

Book reviews

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John Cottingham *The Spiritual Dimension: Religion, Philosophy and Human Value*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Pp. xii + 186. £40.00; \$70.00 (Hbk); £14.99; \$24.99 (Pbk). ISBN 0 521 84377 4 (Hbk); 0 521 60497 4 (Pbk).

John Cottingham's readable book, though short, covers a lot of ground. He is concerned not to treat religion as a set of propositions or doctrines, but to address religion in its full nature. Belief in religious truths is involved, to be sure, but also there are commitment, worship, and, significantly for Cottingham, moral and spiritual praxis, or *askesis*, and the symbolic layering of religious discourse. In this book Cottingham does something that you might think would be done more often in philosophy of religion: he reflects on the nature of religion, including especially those elements that do not take a crisp propositional expression. Based on his 2003 and 2004 Stanton Lectures at the University of Cambridge, the book is scholarly. However, Cottingham has kept it quite readable by relegating the discussion of scholarly details to the footnotes, which allows his main argument to proceed unencumbered in the text. The reach of Cottingham's discussion goes beyond religion *per se* to philosophy and to moral and human value, as his title indicates. It also embraces psychology and it would not have been misleading if *Psychology* or *Psychoanalysis* had been included in the title along with *Philosophy*.

A thesis central to Cottingham's consideration is that 'praxis must come first'. Becoming religious is not a matter of being convinced by a philosophical argument and then taking up the appropriate praxis and commitment. Rather praxis helps bring about an understanding of religion and of God. Of course there is a problem here, which Cottingham recognizes. How can religious claims be well supported if they are taken up by a means that 'appears to involve the abandonment of critical rationality?' (13). He devotes a good part of his book to dealing with this issue in one way or another. One way to deal with this problem would be to sever faith from reason; another way would be to understand religion as a matter of passion in isolation from any transcendent claims. Cottingham takes neither course. He is clear that being religious involves adopting a 'worldview'.

The primacy of praxis, in Cottingham's understanding, does not involve the abandonment of either critical rationality or our deepest moral intuitions. These remain as tests for an adequate praxis, and Cottingham is very much aware that there is more than one praxis. Similarly, a religious worldview, for him, must be consistent with the universe as we and science find it. A religious worldview is not 'an isolated set of doctrines' but a 'net of praxis and belief' expressed', not just at the narrowly intellectual level but also in 'symbolic and figurative discourse'. At the same time it has metaphysical content and if it is correct, there is a correct way of seeing the world, 'namely as being "charged with the grandeur of God"', as Cottingham puts it at one point, quoting Gerard Manley Hopkins (87). Such a worldview is not a mere decoration. For Cottingham a religious worldview cannot be jettisoned leaving the praxis of religion intact.

What, then, is the justification for adopting a religious worldview? Cottingham takes what he calls a 'middle way' between 'quasi-scientific inferentialism' and the blind faith of 'irrationalist hyper-fideism' (24). On the one hand religious belief is not to be treated as an empirical hypothesis, and on the other hand blind faith is not the alternative to be followed. There is no evidence for God to be brought forward of the sort that plays a role in repeatable experiments. Yet there can be kinds of experiential awareness that play a role in what he calls the '*observational* mode of inquiry' (131–132, Cottingham's emphasis). Important here is the notion of *traces*, although Cottingham says that the theist must use this notion in a non-literal sense, shorn of its usual causal implications. For Cottingham affirming a transcendent God is a 'leap into the unknown', but not a leap of blind faith, for the belief 'resonates' with intimations or traces in 'the moral and spiritual fabric of our lives' (133–134). These experiences are compatible with scientific truth but go beyond it. Furthermore it takes 'a lifetime of the appropriate *askesis*' to appreciate these experiences (139). Perhaps a lifetime for Wordsworth, whose *Tintern Abbey* he quotes, and perhaps a lifetime for the Psalmist, but, we might ask, why should we deny that God can open the eyes of doubters and even deniers?

There are certain problems that Cottingham's discussion encounters. He is straightforward in acknowledging various problems; however, this is not to say that he adequately resolves all of them, or that he recognizes all those he faces. Aware that there is more than one 'worldview', Cottingham says that a question to be faced is 'whether there is any viable decision procedure for deciding which interpretative framework is to be preferred' (88). For him an emotional or interpretative framework is that in terms of which one sees the world and so correlates with one's worldview. In Cottingham's presentation it is as though we were at a crossroad trying to decide which way to go. Happily there are experiential reasons for going the way of religion and adopting a religious worldview (and its framework), namely those traces we may experience (with or without a 'lifetime' of preparation).

But can we not say something similar for the atheist and the atheist's worldview (and framework)? Perhaps the atheist experiences traces of godlessness in the random events and evil of the world. It is true that Cottingham in an early chapter (chapter 2) advances a theodicy. His effort, however, is to show that the religious worldview is consistent with what we see in the world, namely, instances of evil. Cottingham does not argue that an atheistic emotional framework cannot read traces in its way, finding in evil traces that support its worldview. In fact Cottingham insists that emotional states are not reactive states to what is independently so, but that emotional colouring can contribute to 'reconstituting the state of affairs itself' (84–85). Perhaps, then, on Cottingham's account religious individuals may be justified in adopting a religious worldview. But atheists may also and equally be justified in adopting their opposite worldview. Each decision may be justified. In this way it is hard for Cottingham's account to accommodate the religious sensibility of believers that their worldview is the correct one, as opposed to a worldview they are merely justified in deciding to hold. It would be very different if there were available to religious persons a *realization*, rather than a decision to be made and justified. For a realization of God's presence in our lives would entail the truth of God's presence in our lives.

It may be that Cottingham's idea that there are two 'modes of inquiry', experimental and observational (131–132), contributes to his setting up the justification issue as one about decision and decision procedures. While he is clear that belief in God is not an issue for (quasi-scientific) experimental inquiry, he still sees it as a matter of inquiry. And in matters of inquiry we gather evidence (or traces) or conduct some investigation, and then come to a judgement, or decision, on the basis of the inquiry. Another contributing factor is Cottingham's stance on religious knowledge. He is concerned not to put his account of religion and the justification of a religious worldview at odds with modern science and the heritage of the Enlightenment. Properly understood, he argues, the Enlightenment allows for the meaningfulness of faith as something that is beyond knowledge, and he offers an interpretation of Kant and Hume along these lines. Religious experience allows us to be receptive to seeing the world as containing traces of the transcendent. But these experiences do not yield anything that meets the requirements for knowledge (122–123). This part of Cottingham's account does not allow him to recognize those forms of religious sensibility that affirm religious knowledge (Job's 'I know my redeemer lives'), and it makes accepting a religious worldview, not a blind leap of faith, but still a 'leap into the unknown' (133), essentially a decision that one makes.

