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Book reviews

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Charles Taliaferro *Evidence and Faith: Philosophy and Religion since the Seventeenth Century.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Pp. xi + 457. £45.00/$75.00 (Hbk), £18.99/$36.00 (Pbk). ISBN 0 521 79027 1 (Hbk), 0 521 79350 0 (Pbk).

An eminent philosopher with whom I was privileged to become acquainted during a visiting appointment many years ago was wont to talk, during discussions of departmental plans, about 'the great heartland of philosophy'. While he never gave formal definition to this, it was clear that it included epistemology, some parts of logical theory, philosophy of language, and ethics. There was no implied suggestion that other philosophical spheres should not be represented; but there was, as I saw it, a clear implication that one did not need to be versed in them to be accounted a competent philosopher. They were *fringe* disciplines. They certainly included philosophy of religion. It did not occur to me to question the correctness of this judgement. Even though I was much more interested in it than he was, I would never have suggested it was part of the heartland.

That was then. While many of us may hope it is different now, many other philosophers still think in the same way. Professor Taliaferro's book demonstrates how totally unhistorical such a view of philosophy of religion is, and how a deep concern with a proper understanding of the place of religious commitment in human life has been a fundamental motive in the development of philosophy in Europe and North America since the seventeenth century.

The book's purpose is to present one erudite scholar's perspective on how philosophy of religion has evolved through this period, and to do this in a way that will serve as an in-depth introduction to those who have significant acquaintance with other philosophical areas but wish to know more about philosophy of religion. The most striking feature of his narrative is its catholicity. The author's own preferences are not hidden, but he has a remarkable gift for imaginative participation in the thinking of those (such as Hume) whose perspective he does not share. I would not hesitate to recommend this book as a source of insight into almost all the thinkers he examines, even in preference to accounts by writers more in accord with their views.

The book is divided into nine chapters. Most chapters start with an account of some event that reveals the importance of the philosophical issues to be discussed in it to the politics and culture of the time. Many involve refreshing re-evaluations of the philosophers examined. Quotations are extensive and usually helpful. And in addition to the main narrative of each chapter, there are many footnote references to the secondary literature that serious enquirers ought to read. (Only the main narrative is indexed, however.)

The book deserves a warm welcome, because of the lively and engaging way in which the world of ideas is placed in its social and political context, and because of the clarity of the author's discussions. These also reflect an obvious pleasure in the process of philosophical debate – a wonderful departure from the gladiatorial cut-and-thrust that has been the least attractive legacy of the analytical tradition since the 1950s. For obvious reasons, this departure is especially welcome in a work dealing with religion. Inevitably a reader will dissent from some judgements, or may feel attracted by them but unsure how far to embrace them. I will offer one or two reactions of these kinds below. I also have one unexpected complaint.

The book opens with an account, likely to be new to many readers, of the philosophy of religion of Cudworth and the Cambridge Platonists. This was a stance in which the later rigid demarcation of philosophy and theology was absent, where metaphysics was intrinsically hospitable to theism, and where the resulting understanding of our relationship to God had irenic political implications. It is clear throughout that Taliaferro sees the severing of these interconnections (and the creation of the 'heartland' mentality) as an impoverishment and distortion that prevents justice from being done to the religious life. The thinker who gets much of the blame for this severance is Descartes, but Taliaferro wants (at least partially) to exonerate him. While emphasizing that his method of doubt entails a questioning of all authority, he also says that, for Descartes, 'trusting in the goodness of God is the cement of the universe and the bonding in the mind–body relation' (82).

This new look is refreshing, but I for one am unsure how far Descartes deserves this rehabilitation. Surely one of the motives for Cartesian dualism is the determination to keep religion at arm's length from science by allocating each to a separate sphere of being? I am reminded here also of Pascal's complaint that he could not forgive Descartes for giving God nothing to do in the world but to provide *une chiquenaude* to start it moving. On the other hand, this objection has to face the fact that an integral part of Descartes' case for God's existence is the need for God to sustain His creatures in being from moment to moment, not merely to begin the motion of the cosmic machine that includes them.

