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Book notes

EDITED BY MARTIN STONE

Kurt Flasch and Udo Reinhold (eds.), *Das Licht der Vernunft: Die Anfänge der Aufklärung im Mittelalter*. (München: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1997.) Pp. 191.

This multi-author volume explores the beginnings of a form of rationalism, more ordinarily associated with the Enlightenment, in the middle ages. The essays it contains originated in a series of talks for *Deutschland-Radio* in 1994. Despite the condescension of the authors to the requirements of a non-specialist audience, their papers contain much information that is directly relevant to students of the history of the philosophy of religion. The topics covered include discussions of Maimonides, Averroes, Aberland, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart. Issues such as rationalism, materialism, logic, natural philosophy and the practices of magic and alchemy are also covered in extensive detail. Written by many eminent authorities in the field – Kurt Flasch, Loris Sturlese, Luca Bianchi, Alan De Libera and Olaf Pluta – the essays provide the reader with simple and clear instruction in the ways of medieval philosophical thought. Perhaps the highlights of the volume are the essays of Loris Sturlese and Alan De Libera. Sturlese's 'Der Rationalismus Alberts des Großen' provides a very thorough overview of the work of Albert the Great. By paying close attention to Albert's use of the work of Aristotle as well as to his Neoplatonism, Sturlese shows how Albert sought to construct from these twin influences a system of knowledge which could integrate the needs of science and the requirements of theology with the methods of philosophy. De Libera's masterful essay, 'Die Rolle der Logik im Rationalisierungsprozeß des Mittelalters' tells the story of medieval logic and its place within modern logic. Beginning with the Arab commentators of Aristotle and proceeding to Aberlard and thence to later thinkers, De Libera shows how so much medieval speculation about the laws of thought are directly relevant to the concerns of twentieth-century philosophers. His essay is a pithy reminder to the modern reader of the fecundity of the medieval philosophical inheritance, an inheritance which Flasch's and Jecks's *Das Licht Der Vernunft* manages to capture in interesting and persuasive detail.

M.W.F.S.

Robert Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages*. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.) Pp. x + 330. £35.00 hbk.

Robert Pasnau's innovative study concerns itself with the neglected area of late medieval theories of cognition. The principal aim of the book is to show how and why issues such as mental representation, intentionality, scepticism, and realism – issues which are by no means absent from current debates in epistemology and the philosophy of mind – were of interest to medieval authors in the period 1250–1350. To this end, Pasnau provides a careful analysis of Thomas Aquinas, Peter John Olivi and William Ockham. Duns Scotus and Henry of Ghent also receive attention, while

less well known figures of the period such as Peter Aureol, William of Auvergne and William Cranthon are finally accorded some of the attention they deserve. In many ways, Olivi and Ockham emerge as the central characters of the book by virtue of their different attempts to offer radically new descriptions of the mind and its powers along direct realist lines, criticizing in the process the traditional Aristotelian theory as it had come down to them from Aquinas. Pasnau's knowledge of his subject and of the authors he discusses is exemplary. His book exhibits philological rigour, contextual sensitivity and philosophical good sense. The work is also informed by a more than adequate grasp of contemporary philosophy of mind, a feature which enables Pasnau to resist the temptation to provide nothing more than a survey of the late medieval cognitive theories. For this reason, the book contains intelligent guidance in the activity of estimating the philosophical salience and coherence of the cognitive theories considered. Given the paucity of informed English-speaking commentary in this neglected area of medieval philosophy, it is to be expected that Pasnau's book will eventually assume a pre-eminence in its field. Given the clear merits of the work, it would be quite unjust to deny it such a status.

M.W.F.S.

Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.) 2 vols. Pp. xvii + 1616. £90.00 hbk.

This magisterial work (hereafter *CHSCP*), the result of fourteen years honest toil and hard labour, presents itself as the most authoritative companion to seventeenth-century philosophy to date. As an English-language work of reference and guide to its subject it is probably without equal. The scope of the subjects embraced by the work and the range of the individual thinkers it discusses is truly impressive. Divided into two volumes, with each volume being split into sections, Garber's and Ayers's *CHSCP* considers: (i) the context of seventeenth-century philosophy; (ii) logic, metaphysics and philosophy of language; (iii) epistemology; (iv) theology; (v) natural philosophy including philosophy of mind; (vi) moral psychology and the theory of action; (vii) ethics and the natural law tradition. Written by acknowledged specialists from Europe and North America, *CHSCP* can be said to reflect not only a new found daring and confidence among English-speaking history of philosophy, but also the ways in which seventeenth-century scholars have come increasingly to rely upon histories of natural science and theology for their understanding of the philosophical issues. While the stimulus of the natural sciences has been endlessly documented in studies of the relation of seventeenth-century philosophy to the so-called 'Scientific Revolution', the place and influence of theology within seventeenth-century philosophical thought has rarely received the attention it deserves. In the section on 'God', in volume 1 of the *CHSCP*, the volume can be said to break new ground. For there, in essays by Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Robert Armogathe, Thomas Lennon and Nicholas Jolley, the reader is presented with compelling evidence that theology was not simply a restraining factor in the intellectual careers of the main protagonists of seventeenth-century thought – a view so often advanced in standard textbook accounts – but was rather a creative influence upon philosophical thinking in general. Nicholas Jolley's essay 'The Relation between Theology and Philosophy' puts this point across quite nicely by way of a discussion of transubstantiation, miracles, and the theological and philo-

sophical problems occasioned by socinianism. The volume is attractively produced by Cambridge University Press, and contains full bibliographical and biographical information.