If one of the questions taken seriously by Cottingham is 'Why should one decide to adopt a religious worldview?', another is 'Why should one choose one path or faith over another?': why, in particular, should one choose a Christian form of worship? Cottingham's book, while on spirituality, has an apologetic

strain for theism and for Christianity. At one point he says, after quoting Denys Turner on the theology of St Bonaventure:

If we are to respect the otherness, the transcendence of God yet at the same time avoid becoming lost in a silence that risks being elided into agnosticism, we need a transition, a way of understanding God in human terms. And the life of Christ provides (according to Christianity) just such a transition (162).

He might have observed that the same could be affirmed of Hinduism, in which Krishna is an avatar of Vishnu, and of Buddhism, in which Gautama Buddha is an embodiment of the eternal Buddha nature. In fact, however, Cottingham's position on adherence to Christianity is tempered. He explicitly rejects exclusivism, and argues only that 'the adherent of the Christian spiritual tradition should not need to make any bones about defending that particular tradition wholeheartedly' (166), which of course allows that the same could be said of other religious traditions.

For Cottingham, while there is more than one praxis, a proper praxis must meet certain constraints. It must not abandon 'critical rationality' (15). It must also meet moral constraints. It must not involve 'unjust or abusive power structures', or require personal degradation, for instance (154). As he acknowledges, spiritual praxis in several traditions, including Hinduism and Buddhism, meets these moral requirements and facilitates inner transformation. Why, then, Cottingham asks, should we not adopt the stance of the 'indifferentist', who holds that it is indifferent which faith, or religious tradition, one adheres to? This question is close to another question that arises earlier in his discussion: 'Could not Augustine discard his theistic worldview and retain the core of his self-reflection and personal quest?' (77). Generalized, the question becomes: 'Could not one follow a spiritual praxis without adhering to any religious worldview?'

One important reason not to take the indifferentist position, for Cottingham, is that it gives no place to religious *truth* – the truth of a particular religious worldview. A similar point could be made about following a spiritual praxis in the absence of any religious worldview. (And, let us add, there is the question of whether certain religious practices central to some forms of spiritual praxis, like prayer, would retain their integrity in the absence of a belief in the truth of a religious worldview.) Cottingham appeals to John Hick's thought about different interpretations of the same divine reality in different religious traditions as a way of understanding the place of truth in religion (156–158). However, he has reservations about certain implications of Hick's pluralistic thought. In fact in an earlier part of his discussion Cottingham had argued that only a theistic worldview could provide a divine teleology and 'underwrite our aspirations to moral goodness' (53). This seems open to question, for surely Buddhism in its way 'underwrites' moral goodness (although not of course by an appeal to the will of God).

Cottingham's book addresses a range of concerns in philosophy of religion. A theodicy is advanced, as was noted. Also there is a treatment of the connection between religion and morality. Cottingham pursues these concerns because he believes that an adequate religious outlook, come to through praxis, will be integrated with a moral system that respects human dignity, and if it is theistic in the Abrahamic tradition it must be able to address the problem of evil. Similarly, for him, spiritual praxis and a religious outlook have connections to the symbolic character of religious language and to the psychological dynamism identified by Freud. Cottingham's discussions of religious language and of psychology are valuable in themselves. Particularly interesting is his discussion, in chapter 4, of the 'triangle of tension' involving religion, philosophy, and psychology. Freud famously attacked religion. Philosophy has had its criticisms of psychoanalysis. Philosophy has subjected religion to tests of consistency and examined the connection between morality and religion, and, moreover, a segment of modern analytic philosophy, Cottingham suggests, is hostile toward religion. Nevertheless, Cottingham argues, the three are compatible and even mutually supportive. In fact Cottingham's effort in this book is an example of how philosophy can be supportive to religion, enlisting psychology as an ally in the process.

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T. L. S. Sprigge *The God of Metaphysics*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Pp. xix + 576. £60.00 (Hbk). ISBN 0 19 928304 4.

It is commonly said, and perhaps even more commonly felt, that the God of philosophy, the kind of deity whose existence might be proved by reasoned argument, has little real religious significance. That is not a view which much appeals to philosophers, and in this important new book Timothy Sprigge sets out to challenge it. However, the project which he gives himself differs from that which might be expected, in two respects.

In the first place, while critics such as Pascal and Kierkegaard have been keen to stress how far is the supreme being of philosophy specifically from the God of Christianity, Sprigge's interest here is simply in securing the possibility of religion in its broadest sense. The issue of what it would be to be 'religiously relevant' in such a general fashion is approached via three lists. There is a fourteen-point list of characteristics in virtue of which any being that possessed them might deserve the title 'God', including such features as omniscience, omnipresence, being the

creator of the universe, and being a proper object of worship. There is a six-point list of features typical of a belief systems deserving the name 'religion', including its association with certain 'religious' emotions and its offering a moral guide to whom adhere to it. Lastly there is an eight-point list of the kind of things a religion might do for its followers, such as providing an object of love, proving comfort when the world looks bleak and holding out some promise of life after death. Sprigge's sense of the religious is as perceptive as it is broad, but the approach is a remarkably generous one; for no one of these features, nor even a given proportion of them, is set down as absolutely necessary for religious relevance.

The second difference concerns the metaphysical Gods Sprigge focuses on. Rather than the abstractions of classical theism, his own sense of which metaphysical paths are most defensible leads him to take up cudgels on behalf of the Gods of pantheism, Absolute Idealism, and process philosophy. The bulk of the book consists in broad presentations of the metaphysical systems of Spinoza, Hegel, T. H. Green, Bernard Bosanquet, Josiah Royce, A. N. Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne, in each case drawing out the religious relevance of their views. Sprigge is a clear and penetrating expositor and, in consequence, these are series of helpful introductions to some of the great constructive metaphysical systems of the modern period. Nor does he simply reproduce material available elsewhere for, in focusing on the metaphysical and the religious aspects of their thought, neglected by many modern commentators, his interpretations enlarge more typical understandings of these thinkers.