(Pascal, incidentally, gets shorter shrift than he should. Most of the space devoted to him is allocated to discussions of the Wager argument. It is true that this is the passage that has generated most philosophical attention in recent years, but this is for technical reasons that have little to do with its apologetic purpose.

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The argument is found in an unclassified fragment, which indicates that its place in the context of Pascal's unfinished Apology was undecided. To concentrate on it is to overlook other features of Pascal's thought that are in my view of equal importance, such as the major change he makes in apologetic strategy by commencing with a description of unredeemed human nature, the way he maintains that our nature protects us from scepticism, so anticipating Hume, and his doctrine of the Three Orders, which anticipates Kierkegaard.)

Locke, Leibniz, and Butler are given more conventional assessments in Chapter 3, where Locke is identified, as is now common, as the father of 'evidentialism'. The treatment of Hume in Chapter 4 is very fair-minded, and recognizes how his anti-religious arguments are built into his whole philosophical system, and how that system integrates his naturalism and his scepticism. The treatment of the *Dialogues* is fair and thorough, though I have serious reservations about according so much space to the dismissal of the cosmological argument in Part 9. Hume's system allows him no room to recognize merit in any a priori demonstrations; and I cannot see that Hume's giving this refutation to Cleanthes rather than to Philo shows that Hume is privately closer to Cleanthes. I think it more likely that his purpose is merely to expose divisions in the theistic camp. The wise things Taliaferro says about the nature of the ongoing confrontation between theism and naturalism do not seem to me to show that Hume himself shares Philo's apparent agreement with Cleanthes in Part 12 – only that he valued polite practical accommodation with empirical theists like his moderate friends, whom Cleanthes represents.

Many readers will be intrigued by Taliaferro's lengthy discussion of the way Adam Smith's use of Hume's doctrine of sympathy to develop an ideal-observer theory of ethical judgements might provide a bridge between a self-consciously secular ethic like Hume's and a theistic ethical system. I think in fact that the appeal to what he calls a 'God's-eye view' is a fairly common feature of ethical discussion, and helps to account for the extent to which many secular persons consider themselves to have absorbed a Christian ethic. The treatment of Kant in Chapter 5 is admirable for its balanced clarity in expounding aspects of his wider critical system and his special views on religion: a fine place for a reader to go who wishes for an introductory overview.

The comments in Chapter 6 on the growth of naturalism in the nineteenth century may or may not suit the reader, but they are commendably non-partisan. I have only one comment of my own in this short space. I think the challenge that evolutionary biology presents for theism is a very deep one, but not quite for the reasons Taliaferro seems to accept. He seems to agree with Richard Dawkins that Darwin made naturalism self-evidently viable; I think this is an exaggeration, in view of the perplexities the fact of the emergence of consciousness has generated among naturalistic philosophers. But what Darwin did do was to dispense with teleology, and explain the appearance of design, in a vast range of biological

phenomena, so making it immeasurably harder to see love as a factor in the dynamic of creation. While this is far from proving even the viability of naturalism, it creates a situation in which theism has to be grafted on to a common body of knowledge of the world that does nothing of itself to suggest its truth. The same chapter contains a brief attempt to rehabilitate Hegel, and some useful pointers to the work of idealist theists influenced by him, who are commonly neglected.

Chapter 7, on 'Continental and feminist philosophy of religion' is a good place for those readers who approach the thinkers it covers with a degree of trepidation. They will find a palatable account of Kierkegaard's assertion of subjectivity, and a far-from-slavish treatment of Nietzsche's assault on realist notions of truth. They will also find a measured response to the criticisms of early modern and contemporary philosophy of religion to be found in major feminist thinkers such as the late Grace Jantzen.

