

humility is fundamentally just the sort of other-favouring preference that seems to be the main focus of much of the book, rather than something more complex.

These critical comments aside, I found a great deal to recommend in Austin's book. Scholars of humility should take heed, and so should the rest of us who just want to be humble.

T. RYAN BYERLY 

University of Sheffield

e-mail: [t.r.byerly@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:t.r.byerly@sheffield.ac.uk)

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Garth Hallett *The Maturing of Monotheism: A Dialectical Path to its Truth*. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019). Pp. 215. £85.00 (Hbk). ISBN 9781350089358.

Traditionally, commentaries defending religious faith will focus on presenting a viable argument from cosmology or teleology or, perhaps, an appeal to aesthetics. However, the following study proposes a general, dialectical philosophy, one that promotes a humanistic and experiential approach instead. *The Maturing of Monotheism* attempts to carve out a middle path between traditional metaphysical arguments for monotheism, and the anti-theistic challenges of our day. By merging both religious and scientific depictions of reality, Hallett seeks to show the way to rational, theistic faith. It is possible, he argues, to dispel unhelpful myths and misconceptions and, rather, embrace the mysterious and moving nature of reality that both science and monotheism describe. The study gives a comprehensive insight into both long-standing and contemporary arguments across a broad range of topics, while developing Hallett's distinctive philosophy. With a modest amount of humour and a human touch, Hallett argues for the intellectual coherence of monotheism in today's post-modern milieu. The study unfolds as follows.

The first section is made up of two preparatory chapters, the first ('Truth') promotes what Hallett is calling the 'Principle of Relative Similarity': a middle way to interpreting truth in language that works between essentialism and traditional discussions of analogy and inference. The vagary of language affects how we get to truth, but somewhere between literal meaning and more figurative and metaphorical interpretation is where we might find the most fruitful path to truth. The second chapter ('Theism') looks at Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and indicates that these religious traditions can speak in different ways about one truth, about one divinity. Hallett argues that the veracity of monotheism lies beyond the conflicting descriptions from these monotheistic traditions; rather it lies in

the single, identical reality that all religious traditions share. The study embraces YHWH, God, and Allah as identical; as the 'supreme object of human aspirations and terminus of human hopes, both individual and collective'.

The second section consists of six chapters addressing six major anti-theistic challenges, those being: materialism, determinism, objective value denial, the problem of evil, and predictions of human and cosmic pessimism. Hallett begins by setting out the present terrestrial scene with chapter 3 ('Diversity'), proposing a philosophical approach to understanding reality – human or divine – between reductive materialism and a strict Cartesian dualistic theory. In doing so, he leaves room for a realistic range of metaphysical possibilities, room that even scientific study recognizes, such as quantum theory, for example. Chapter 4 ('Freedom') presents the dichotomy of mind and matter, particularly when it comes to questions of free will and determinism. Hallett seeks a 'happy mean' between Locke's account of necessity and Hume's account of regularity. Providing a new account is important, says Hallett, as he believes that 'today's natural determinism poses a more serious challenge to theism than does the theological variety'. Thus, Hallett argues for an account that is dynamic but less necessitarian for our causal terminology, one that allows space for dynamism and freedom, the type of freedom that is needed to converse about human and divine reality.

Chapter 5 ('Goodness') suggests that to deny the possibility of objective moral values is also to deny the possibility of the divine. So, in response to moral scepticism, Hallett argues that although the *logical* connection between morality and religious belief is not as tight as is often supposed, the psychological link between the two *is*. What he means by this is that people often perceive a connection, and so belief about objective moral values strengthens people's religious commitment and vice versa. Moreover, the complexity of moral judgements (cognitive, emotive, pragmatic, and prescriptive) ought not to imply automatically the non-existence of an all-good, all-wise, all-powerful creator.

In chapter 6 ('Evil'), Hallett does not provide a solution to the problem of evil; rather, he proposes that any true debate on the matter cannot happen in abstraction from real-life cases. In what he calls the 'Atheist's case' (what possible reason could a merciful God have to permit evil?), Hallett addresses metaphysics, including the free-will defence (Plantinga), and values. Here, he looks at Jerry Coyne's argument of 'design flaws' (why would a perfect God design imperfectly?), Michael Peterson's response to this, J. L. Schellenberg's 'hiddenness argument' (argument against theism from non-resistant non-belief) and Richard Gale's response.

Then, we turn from the present to the future, with chapter 7 ('Afterlife'), reinforcing the notion that the obscurity of a hereafter does not disprove its possibility. Hallett talks about how Platonic philosophy can help to comprehend mysterious scientific findings, such as dark matter. Chapter 8 ('Eternity') suggests that going against the grain, breaking free from 'déformation professionnelle', is an important

step in the 'maturing' process. Given that, scientific enquiry arguably lies somewhere between 'knowledge' and 'possibility'. For instance, Alfred Wegener's theory of drifting continents became the butt of jokes in the fields of geology and geophysics until it turned out to be true. The way in which we treat optimistic, theistic vision ought to be treated in a similar vein: with the view that what lies ahead for humankind might exceed all human estimation.

The third section contains the final two chapters. Chapter 9 ('Focus') re-emphasizes the current shift Hallett finds in theistic (and scientific) discourse: from premise-by-premise, syllogistic forms of proof to a more holistic, metaphysical modality. Influenced by the latter, Hallett presents a 'middle' approach: 'a plausible system of belief'. This is essentially the idea that a framework of belief is not dependent upon classical proofs as evidence for its claims. Chapter 10 ('Convergence') reiterates this, and says that although epistemologically Platonic-based beliefs may appear 'unsafe', psychologically they are 'natural', and existentially 'we could not live without them'. This final chapter truly exemplifies his notion that to philosophize about religion engages every aspect of our human nature.

*The Maturing of Monotheism* is a useful tool for philosophy of religion students and for academics in the field of theology and philosophy. For students with an interest in one of the chapters, topics, or the entire study, this book has classical and contemporary arguments for and against monotheism, and will provide a list of important scholars. What is particularly useful for those who are unsure whether a chapter is of relevance to their study is that each chapter begins with a helpful short synopsis. For academics, it is a gentle reminder to approach the subject of religion with maturity and sensitivity because the study of religion is not a mere academic exercise. Hallett patiently builds a reasonable case that there is at least room in our philosophizing for theistic faith that is rational, and it ought to be on the grounds that the opposite should not be assumed and such discourse should be studied seriously.

JESSICA EASTWOOD 

University of Durham

e-mail: [jessica.g.eastwood@durham.ac.uk](mailto:jessica.g.eastwood@durham.ac.uk)