A good example of this is Spinoza, where Sprigge pays particular attention to Spinoza's version of the ontological argument, a topic many contemporary commentators tend to pass by in embarrassed silence. His account of is also notable for its understandings of 'essence' and 'expression', which are closer to the more old-fashioned subjective interpretation of what Spinoza says about attributes than to the objective interpretation more favoured today. In the end, Sprigge has no doubt that Spinozism, or something very like it, could function as a religion, at least in the sense of being one person's interpretation of the truth about religion, but some of Spinoza's assertions are read in ways that make this easier to hold than perhaps it really is. It is, I think, doubtful that intellectual love of God can be rendered simply as 'conscious delight in the reality we are in the midst of' (71), or that many readers will find Spinoza's determinism as easy to swallow as does Sprigge.

The account of Hegel is perhaps even more unusual today in the emphasis it places on metaphysics but, as Sprigge notes, ways of reading philosophers that seem either obvious or absurd to one age often seem quite the opposite to another, and to rest content in the common sense of contemporary attitudes may be nothing more than irrational complacency. His exposition of the Hegelian hierarchy of concepts is perhaps simultaneously too detailed and too highly

condensed to be of very great illumination, but once he arrives at Hegel's conception of religion itself Sprigge becomes a very helpful guide. The general notion of religion as revealing in pictorial form what is more adequately conveyed by philosophy is criticized on the grounds that it offers no consolation for the unhappy, nor any real guidance in life. But perhaps more than anything Sprigge wants to insist, *contra* Hegel, that there is more to life than philosophy. That is to say, he rejects Hegel's panlogicism; rationality itself is neither the goal nor the substance of being: 'the notion that existence could be the same as understanding strikes as cold and ghost-like as the dreariest materialism', he quotes approvingly from F. H. Bradley.

T. H. Green's notion of the eternal consciousness and the virtue ethic of social service which it grounds are given sympathetic treatment, but Green's emphasis on self-denial, his negative attitude towards the search for pleasure, and his enormously over-optimistic belief in progress are all found bars to accepting the final system. Sprigge also finds in Green an implausible and unattractive egoism, but this, I think, stems from a misunderstanding which arises from insufficient attention paid to Green's theory of social nature of the self – for Green, the self we must realize is the true social self, not the superficial psychological one.

Such a book as this might be expected to contain a discussion of Bradley's philosophy of religion, but this is something Sprigge has already treated in an earlier work – *James and Bradley, American Truth and British Reality* (Chicago IL: Open Court, 1993) – so instead he discusses Bosanquet, who was not, as Sprigge quite rightly argues, a mere follower of Bradley. This account is especially welcome, for while there has been some renewed interest in his political philosophy, Bosanquet's metaphysical and religious ideas have remained unconsidered. This is a pity since there is much of value in them, as this chapter clearly demonstrates. But despite its intrinsic interest, Bosanquet's system is perhaps the least religious of all those considered, for Sprigge is right that for Bosanquet the real religion was that of civilization. I found the final assessment of Bosanquet rather harsh; at the metaphysical level he is taken to task for denying the reality of evil, while in social terms his commitment to Green's notion that it is the aim of the state to help us to become good rather than comfortable is, by association with his involvement in the Charity Organisation Society, interpreted as a lack of sympathy. More sympathetic readings are possible.

Each of these figures, and those too of Royce, Whitehead, and Hartshorne might be classed as allies in Sprigge's overall project, but the book also gives space to one sharply opposing voice, that of Søren Kierkegaard. Via a clear, detailed and not unsympathetic consideration of the *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Sprigge considers Kierkegaard's objections to Hegelianism: that some questions in their very nature can only be approached subjectively; that philosophy inevitably substitutes the rational and abstract for the paradoxical and concrete; and that the answer to life's puzzles is to be found

in a synthesising *both/and* rather than a stark *either/or*. Kierkegaard's Christianity in itself is not found attractive – original sin, eternal damnation, a lack of ethical focus and its essential egoism are all declared stumbling blocks – but, in general, the chapter is a missed opportunity. For, although Hegelianism was its professed target, the thrust of Kierkegaard's arguments could apply to each of the metaphysical views in this book, yet besides a distaste for their specific upshot, they are never really responded to. Sprigge tells a story adapted from Kierkegaard himself of a man who has written eloquently of the consolation of religion but was himself unable to find consolation in his own words, yet no clue is given of how a metaphysically inclined theologian might avoid this fate. In the end it seems enough for Sprigge that at least some people do find, or think they find, their religious feelings stirred by such abstract philosophies.

The book ends with an outline presentation of Sprigge's own metaphysical system. Summarizing his views as presented in his earlier books, *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), and *The Rational Foundation of Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1988) and in some measure developing them, this chapter confirms his position as one of the few original constructive metaphysicians of the second half of the twentieth century. The position he advances is closest in style to that of F. H. Bradley although it also bears the influence of Royce, Whitehead, and Hartshorne. He argues that the only conceivable sort of reality is conscious experience – pan-psychism – and that the only way such centres of experience can be related together is in one greater whole which is itself an experience – the Absolute. The resulting universe is necessary and timeless. Whether or not we should call this 'God' is something Sprigge leaves open, but he certainly thinks it of religious significance. It is an appropriate focus for feelings of religious devotion, a provider of religious comfort – 'it reassures us that somehow reality is not so fleeting or so bad as it often seems' (529) – and it is capable of underwriting a moral code. It is interesting in this regard to note that ethically he advocates a species of qualitative hedonism unlike that of any of the philosophers he discusses – indeed Green and Bosanquet were famous precisely for their rejection of this.

Although in some sense a total experience, Sprigge's supreme being is not really personal but, while admitting that this may render religious emotion impossible for some people, he does not believe that that rules it out *tout court*. He does claim, however, that such a conception leaves no room for petitionary prayer, other than as exhortation to one's own self-improvement, or for grace, which as selective divine intervention he finds 'ethically dubious' (525). In fact, generally, Sprigge's God does not seem overly concerned with the world or its inhabitants – He sums it, but does not involve Himself much in it. And in this respect the religious import of Sprigge's system is weaker than some of his models; Spinoza allows that God loves us, and Green and Hegel see God as immanent in the world, realizing Himself through it, the master hand behind the

history of the world. But what Sprigge here surrenders as inessential, many might feel essential. They are not answered.