Chapter 8, called 'Five major moves', chronicles analytical philosophy of religion in the middle and late twentieth century, through its positivist and Wittgensteinian phases and into the introduction of Reformed epistemology. (Taliaferro rightly identifies the new scholarly consciousness of non-monotheistic religions as the primary challenge to Reformed epistemology. It was originally offered us as a form of Christian apologetic, but it uses arguments that look equally easily available to Christianity's religious competitors.) Swinburne's work deserves more attention here, not only for its depth and extent, but because it is a recent example of a philosophy of religion that continually sets a wider philosophical stage for its apologetic arguments in a manner Taliaferro found appealing in Cudworth and his circle.

Chapter 9 fills out the picture of present-day philosophy of religion. A judgement I applaud, or at least want to be true, is that 'there is a more widespread realization today that *the one correct view* of an issue in philosophy and religion … is not overwhelmingly obvious' (423). This ought certainly to be the result not only of experience of the complexity of philosophical reflections on religion but also of the effect of the rapid expansion of scholarly knowledge of our world's varied traditions. Philosophy still has a long way to go in developing a proper openness to this scholarship. But the tone taken in this book throughout is an excellent example of what we should all hope for.

I would suggest, however, that if philosophical debate about religion does indeed become characterized by greater openness and humility, this might lead to less, not more, of the systematic thinking that Taliaferro points to in the Cambridge Platonists, and for which he has such an obvious nostalgia. Any thinker suitably conscious of the likelihood that he or she may be right about some philosophical issues, but wrong about others, is likely to hope that any religious doctrines to which he or she is committed personally do not depend for their acceptability on the truth of one philosophical position rather than another. To take an example on which Taliaferro is a known authority, while some form of

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mind–body dualism may well be the most hospitable metaphysic for the defence of belief in an afterlife, it is wise to hope that the two do not stand or fall together. System is a philosophical objective, not a religious one.

I come to my unexpected complaint. The book has many footnotes that refer the reader to secondary literature. These are very valuable; but from time to time they are marred by errors and misspellings that should not have survived the proof stage. I offer a few random examples. 'Darwall' becomes 'Darwell' three times (35); 'J. N. Findlay' becomes 'J. N. Findley' three times (227); 'John King-Farlow' becomes 'John King-Farlo' (254), and 'John King-Farrow' (411). Plantinga's *Warranted Christian Belief* is referred to as *Christian Warrant* (243); the volume edited by Peter Byrne and Leslie Houlden cited (332) should be the *Companion Encyclopedia of Theology*, not *Philosophy*; and Simone Weil's work is *Gravity and Grace* (313). Such slips, however trivial, are blemishes in a book of this quality and from this publisher.

This aside, I warmly recommend this work as an enjoyable and enlightening read, and a model of how philosophers should think and write about one another. I learned a lot from it, and I am sure that all its readers will do the same.

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Peter C. Hodgson *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Pp. x + 308. £60.00 (Hbk). ISBN 0199273618.

Peter C. Hodgson, Charles G. Finney Professor of Theology, Emeritus at Vanderbilt University, is well known for his work in theology across a broad spectrum of subjects and issues. Titles range from *Children of Freedom: Black Liberation in Christian Perspective*, to *The Mystery Beneath the Real: Theology in the Fiction of George Eliot*. He also played a major role in the translation and editing of a new critical edition, appearing in the 1980s, of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, helping to make Hegel's religious thought more accessible to an English-speaking audience. As a graduate student struggling with Hegel's thought for the first time, I found his editorial introduction and textual notes to this edition useful in the extreme, only wondering why he had not published a whole book on the subject. That book has now appeared, Professor Hodgson bringing his wide knowledge of the Christian tradition, as well as a keen sensitivity to various contemporary theological questions to bear on Hegel's important work.