M.W.F.S.

Arthur F. Holmes, *Fact, Value and God*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997.) Pp. viii + 183.

This book traces the history of conceptions of the place of value in the cosmos from the Greek thought to the present day. The concern is to uncover the successive ways in Western thought in which conceptions of ethics have been embedded in theories about the nature and purpose of the universe. The problem of how values are related to facts is shown to have a history. The history is one of the evolution of a tradition in which the universe has been seen as embodying a moral order, whereby the moral notions we live by are answerable to, and correspond with, the structure of reality. Since these conceptions of the universe as enshrining a moral order are inevitably religious and theological, this book is as much a history of philosophy of religion as of ethics. Indeed, it is a history of the relation between conceptions of the divine and conceptions of morality in the Western tradition. Holmes's story takes him from the Pre-Socratics to Nietzsche via Plato, Aristotle, late Classical thought, the major medieval Christian theologians and the leading philosophers of the Enlightenment. His history argues for a conclusion: for two millennia ethics has been grounded in cosmic order and purpose and without such a grounding ethical realism is untenable. No belief in a divinely grounded moral order equals divorce of value from fact, equals the untenability of ethical realism. While his history is indeed suggestive of this conclusion, he does not demonstrate it. His final chapter is too brief to constitute anything like a proper survey of contemporary treatment of the issues uncovered. Those familiar with current moral philosophy will be aware that there are various attempts in it to establish moral realism without appeal to metaphysics (for example, McDowell's work) and numerous arguments to the effect that nothing is gained by endeavouring to avoid this 'bootstrapping'. Yet, if we think of Holmes's book as a contribution to the understanding of the history of the relationship between ethics and religion/metaphysics, then we must judge it to be a very useful survey, one that will be helpful in many an undergraduate course.

P.A.B.

Paul Avis (ed.), *Divine Revelation*. (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1997.) Pp. viii + 215. £12.95 pbk.

Perennial questions about divine revelation are the subject of this collection of essays edited by Paul Avis. The modest volume aims to make various aspects and approaches to revelation by academic theologians and philosophers of religion accessible to the beginning student. In this regard the goal is widely successful. The eleven essays expound, analyse and evaluate the concept of revelation in various relations: James Dunn on biblical concepts, Gabriel Daly on revelation in Roman Catholic theology, Avis himself on modern Protestant views, Terence Penelhum on revelation and philosophy, Charles Davis on critical theory, Maurice Wiles on divine action, Gavin D'Costa on world religions, Leslie Houlden on the Gospels, Esther

Reed on feminist philosophy and theology (with focus on Irigaray), Richard Bauckham on the revelation of Jesus, and William Abraham on revelation reaffirmed. There is little which is original or surprising in these essays but they do serve, by and large, as a helpful introduction to the issues surrounding the topic of divine revelation. There are good summaries of the contributions of, for instance, Vatican II, Rahner, Barth, Pannenburg, Ward, DiNoia, Plantinga and scriptural accounts.

This reviewer found the essays by Dunn, Penelhum, D'Costa, and Abraham particularly clear and well argued. That three of these are philosophically inclined thinkers (excluding Dunn) is of some interest, for recent analytical treatments of the concept of revelation appear to diverge substantially from the works of many recent theologians. This is most notably seen in the philosophers' general reaffirmation of traditional concepts of revelation (cf. recent works by Abraham, P. Helm, G. Mavrodes, R. Swinburne and N. Wolterstorff) over against more constructivist proposals.

There are always quibbles. One can observe a certain asymmetry to the historical essays. Daly's essay stretches back to Augustine, Bonaventure and Aquinas, before focusing on post-Tridentine and especially post-Vatican II ideas about revelation. But Avis begins with Enlightenment and modern concepts. This means that Luther and Calvin barely get a mention! Evangelicals may also feel left out by the omission of reference to Carl Henry's six-volume *God, Revelation, and Authority* (duly noted in Gabriel Fackre's recent *The Doctrine of Revelation*). Davis's essay I found particularly opaque and Wiles's piece seems somewhat dated; still training attention on issues covered in the Wiles/Mitchell debates while ignoring recent work by, say, T. Tracy and W. Alston on divine action. There are also curious, perhaps trivial, structural features to this volume. It is odd that Dunn's essay on biblical concepts is separated from Houlden's essay on the Gospels. And the essay on the Gospels is separated from Bauckham's article on Jesus (divided by an essay on feminism). But more importantly it is surely remarkable that a volume self-consciously setting out to be an accessible classroom text would have no index or bibliography whatsoever!

Such fastidiousness aside, *Divine Revelation* is a very useful collection of essays on key issues regarding the notion of a divine revelation. Most essays are insightful and presume a minimum of background knowledge. I would recommend it as an introductory text, especially in a theological college setting.

M.A.