The book certainly succeeds in showing that metaphysical views can be of religious worth, but this reviewer is sympathetic to that conclusion, and I'm less sure that the material assembled here would persuade someone inclined to the opposite view. Part of the problem is that the bar is set so low that hardly any metaphysical system (except materialism) could fail to pass. If a metaphysical view gives comfort and purpose to life, then Sprigge does not want to discount it. By his own admission his understanding of religion comes close to Arnold's emotion 'touched by feeling'.

Sprigge is quite right to stress the supportive role that faith communities may play, but if that is all they do they become indistinguishable from the ethical and friendly societies so popular among the nineteenth-century idealists. He concludes by saying perhaps the greatest value in the thinkers he surveys is that they explain why we should be concerned with others (542), although he laments where this is not extended to animals (543). In view of this, he might also have discussed Schopenhauer, for there is a metaphysical system which meets both of those criteria splendidly. But Schopenhauer would not be welcome company, for a harsher critic of both theism and pantheism it would be harder to find. Another critic who finds no voice is McTaggart, which is also a shame, for he too would stand as a serious challenge to Sprigge's thesis. McTaggart draws a very sharp distinction between the comfort of metaphysics and the comfort of religion; as an atheist he wants none of the latter but enthusiastically endorses the former.

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Hendrik M. Vroom *A Spectrum of Worldviews: An Introduction to Philosophy of Religion in a Pluralistic World*, tr. Morris and Alice Greidanus, *Currents of Encounter* 29. (Amsterdam and New York NY: Rodopi, 2006). Pp. xi + 331. € 70.00/US\$91.00 (Hbk), € 30.00/US\$39.00 (Pbk). ISBN 10 9042020482 (Hbk), 13 9789042020467 (Pbk).

Hendrik M. Vroom is Professor of Philosophy of Religion at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. In this book he seeks, in part, to redress the heavy bias, prevalent in most introductions to the philosophy of religion, towards Christian monotheism, and to promote what he frequently refers to as a

'dialogue' between, not only religious believers, but adherents of secular worldviews as well.

Vroom keeps us waiting until the last chapter of the book for an explicit statement of what he understands the philosophy of religion to be. He distinguishes four positions, or levels, from which an inquiry into religion can take place. These are: (a) the position of a particular 'school' (or sect) within a broader religious tradition; (b) that of the religious tradition itself; (c) that of 'people from several traditions in dialogue'; and (d) that of humanity in general (296). The first two of these levels are concerned primarily with apologetics – the defence of a specific faith position – and Vroom distinguishes his own approach from these. He sees his task as involving the third and fourth levels, which consist in, respectively, the comparison of key doctrines and themes in various worldviews, and the attempt to discover 'what is valid for everybody' in worldviews in general (297).

While the book certainly succeeds in bringing together a diverse range of religious viewpoints, and in highlighting a number of their similarities and differences in relation to various issues of widespread human concern, it does not appear to discover anything that is 'valid for everybody'. Indeed, in the context of discussing the attempt of Hans Küng and others – made at a gathering of the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1993 – to formulate a 'Declaration of a Global Ethics', Vroom casts doubt upon the viability of reaching a consensus view: 'The narrow religious consensus pinches the broad ideals concerning the good life and squelches the inspiration that can emanate from religious traditions' (241). It would seem, then, that what Vroom thinks can be achieved through increased inter-religious and inter-worldview dialogue is not the discovery of universally valid norms or doctrines, but rather an improved understanding of similarities and differences, which in itself is apt to reduce mutual hostility. For this reason, as he frequently urges, 'an open dialogue between all worldviews is a pressing necessity' (238).

The book, like most books, has both strengths and weaknesses. Its principal strength is, as I have hinted already, its overcoming of the powerful gravitational pull towards Abrahamic religions and Christianity in particular that still holds sway over much of the work being done in philosophy of religion. This is not to say that the author ignores the big three Abrahamic monotheisms – far from it – but, rather, that he also gives close attention to non-Abrahamic traditions, most notably Buddhism and Hinduism.

The weaknesses of the book are, however, considerable. The most serious of these is the disparity between its putative purpose and its actual content. The book's subtitle is 'An introduction to philosophy of religion in a pluralistic world'. From this, it would be fair to expect the book to contain some philosophy, by which I mean some examination of the arguments that have been put forward by a variety of philosophers for conclusions that are in some cases favourable to, and in other cases starkly opposed to, religious doctrines. But we find very little of this

in Vroom's book. Indeed, on the rare occasions when he does introduce a philosophical argument into his inter-religious dialogue, the argument is very sketchily laid out and then impatiently swept aside. This is evinced at a point in chapter 8, on the problem of evil, where Swinburne's means-ends argument for the necessity of evil is briefly touched on (203–204). Vroom's source for Swinburne's argument appears to be a secondary text by Vincent Brümmer, and he dismisses the argument itself in one short paragraph without pausing to consider any responses that might be available to Swinburne. It's a very unsatisfactory treatment.

The vast bulk of the book comprises, not what is ordinarily recognized as philosophy of religion, but rather an exegetical study of several religious worldviews and the relations between them. The viewpoints that receive the most attention are: Neoplatonism, Advaita Vedanta, the 'qualified Advaita Vedanta' of Ramanuja, Stoicism, the Kyoto School of Zen Buddhism, and Reformed Christianity (as represented primarily by Karl Barth). This is a nice mixture, and Vroom competently plays these varied traditions off one another, drawing attention to important features of each by means of comparison and contrast. Vroom himself comes close to admitting that what he is doing is not really philosophy of religion, but something prior to genuine philosophy, when he notes that his investigations 'operate ... on the level of prolegomena', making 'a contribution to the philosophy of religion that is based on more than mono-cultural premisses' (295). The term 'premisses' implies that there is an argument going on, which is not really the case, but it is certainly true that Vroom has broken the mono-cultural mould, and that his eclectic selection of religious perspectives can serve to inform discussions in the philosophy of religion. To this extent, the book performs a valuable service.

The opening chapter discusses the book's central topic, namely 'worldviews'. Vroom defines a *worldview* as 'the sum of all a person's insights ... that give direction to one's life' (10). He regards religions as being examples of worldviews, but construes 'worldview' as a broader category which encompasses non-religious (secular) outlooks as well as religious ones. In setting out to promote dialogue between worldviews in general, Vroom provides himself with a task that is impossible to fulfil within a single volume. He later confesses to being 'painfully aware of [the] limitations' of the book, noting that 'to attempt completeness' – in the sense of encompassing the full gamut of worldviews – 'would yield an encyclopedia' (278). In view of these unavoidable constraints, it would have been helpful if Vroom had more clearly defined his project from the outset, rather than implying that he was concerned with worldviews in general, only to have to admit subsequently that such an endeavour is overly ambitious.