Hodgson's book is first and foremost an attempt to understand Hegel's philosophical articulation and defence of Christianity, albeit a defence in which 'Hegel set out to recover the conceptual foundation of religion by creating a post-critical speculative theory of his own' (13). However, even in drawing out and elucidating the elements of Hegel's construal of Christianity, Hodgson has a second, more critical aim in mind. In the author's own words, 'my purpose in struggling to understand Hegel is to promote our own thinking on these topics and not to present a fixed system of thought' (51). Hodgson's own appropriation of Hegel's material is explicitly contained in the last section, and perhaps in the last chapter of the second section, although there are constant comments, reflections, and queries in the course of his exposition, which serve to enlarge and clarify the discussion.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 contains a concise introduction to Hegel's religious thought, also highlighting certain aspects of Hegel's systematic work which are important to an understanding of what is said about religion. Part 2, 'Elements of a Hegelian Christian theology', is the lengthiest portion of the book, and is structured in accordance with Hegel's own vision of Christianity. The idea that the Christian Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – can be represented as a process whereby the Absolute begins in abstract self-identity; goes onto particularize itself in 'creation'; and then finds reconciliation again, by finding itself reunified with the first person of the Trinity – this understanding of the Trinity, is sympathetically retraced by Hodgson, in all its Hegelian complexity. Part 3 takes up the challenge of appropriating Hegel's thought about Christianity for theology today.

Part 1 of Hodgson's book manages to incorporate and compress an enormous amount of background information about Hegel's life, intellectual development, and eventual philosophical agenda. It is especially useful to the uninitiated, covering such complicated issues as the nature of speculative philosophy, which the author expresses as a reciprocal 'mirroring' between consciousness and reality (7); as well as what Hodgson calls the 'logical deep structure' behind Hegel's thought (6). This structure, appearing throughout Hegel's work, is said by Hodgson to represent both reality and thought as involved in a kind of 'syllogism', the terms of which, when understood, can function as a 'hermeneutical key' to a grasp of what he is saying throughout the lectures (12). The project of a 'philosophy of religion', something that Hegel viewed as an alternative to the no longer viable 'natural theology', is explained, and Hodgson portrays Hegel as a theologian of the spirit. This latter term, spirit, one of the most pervasive and yet elusive in the Hegelian idiom, is described by Hodgson as consisting in a certain life-giving/sustaining energy, which in its human form, comes to expression in thought. By the time it is used to describe the human–divine relationship, it will come to mean that God (absolute spirit) is expressed in and through human thought, all the while maintaining both the distinction between the human and the divine, and yet also identifying them at a higher level.

Noting that Hegel lectured on religion on four separate occasions, each occasion involving major changes and revisions, Hodgson also argues that Hegel was really far more of an open-minded thinker, engaging life itself with his dialectic –and this in contrast with the popular caricature of a once-and-for-all, closed-book type of mentality. Yet certain features of Hegel's lectures remained constant, including the overall movement from the concept of religion, through determinate religion, towards the consummate or revelatory religion. It is the fact that Hegel consistently presented Christianity as the consummation of the process, which is both puzzling in itself, and the source of Hodgson's later discussion of the issue. This section of the book finishes by taking up Hegel's famous image of Scholasticus, afraid to enter the water until having learnt to swim – 'Does not modern theology need to be persuaded to enter the water?', asks Hodgson. We need Hegel's courage in attempting both to hold on to the content of religion while experimenting with new ways of thinking about it.

In Part 2 Hodgson moves on to a detailed examination of Hegel's presentation of Christianity. The first two chapters consider the more generic concept of God, as Hegel expounded it in Part I of his lectures. Thus we are given Hegel's understanding of religion which amounts to a relationship between the finite and the infinite. Shunning agnosticism of God, Hegel believed that 'there is no way of passing over from the finite to the infinite unless the infinite itself constitutes the passage' (79). This unifying or encompassing vision of the infinite, is itself identified as the speculative insight into the matter. Christianity, with its belief in the Incarnation, can then be seen to be the consummate religion, in as much as 'the *relatedness* of divinity and humanity, is consummated, fully accomplished' (90). Turning to the concept of God in itself, Hegel's basic understanding is said to be akin to that of Spinoza, where God is seen as the absolute substance, on which everything is dependent. Hodgson qualifies this by pointing out that the divine subjectivity was not adequately understood by Spinoza, as it was by Hegel. Further distancing Hegel from Spinoza, Hodgson presents Hegel's case against the charge of pantheism, levelled against his thought – if anything, the term panentheism is to be preferred. The details of how knowledge of God is to be understood are nicely summarized by Hodgson. Of particular interest is the relationship between representation and concept, since philosophy can be said to simply convert one-sided/symbolic religious representations into comprehensive philosophical concepts. Hodgson worries that if theology attempts to take up and deal with religious representations, then it too might be subsumed under the more encompassing treatment of philosophy – something Hodgson finds 'suffocating' (126). A brief survey is given of Hegel's attempt to champion the unfashionable proofs for the existence of God. These proofs are recontextualized by Hegel as partially flawed efforts to mediate between the finite and the infinite, or to elevate the mind to God. The ontological proof shows itself, despite the Kantian

