new relativistic, post-modern era, we have no history, no right or moral action, and no body of knowledge. In their place is a plethora of alternative, and sometimes incompatible theories from 'fuzzy logic' to 'consilience' proposing a theory of everything. Closure is a response to this crisis. It is a radically new story about the nature of ourselves and of the world.

Closure exposes the central questions of contemporary philosophy: language and meaning, of the individual and identity, of truth and reality, but it is also philosophical in the broader everyday sense that it enables us to make sense of where and who we are. A central principle, the process of closure, is shown to be at the heart of experience and language. As a theory of knowledge it has dramatic consequences for our understanding of the sciences, involving a reinterpretation of what science does and how it is able to do it. It similarly proposes a profound shift in the role of art and religion. But, above all, it reshapes our understanding of ourselves and the organisation of society, our goals and our capacity to achieve them.

A superb new account of how order is created out of disorder, Closure is an exhilarating work of conceptual geography.

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After Finitude and the Limits of Thought

By S. Purcell

It is strange that a book written so clearly has been so clearly misunderstood. The preceding reviewers seem to have either (simply) disagreed with Lawson or not to have grasped the point of the project.

This project is a response to what Lawson identifies as a recurrent and ineradicable problem that has plagued most philosophical positions of the twentieth century (Anglo-American or Continental): the problem of self-reference.

In arguing for the persistence of the problem, one will note close proximities with Graham Priest's (more technical and rigorous) analysis of the Inclosure Schema in *_Beyond the Limits of Thought_*. Indeed, without knowledge of these more sophisticated arguments, I might not have accepted Lawson's description of the problem (this is why I gave the book only 4 stars).

Granted that self-referential paradoxes constitute an ineliminable feature of thought, Lawson proposes a solution: eliminate reference to the world as the totality of things (this appears to be a metaphysical analogue of Zermelo's solution to Russell sets in set theory). Here one finds some resonance with Alain Badiou's project in *_Being and Event_* and its sequel *_Logics of Worlds_*, as well as Quentin Meillassoux' *_After Finitude_* (and hence the title of this review).

I mention these similar projects both to illustrate what may be considered a general family of emerging thought (in both Analytic and Continental thinkers) born from the dissatisfaction of the 20th century's solutions to these paradoxes, and to suggest the philosophical significance of the concern. At stake here is not a repetition of Derrida, Heidegger and Wittgenstein, but grounds for rejecting them. Similarly, the equation of Lawson's two operative terms closure/openness with pre-Socratic thinkers (as one reviewer suggests) is as superficial as comparisons come. Lawson's concern with self-referential paradoxes is born of the proliferation of these type paradoxes, which only began at the beginning of the 20th century (or at least very late 1890s). Though Zeno's paradoxes were known and address in the ancient world, their philosophical significance has no analogue with contemporary concerns (see, for example, how Aristotle addresses them in his *_Physics_* as opposed to Russell or Zermelo's concerns). Besides, the binaries such as love and strife, or even the limited and unlimited, were not used to address these paradoxes.

In sum, this is an excellent work of philosophy that presents a truly genuine philosophical innovation. The success of the project is something about which one may *_argue_*, but this would at least require a serious assessment of the arguments Lawson himself provides. (I myself have such reservations.) If one is interested in learning about alternatives to the post-modern project without regressing to modernist realism, this is one of the definitive sources for such an interest. Equally, if one should like to maintain either of these positions, then one ought to look here and form a defense to a relevant attack. In either case, the philosophical significance of this work is will prove profound.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Closure: an excellent solution, for now...

By Marcos R Sousa

Closure is not a story with new facts. It's a new way to tell the same story. It assumes that we cannot grasp the whole: the reality, the world. The whole is called "openness". Openness is not a thing. We cannot grasp it. What we have achieved is to perform "closures" of perception and language. Our perceptions are limited by our body. We can see only some electromagnetic waves of light (wavebands), not all of them. We can hear only some sound wavebands, not all of them. Our conceptual, religious and scientific closures are limited to our culture, they are limited to our current knowledge. These closures allow us to act within them, even when we cannot grasp the openness. This theory has the advantage of not falling into the problem of self-reference and it uses the material perception as synonymous with conceptual perception, and vice-versa, as guidance. Thus, Closure is just a language feature that allows us to discuss a "theory of everything" without falling into self-referential problem. It has practical implications, it allows to act in the world (this world / reality / all is the openness no-thing, which cannot be named. We don't know what the atomic sub-

particles are; we don't know what came before the big-bang; there many hypothesis that cannot be tested by science. There are things we will never know. (What We Can Never Know: Blindspots in Philosophy and Science). Through Closure, without the risk of being self-referential, we can act, conduct, intervene with closures that allow us to appoint and act, until new openings. As a new scientific paradigm almost touch openness, without reaching it, we quickly close inside them again because we cannot act in the "openness". Therefore, Closure is born admitting that it is not a definitive approach, but it is useful for now. This theory is in line with current scientific knowledge. Usually, science works inside paradigms, inside specific contexts, fragments of knowledge. Through Closure, it is easy to deal with the success and with the failure of scientific theories, including the failure of those that had previous success. Through Closure, it is easy to understand culture differences and the impact of these differences in human life. Through Closure, it is easy to understand the power of the marketing of ideas, beliefs and values.