It should be noted that Vroom uses the term 'insight' in an epistemically neutral sense. Thus, when he talks of a worldview as a 'configuration of basic

insights' (e.g. 15), we are not to regard these insights as necessarily truth-bearing. 'Insights' are merely what most of us would call 'beliefs', and hence 'basic insights' are basic beliefs. They may be true or false, but their truth-value is not what Vroom wishes to investigate. Rather, he is more interested in the internal coherence of 'configurations of basic insights' and in the relations of similarity and difference between the insights of alternative worldviews.

Chapters 2–4 revolve around the question of whether it is feasible (and, if so, whether it is legitimate) to compare and evaluate worldviews. It is, of course, essential to his overall project that it is both feasible and legitimate to compare worldviews with one another. His argument on this point seems to rest principally on the analysis of an equivocation in the term 'comparable'. Having noted that sometimes this word is used to mean 'similar to' whereas at other times it means simply 'capable of being compared', Vroom asserts that, when taken in the latter sense, there is no good reason to presume that the insights of geographically and historically disparate traditions are not amenable to fruitful comparison (23ff.). This seems to me to be a legitimate presumption, and probably the only workable one for anyone engaged in the enterprise of comparative religion. Vroom muddies his position somewhat by claiming that certain 'very complicated' religious concepts, such as '*satcitananda*, emptiness, Buddha-nature, and the Trinity', 'are only meaningful within their historical contexts' (33), but I think he has probably, rather incautiously, overstated this difficulty. What I take him to be claiming is not that the meaning of these concepts is impenetrable outside of their respective contexts, but rather that, in order to gain an adequate understanding of them, we need to pay attention to the contexts in which they arose. This point, I take it, is fairly uncontroversial.

With regard to the critical evaluation of worldviews – as distinct from the mere hermeneutic enterprise of interpreting them – Vroom thinks we should approach this very cautiously. He endorses the claims of Heidegger and Gadamer concerning the contextual nature of understanding, and the unattainability of a culturally neutral perspective from which to assess a worldview other than one's own (53ff.), but concludes that it is nevertheless legitimate to evaluate a worldview in terms of its internal coherence. To exemplify the point, Vroom considers the coherence of reincarnation as conceived within Hindu and Buddhist traditions. In the case of the former tradition he appears to conclude that the Hindu conception of the reincarnating soul combines two incompatible characteristics: insofar as the soul undergoes transitions from one lifetime to the next, it is immanent, whereas insofar as it is identical with the absolute Brahman, it is transcendent. Vroom refrains from condemning the view as incoherent, however, on the grounds that its Hindu purveyors are generally aware of the paradox (84). This is a surprising conclusion; for, although it is undoubtedly preferable to be aware of the incoherence of one's own position as opposed to unaware of it, there seems

to be nothing in such awareness that, in itself, prevents an incoherent position from remaining incoherent.

This reluctance on Vroom's part to call a spade a spade when it comes to philosophical incoherence is brought to light again in later discussions of the idiosyncratic views of Kitaro Nishida, who founded the Kyoto School of Zen Buddhism in the early twentieth century. According to Vroom, Nishida developed a conception of the relation between the divine and worldly beings which he termed 'contradictory identity'. On this view, 'All beings ... are distinct as expressions of the divine, but they are also identical with it', thus they are both identical to, and not identical to, the divine (162). While admitting that 'this concept is not coherent nor clear and distinct', Vroom maintains that 'it does provide, with stated reasons, an expression of different fundamental insights' (163). While Vroom is perhaps to be admired for his diplomatic style, one cannot help feeling that a more robust philosophical engagement would be preferable to such diplomatic fence-sitting.

Having made a case for the feasibility and legitimacy of a comparative study of religious worldviews, Vroom's main project gets underway in chapter 6, where he introduces his typology of 'three views of transcendence'. These are, respectively, the *acosmic*, the *cosmic*, and the *theistic* view. He characterizes an acosmic view as one in which the transcendent is placed 'outside the cosmos, fully separated from it' (118). To exemplify such a view he invokes the Christian mysticism of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Meister Eckhart, plus the sort of Neoplatonism associated with Pseudo-Dionysius and the monistic Vedanta of Shankara. A cosmic view, meanwhile, is one that 'looks at transcendence as immanent: salvation is within and not outside of the world' (279). As examples of this, Vroom chooses Stoicism and Buddhism, primarily the brand of Zen Buddhism propounded by the aforementioned Nishida. Finally, theism is characterized by Vroom as a view that 'understand[s] the universe as creation, intended and made by God, the Creator' (118). To illustrate this Vroom selects a passage from the Belgic Confession of 1561, Descartes' conception of God as a perfect being, and the renewed affirmation of God's revelation to humankind that we find in Barth and Moltmann (149).

It is vital to Vroom's project that we not only accept his threefold typology, but that we regard it as an illuminating way of categorizing religious viewpoints. For, in subsequent chapters, he applies the typology as an aid for distinguishing alternative perspectives on several matters, including whether God is personal or impersonal (ch. 7), the cause and place of evil in the world (ch. 8), the question of God's goodness (ch. 9), and the relation between religion and morality (ch. 10). Vroom himself, in the final chapter (ch. 12), makes the assessment that 'The subdivision of cosmic, acosmic, and theistic has proven its worth as a way of organizing different worldviews that display a definite concept of transcendence, of being human, of salvation, and of morality' (279).

My assessment is somewhat different. It strikes me that, far from having ‘proven its worth’, the typology contributes nothing to our understanding of the traditions which Vroom shoehorns into one or other of its three categories. It would, in my view, have been better, from an interpretive point of view, to have abandoned the typology altogether and to have instead given us a careful analysis of the views of a smaller selection of religious and philosophical perspectives on the range of topics upon which Vroom focuses. I will give two illustrative examples of the overall inadequacy of the typology.