onslaught, as the only genuine proof. The worship of God, or the Cultus as Hegel termed it, emerges next, and Hodgson notes that it plays a practical role, vis-à-vis the merely theoretical (and, one supposes, overly abstract) type of knowledge of God evinced in the proofs.

Hodgson turns next to the Hegelian concept of God as it is concretely expressed in Christianity, or in Trinitarian form. Hodgson points out that for Hegel, the Christian concept of God unfolds in three moments, or kingdoms: the concept of God in itself; the concept of God as it appears in creation, specifically the human world (Christ being the ultimate focus); and the concept of God as it emerges in the community, or as the Holy Spirit. Hodgson will treat each in turn, and begins with the concept of God in itself. Christianity traditionally distinguished between an immanent and an economic Trinity, the former having to do with God in Himself, before creation, the latter having to do with God as He is involved in the drama of creation. Hodgson argues that Hegel collapses the distinction, presenting us instead with what Cyril O'Regan has called an 'inclusive or holistic Trinity' (130). This reveals Hegel's speculative reconstruction of the Trinity, where 'God is to be understood not as three persons but as infinite personality or infinite subjectivity, which constitutes distinctions within itself but suspends these distinctions and remains in unity with itself' (135). Hodgson argues that the abandonment of the distinction between the economic and immanent trinities means that what was formerly a mystery, becomes now a '*rational* mystery' (132). Hodgson is here drawing attention to the fact that Hegel identifies 'mystery' with 'reason,' meaning by the latter, that which is adequately understood within Hegel's speculative framework. Thus, something is called mysterious in so far as one has not reached a speculative grasp of it. For non-speculative thought, or 'understanding' (*Verstand*), 'the Trinity is a suprarational paradox' (132).

In the next three chapters, Hodgson turns to an elaboration of the other two kingdoms, which centre around creation and the Christ figure, and community and the Holy Spirit. Having pointed to Hegel's model of the inclusive Trinity, Hodgson explains one of the consequent features of Hegel's account of creation, an account in which 'God is complete apart from the world, and that God achieves completion through the world' (145). The difficulty of maintaining both sides of this viewpoint lead the author into a discussion of the German term *Entlassen* – a release, or letting-exist – as the way in which Hegel tries to philosophically account for this creation. Furthermore, since God's creation for Hegel 'divides into the realms of the natural world and finite spirit' (146), the account of the Fall must be related to this division. Hodgson gives a good account of Hegel's struggles to describe the Christian notion of the Fall within his speculative framework. Since the distinction between finite spirit/humanity and nature is found in the possession of self-consciousness, Hegel is led to the position that 'estrangement and reconciliation have the same source: consciousness and