9 of 16 people found the following review helpful.

A deeply flawed theory of everything

By Sam Nico

`Closure' is an attempt to plasticise reality, to soften up its dogmatic form not by invoking principles of criticism, rather by showing how criticism of sorts is generated by principles of closure. Briefly, it outlines how our conceptual structures are destined to be incomplete. By aiming them at what is not contained in them (the uncontained referred to as `openness'), it demonstrates how the aiming process itself impedes total containment which is completion. Consequently, the idea of closure is actually a tension between these two words, openness and closure, which generates our concepts, ideas and perspectives concerning the nature of reality. Closure as such a tension generates further concepts and therefore a nested structure of further closures.

This duologue closure/openness has a distinguished pedigree (although this is never alluded to) which can be traced back to the Greek ideas of the fixed and the loose, is re-invoked by Kant's noumenal (which gets a mention in passing) is improved upon by Schopenhauer's idea of the Will and objectification of the Will, can be found again in existential texts such as Heidegger's Dasein and Sartres' in-itself and for-itself. In particular, it bears a marked resemblance to Whitehead's notion of eternal objects and their prehension in actual occasions. Unfortunately, closure stands against them as a distant poor relation, beginning as a great-grandchild but soon deteriorating into a distant cousin twice removed related by name only, as though it is embarrassed by such an association.

The linguistic analysis is handled well enough, arguing against the inordinate emphasis linguistic philosophy has received in the universities. Closure provides the means to allow it to move beyond itself by developing a method of self-reference within its own terms that is not regressive, and so capable of shedding light in other areas that have been allowed to lie fallow.

But this is where the problems begin. In attempting to move beyond linguistics, closure turns itself from a principle into a theory. It assumes the mantle of a scientific idea by severing ties with the philosophy that gave it life. In so doing, it imagines it has something to offer science, say, which in turn will reply that it already contains closure as part of its working method (through Popperian falsifiability, for instance). In effect, it is teaching grandmother to suck eggs. However, it discredits the philosophical tradition, and that is far more significant. It is as though the idea is looking for approval and reshapes itself into a more acceptable form, in this case a scientific theory, and betrays its own roots. Far more significant, by exchanging allegiances, it is no longer capable of the criticism and the vision that is so sorely needed to loosen up the assumptions we take for granted, and which ironically prevent exactly the kind of closure that closure was originally intended for.

It is most certainly true that we are constrained by historical legacies and physiology, but he makes no mention of the fact that particular systems of thought, perceived as forms of closure, are difficult to alter or overhaul because they represent the interests of the very parties in a position to alter them who defend them from such alteration. Without this particular dimension, closure becomes self-serving, seeing only itself in

everything, imagining itself to be a concept like Dawkin's notion of a meme, or Daniel Dennet's algorithm. In effect, it becomes non-critical, and sees only forms of closure without being able to comment or criticise those things it applies itself to. Finance, for instance, is seen as an effective means of intervention which effectively realises a particular form of closure. It becomes a good thing. But then even Stalin and Hitler were not such bad men, as they represented particular forms of closure. The irony is that while he sees the closure in everything and it becomes a myopic view.

This problem is created by the non-political stance of the book, seeing such systems as extensions of child psychology writ large. Perhaps it has more to do with the context of closure reducing all the different things to sameness. This is in marked contrast to the much deeper view of closure inherent in Whitehead's process philosophy, in which sameness is the source of all novelty. Furthermore, these three hundred pages continue to refer to the incompleteness of knowledge, an idea summed up in one short sentence in Whitehead which warns against the dangers of taking the selection for the totality.

The greatest omission of all, however, is that there is not a single reference to an ethical universe. Given its aim to turn itself into a pseudo-scientific theory, this is hardly surprising, since ethics is not a direct brief in the science context. Science at its worst defines ethics in terms of an evolutionary strategy for survival, and this is a view only possible in a perspective that holds itself falsely as a complete theory, or one nearing completion. It does not, however, provide any insight into the riddle of ethics, which has less to do with what can be discovered outside Plato's cave, and more to do with why anyone who manages to leave it should return.

However, reading 'Closure' was a philosophical experience akin to reading Andre Gide's 'Pastoral Symphony' in which compassion for another human being becomes something entirely perverse by the end, and yet the language of description is hardly altered. 'Closure' becomes an ironic work because it is clearly lost on the author, but it is painful for the spectator to watch it develop from the outset, starting life as a philosophical idea full of promise and ending life as a quasi-rational concept with little value and no future. Failure, after all, is the point of closure, and this book is therefore highly successful.

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