Firstly, in chapter 7 (on personal and impersonal views of the transcendent), Vroom lumps together under the acosmic view the Vedantic positions of both Shankara and Ramanuja, despite the fact that these were vehemently opposed to one another. Vroom acknowledges that Ramanuja’s view incorporates ‘theistic elements’ (172), thereby undermining its characterization as acosmic. This characterization is further undermined when Vroom subsequently notes parallels between Ramanuja’s conception of Brahman and the theism of Tillich (174). In the same place, Vroom discerns similarities between Tillich and Nishida’s Zen theology, which Vroom had previously categorized as ‘cosmic’. It is therefore highly doubtful that the classification of Nishida, Ramanuja, and Tillich as, respectively, cosmic, acosmic, and theistic is in any respect helpful for comprehending the complex ways in which each of them formulates the nature of God.

Secondly, in chapter 10 (on morality and the good life), Vroom notes that ‘The purpose of human existence in acosmic worldviews is in principle the removal of all ties to this world’ (243). This may well be true, but the problem is that the same description could equally apply to Buddhism, and perhaps to Stoicism as well, both of which viewpoints are placed by Vroom – along with humanism in both its theistic and atheistic forms – in the category of cosmic worldviews. Indeed, in outlining the cosmic perspective on the good life, Vroom admits that ‘[m]arkedly different views unfold within that framework’, and is obliged to split the category into four thoroughly discrepant subdivisions (242–243). Again, therefore, the interpretive usefulness of the threefold typology is placed in question.

Overall, then, I would say that the book has some major defects. In addition to those mentioned above it also suffers from an unusually large number of typographical and grammatical errors, which are an irritating distraction for the reader. As an introduction to comparative religion, it is partially successful, and benefits enormously from the variety and richness of its textual sources and illustrative examples. But it would not be my first choice as an introduction to the philosophy of religion.

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James K. A. Smith and James H. Olthuis (eds) *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant, and Participation*. (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2005). Pp. 301. \$24.99 (Pbk). ISBN 0 8010 2756 X.

Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition is a volume of the papers given at (and revised in the light of) a conference held at Calvin College in September 2003. There to represent Radical Orthodoxy were John Milbank and Graham Ward, who responded to each of the papers presented. The conference itself was the culmination of regular gatherings of a Working Group on Radical Orthodoxy during 2002 and 2003, funded by the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship. For the conference this group joined forces with a similar team of scholars from the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto.

The essays are grouped around key areas of controversy: after an introduction by James K. A. Smith, and opening expository essays by Milbank and Ward, we have the themes of covenant and participation, of society and the church, and of the Eucharist. The volume ends with an afterword by James H. Olthuis.

Setting the tone for the book, Smith offers in his introduction an extremely clear summary of Radical Orthodoxy, drawing out areas of affinity and overlap with the Reformed tradition (in particular the Dutch Reformational strain), as well as highlighting anticipated points of disagreement. The motivations of the book are made clear: while in key respects piqued by this controversial movement (see Olthuis, 277), scholars from within the Reformed tradition have nevertheless discovered deep and important resonances within it, most especially so in its critique of modernity and of the secular. In many ways, the book offers from a particular perspective a helpful introduction to the thought-world of the relatively new movement, translating the often dense, heady, and bewildering prose of its authors into the somewhat flat-footed, but thus more easily digestible, rhetoric characteristic of scholars within certain strands of the Reformed tradition.

Having said this, Milbank's essay, 'Alternative protestantism: Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed tradition', is of exemplary lucidity. Realizing the incongruity of the juxtaposition of 'a long, complex tradition of practice and theory that is a vital part of the entire Western legacy', and 'a recent movement of reflection still developing' (25–26), Milbank highlights Radical Orthodoxy's nature as a *particular* (ecumenical) *theology*, which might therefore gain embodiment in a variety of Christian practices. (Other essays in the volume, to which I will come, might have benefited from keeping this in mind.) No head-on comparison or rivalry is in question; Milbank's only way forward is to engage with

specific theologians from the Reformed tradition, and his essay is in the main a reading and critique of Calvin. Less modestly, but most helpfully in respect of the book's agenda, this is set within the context of a characteristically Milbankian 'metanarrative' which reads the Reformation as a 'partial though imperfect critique of the later Middle Ages'. 'Alternative Protestantism' is the 'desire to carry out a more perfect critique' (27), one which may draw on resources within Calvin and others. Perhaps less characteristically Milbankian is the generosity of this reading which seeks for repair rather than replacement.

Graham Ward's essay, 'Barth, Hegel, and the possibility for Christian apologetics', while interesting and provocative, is less explicitly geared towards the concerns of the volume, but reads more as a self-contained piece on the nature of Christian apologetics. The essay seeks to move, with and against Barth, beyond self-enclosed Christian discourse towards a Christian theology which takes its 'historical and cultural embeddedness with all theological seriousness' (58), and must therefore be consciously engaged in ongoing cultural negotiations. A key concern of the volume: Radical Orthodoxy's desirable emphasis on 'cultural engagement' (e.g. 244–245), which nevertheless raises for some of the Reformed authors the suspicion of cultural assimilation (20), is thus explored. But there are no sign-posts to help the reader understand how Ward's argument contributes to the book's wider dialogue – whether he is taking Barth as representative of the Reformed tradition; to what extent he is reading him against the grain; to what extent he seeks rapprochement with those who have had worries about the sort of cultural engagement Radical Orthodoxy advocates.

Milbank, and to a lesser extent Ward, open up a hospitable space for discussion between the movement and the tradition. While the volume as it stands shows some headway to have been made with this discussion, the impression remains (confirmed by the Afterword) that the initial sticking points, while admirably confronted, have resulted in certain impasses. Without discussing all the essays in the volume, I will concentrate on one such impasse, tracing the various ways in which it is dealt with. My choice of essays for consideration should not be taken as a reflection of their quality, but simply of their pertinence to the issue at hand.

Implicitly or explicitly, a pervasive motif is the relation between the philosophical and the biblical. Depending on how it is handled, this can easily lead to an impasse in a dialogue between what one might describe as a philosophically oriented movement and a biblically oriented tradition. In the context of a sensitive critique of Ward's Eucharistic theology, George Vandervelde, in his essay "'This is my body": The Eucharist as privileged theological site', helpfully sets us before the problem. He legitimately critiques Ward for not paying enough attention to 'the narrative of the unfolding drama of [Jesus'] death by torture', within which the Last Supper occurs (269). Ward's reading, he suggests, is controlled by his philosophical-theological ontology, and the result is an abstraction from the concrete world of the biblical narrative, in particular from Jesus' body,

which comes to stand for ‘transcorporeality’ (273). One way of reading this critique is to understand Vandervelde as asking for Radically Orthodox thought to be brought into engagement with a typically Reformed practice: the close reading of scripture. And this sits well with Milbank’s description of the dialogue as one between a theology and a tradition (in its *practical* as well as theoretical dimensions).

However, Vandervelde’s rhetoric occasionally comes closer to juxtaposing, not a theory and a practice, but two different thought-worlds: ‘Greek philosophy’ and ‘[biblical] narrative’ (269). While he just about escapes the inherent dangers in this dichotomy, other contributors to the volume do not – and it is this which gives rise to an impasse. The dichotomy is encapsulated in that between Radical Orthodoxy’s (philosophical) language of *participation* and the Reformed tradition’s (biblical) language of *covenant*. Impasse ensues when ‘covenant’ is elevated to the level of a philosophical concept. And this is precisely what Michael S. Horton does in his essay ‘Participation and covenant’, in which ‘covenant’ is drawn upon as the preferred paradigm insofar as it avoids both an ‘unbiblical dualism’ in which ‘strangers never meet’ and a ‘monistic scheme’ in which ‘estrangement is overcome’. Rather, ‘if we begin not with the metaphysics of being but with Yahweh of the covenant, we ineluctably find ourselves in the world thus described as meeting a stranger’ (116).

All well and good, but how are we to articulate this *philosophically*? The concept of covenant does not yet tell us what is entailed in relating to the one who cannot be counted amongst creatures, but created the whole world *ex nihilo*. While Horton affirms the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, he does not begin to confront the philosophical problems this raises – which is precisely what Radical Orthodoxy is attempting to do with its language of participation. In other words, holding to a biblical covenantal theology does not exempt one from the need to ask philosophical questions. To reason as if this were so can only lead to philosophical naivety (a naivety which re-emerges particularly evidently in Olthuis’s Afterword, esp. 292–293).

That the choice between participation and covenant is a ‘false’ one (109: Horton refers here to Milbank’s response) is something Justin S. Holcomb recognizes in his essay ‘Being bound to God: participation *and* covenant revisited’. He argues both that the Reformed focus on the covenant can ‘deepen and strengthen participation language’ (244), helping Radical Orthodoxy overcome ‘its allergy to the particular’ (251) by giving its Christology a scriptural rooting; and that ‘[p]articipation gives covenantal theology a language for cultural critique and engagement’ (244). However, there remains an ambivalence as to the nature of this mutual enrichment: early in the essay Holcomb talks about two ‘theological frameworks’ (244); but he later describes the relation in a way which sounds more like that between a practice and its philosophical articulation: ‘Radical Orthodoxy’s “participatory gnoseology” and its attempt to fashion a

“Christian ontology” need grounding in, and the discipline of, the rule of faith with its hermeneutical goal: the interpretation of Scripture’ (262). If he had followed this latter instinct, he might have avoided the rather unsatisfactory juxtaposition of alternative frameworks, reaching instead a more sophisticated understanding of the relation between biblical covenant language and its interpretation in participatory terms. He ends instead on a hermeneutically naïve note, claiming the ‘traditional, covenantal interpretation of Scripture’ to be the appropriate ‘foundation’ of a participatory theology (262).

The relation between the biblical and the philosophical that these authors variously handle might have been more fruitfully explored if it had been recognized that the language of covenant and the language of participation operate on different levels and with different purposes, and for *this* reason do not constitute competing frameworks. ‘Covenant’ is a biblical term requiring further interpretation; in ‘covenant theology’ it functions, to be sure, as a hermeneutical key to the Bible, but even here is not yet a philosophical concept, but an aid to reading. On neither level is it an alternative to ‘participation’, which is precisely a philosophical unpacking of what is involved in a covenant with the Creator of the universe. It is in just this vein that Milbank’s remark may be taken, that ‘Calvin’s humanist and practical theology is one that is implicitly in search of a metaphysics’ (35).

While this impasse prevents some of the contributors from entering into a properly philosophical engagement with Radical Orthodoxy’s participatory theology, other contributors do attempt philosophically motivated critiques – with varying degrees of success. Adrienne Dengerink Chaplin, in her essay ‘The invisible and the sublime: from participation to reconciliation’, attempts to show, through an analysis of three essays on aesthetics from the *Radical Orthodoxy* volume, that residual dualisms plague Radical Orthodoxy’s participatory theology. She contrasts a participatory vision, in which the fall, so she infers, is understood ‘in terms of a loss of participation in the invisible, immaterial divine realm’, and reconciliation in terms of mediation between visible and invisible (104), with a ‘biblical vision’ in which reconciliation involves transformation and healing – ‘the restoration of a broken relationship or covenant between God and his people’ (91). While this may look suspiciously like the same dubious contrast between philosophical and biblical visions, Chaplin’s philosophical critique (although itself open to challenge) does open up a space for proper dialogue. However, because she leaves her biblical vision undeveloped, the ‘Reformed aesthetics’ she gestures towards remains vague and somewhat threadbare.

Laura Smit’s “‘The depth behind things’”: toward a Calvinist sacramental theology’ is also a genuine engagement with Radically Orthodox thought, drawing on Calvin’s sacramental theology in critique of Graham Ward’s. However, it remains philosophically simplistic, and would have benefited in its discussion of Christ’s humanity and the mode of its presence (212–213) from Milbank’s

discussion of this issue in his opening essay (especially 35), which Smit does not refer to at all. Hans Boersma, in his essay 'Being reconciled: atonement as the ecclesio-Christological practice of forgiveness in John Milbank', offers a good, clear critical exposition of Milbank's atonement theology. However, while he critiques Milbank for not being sufficiently concrete in his vision of non-violent forgiveness, the critique might be turned back on his own vision of redemptive violence: he too easily slides from a recognition of the unavoidability of violence (a claim which he also fails fully to substantiate) to the possibility of violence as a means for good, without showing how this possibility comes about.

After these brief comments on a selection of the essays in the volume, I hope it will have become clear that the dialogue explored in the book between Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed tradition, although one might not at first have considered them natural dialogue partners, is a worthwhile one. The affinities have been clearly displayed, and the points of disagreement brought into unmistakable view. While some headway has been made beyond the preliminaries, it has been my suggestion that the most pervasive disagreements could be pursued more fruitfully if: (1) there were a clearer recognition of the fact that the comparison between the movement and the tradition is not, as Milbank puts it, a comparison of like with like (25), but one between what are more like different languages with different purposes – languages which are therefore not simply alternatives; and (2) the interlocutors on each side were to learn better each others' languages, and were thus not simply to juxtapose them, but to bring them into living relation. Although sometimes obscured, the necessary complexity of this relation is certainly gestured towards within the volume. It succeeds admirably in opening up a space for further exploration.

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P. F. Bloemendaal *Grammars of Faith: a Critical Examination of D. Z. Phillips's Philosophy of Religion*. (Leuven: Peeters, 2006).
Pp. xiv + 444. € 43 (Pbk). ISBN 904291744 X.

This is a monumental study of the philosophy of religion of D. Z. Phillips. It is divided into three parts. The first surveys Wittgenstein's writings on religion in two chapters, one on the early period and one on the later. These chapters also include discussion of general themes and notions in Wittgenstein's philosophy that have been thought to touch upon the philosophy of religion. Thus the second chapter has a section discussing the notions of grammar,

language games and forms of life. Part 2 examines the transition from Wittgenstein to 'Wittgensteinianism'. One chapter deals with Rhees, Winch, and Malcolm, and another with Phillips's *The Concept of Prayer*. The third part contains over 250 pages of material on Phillips, organized thematically. It contains six chapters on the following themes: philosophy, description and contemplation; religion and reductionism; miracles; immortality; the reality of God; and revisionism.

Readers who conscientiously plough their way through these 450 pages will be confronted with a set of conclusions about Wittgenstein, the Wittgensteinians, and Phillips that are carefully argued and sensible. To illustrate: the first part ends by warning us of the fragmentary character of Wittgenstein's remarks on religious language and tells us that much depends on how they are developed by commentators and followers. En route to that sage advice it contains well-grounded warnings about taking 'language game' and 'form of life' as terms that might encourage us to think that the language game of religion or the religious form of life are out there waiting to be discovered. The penultimate paragraph of the last full chapter on Phillips (there is a brief 'Afterword') contains a verdict on Phillips's writings on religion that few, perhaps, will want to object to:

While it cannot be denied that Phillips's analyses capture certain key elements of 'traditional Christian belief', it is equally clear that they either overlook or discount at least many others. Despite Phillips's vehement objections, his resolute refusal to incorporate any straightforwardly factual, historical, and/or metaphysical components into the religious frame of reference marks his account as an unorthodox account of (Christian) religious belief. This conclusion immediately raises the question whether Phillips's analyses are revisionary in nature. ... It would be hard not to suspect that some sort of revisionary exercise is being undertaken, rather than purely descriptive work avowedly performed.

To get to such conclusions Bloemendaal goes through the writings of D. Z. Phillips and of his critics with great patience and care, but also at great length. His summaries are accurate and his weighing of points judicious. But it must be questioned how many readers will follow this slow-paced journey through every step when the end point is of limited interest. It is not clear whether there is anything here that adds in a significant way to shorter, more readable critiques of Phillips in the literature – and note that Bloemendaal frequently cites and uses such existing critiques.

Despite the great length of this work and the painstaking way it goes through aspects of D. Z. Phillips's philosophy, there is also a respect in which it contains a major omission and marks a lost opportunity. It is evident that when Phillips set out the content of what, for him, is the authentic, non-superstitious 'grammar' of a concept like immortality he is giving an interpretation of religion in moral terms. He is seeing religious language as enunciating a moral perspective upon reality, rather than seeing it as asserting metaphysical claims about

what might be the case. Bloemendaal's study is not sufficiently attentive to this point and contains nowhere near enough on the character of the moral perspective that Phillips, and other thinkers influenced by Wittgenstein, adhere to and promote. This guiding thread to understanding those classed as Wittgensteinians in the philosophy of religion is indicated in a quotation from Phillips (376), in which he writes of believer and unbeliever having 'different perspectives on life' (from *Religion without Explanation*, 168). The unique perspective on life of the believer is a moral one.

The concept of perspective is important in itself here. One aspect of the later Wittgenstein that does not get covered in the first part of the book is the reflections on seeing an aspect in Part II of the *Investigations*. 'Perspective' in Phillips's usage indicates that the believer does not simply have a different attitude to the same world as the unbeliever, but sees it differently. A religious perspective on reality discloses a different aspect, or set of aspects, to him/her. The world is a different place because it contains unique possibilities of meaning and of action. These possibilities are moral in character. If the notions of perspective and seeing an aspect are borne in mind, then it is possible to make more of the realism/non-realism issues with respect to Phillips than does Bloemendaal in his eighth chapter. The importance of this part of the later Wittgenstein for religion is something that might have struck Bloemendaal if he had paid any attention to John Wisdom. But he does not. Wisdom figures nowhere in the text; is not in the index; and none of his writings are in the bibliography.

It is possible to glean the character of 'the perspective on life' which authentic, non-superstitious uses of religious language enunciate for Phillips from pages in Bloemendaal's study. Thus we are told that genuine faith involves self-denial and losing oneself (136). In his chapter on immortality Bloemendaal tells us of the way in which *Death and Immortality* describes true eternal life as a matter of dying to the world and to the self. However, the full nature of the perspective is not spelled out, to my mind. There is another major omission (beyond that of John Wisdom) in Bloemendaal's secondary reading that prevents him from making more of this vital material. He is not aware of those writings of Emyr Vaughan Thomas in which this account of authentic faith is fully set out in its own terms and its origins explored. (Two earlier papers of Thomas do show up on the bibliography.) I have in mind particularly Thomas's paper in this journal on Wittgenstein and Tolstoy (33 (1997), 363–377), and his later book *Wittgensteinian Values* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001). Knowledge and use of these sources would have allowed Bloemendaal to give a much more coherent picture of Wittgenstein's attitude toward religion in his various writings from the *Notebooks 1914–16* to *Culture and Value*, and they would have enabled him to see a connecting thread between Wittgenstein and the Wittgensteinians, and amongst the members of the latter grouping. Thomas's book contends that

there is an ethical outlook connected to notions of dying to the world, self-renunciation, the search for a sense of absolute safety, and so on, characteristic of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century post-Romanticism that provides a common source from which all of these writers draw.

This is a book exhibiting great industry and immense patience with its subject matter, but it hardly excites. Its 450 pages advance understanding of D. Z. Phillips's philosophy of religion and what lies behind it to only a limited extent.

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