cognition' (153). The Hegelian picture of evil turns out to consist in the ruptures that appear between finite spirit and nature, and between finite and infinite spirit, both of which appear with the emergence of cognitive awareness. Hodgson adds a final remark that Hegel is not downplaying the issue of evil, rather is he ascribing its very real power to its connection with cognition. At any rate, the path is then open for Hegel to present Christ as the solution to this rupture, since in his person he identifies the human and divine poles of reality. Hodgson goes into the details of how Hegel offers an account of the Incarnation which tries to reconcile the necessity of the particular historical occurrence, while nonetheless maintaining that its ultimate significance lies in its universal significance for humanity. Hodgson expresses some hesitation over these points, even arguing that Hegel is 'bending his argument to accommodate normative Christian doctrine' (162). The third of Hegel's kingdoms, or the Holy Spirit, evolves out of the deeper significance of the death and resurrection of Christ. Drawing out the more universal element of the Incarnation, Hegel argues that the Christian account of the coming of the Holy Spirit can be seen as a transition from the sensible/immediate Incarnation, towards its deeper spiritual meaning. Hodgson observes that Hegel's reconstruction of this doctrine involves two parallel types of passage, 'from the individual to the community, and from externality and appearance to inwardness or subjectivity' (178). The community which shows itself at first as a church is viewed by Hegel as a step on the way towards an adequate reconciliation with the world at large – the church must give up its exclusiveness and come to fruition in the institutions of the state.

Hodgson finishes Part 2 with an overview of Hegel's treatment of other worldly religions, focusing on the Chinese religion, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism. Hegel is said to fail in his attempt to conceptually order the unfolding of world religions in accordance with his systematic agenda, presenting us instead, with what Walter Jaeschke has labelled a '*typology* or *geography* of religion' (218). The author concludes with some critical remarks about Hegel's tendency to subsume all religions under the rubric of Christianity, even arguing that if Hegel were alive today, he would be a religious pluralist. One thinks in this regard of the work of John Hick, as well as of Paul F. Knitter, whom Hodgson mentions as a possible example of how to adapt Hegel's 'fulfilment' model of Christianity (238).

Hodgson's brief and final Part 3 attempts to assess the theological significance of Hegel today. He first engages those thinkers who argue that Hegel is not a fruitful theological resource, going on to list some contemporary topics on which Hegel's thought might shed some light, even offer a solution. I will not say much more about this section, as Hodgson's points here will occupy me below.

It must be said that Hodgson has written a very clear, well-presented book on Hegel's philosophy of religion. As such, it renders not only an introductory

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service but also tends to crystallize certain issues in the contemporary debate. Although the secondary literature is not taken up at length, the ease with which Hodgson handles obscure portions of the primary sources indicates that he is well aware of disputed territory. I found his constant reference to broader discussions, bordering Hegel's treatment, a refreshingly engaging approach. In this respect, the whole book, and not just the final section, can be seen as an indirect defence of the contemporary theological relevance of Hegel's thought.

Having said as much, Hodgson's admirable boldness in portraying Hegel as relevant to contemporary postmodern theology, also weakens his exposition at certain points. Hodgson speaks at times of Hegel's 'conceptual play' (217), which shows itself in his willingness to experiment with new schemes. I find this hard to square with what Hodgson calls the logical deep structure of Hegel's thought, paradigmatically expressed in the *Science of Logic*. Hegel seems to me to know exactly where he is going, and what he wants ultimately to say. Experimentation there may be, but not at the fundamental level. Hegel is systematic to the point of fault, and Hodgson himself grudgingly recognizes this in places, for instance, in Hegel's view of the relationship between representation and concept. Yet, although the author worries about the tyrannical exploitation of theology/religion by philosophy here, I believe that he fails to see some of the religiously unfriendly results that stem from Hegel's panlogicism, as it is sometimes called. This can be seen in Hodgson's repeated attempt to locate a conception of 'divine mystery' in Hegel's thought. What a rationally comprehended mystery could mean is lost on many readers, and there is little attempt to sort out the deeper ambiguities in Hegel's position here. While Hegel may well *say* that his rational standpoint preserves mystery, a more critical evaluation is needed, and here perhaps we see the disadvantage of leaving out a critical engagement with secondary literature on precisely this point. This is no small omission, since the viability of Hegel's thought for theology is in question. Indeed, this ambiguity in Hegel's position may well have been the crux of the separation between the 'right' and 'left' interpretations, following the death of Hegel in 1831.

Despite his lucidity in exposing Hegel's views, not enough of a distance is taken from Hegel's position at times, even granted Hodgson's various complaints against Hegel's position here and there. This came through especially in his evaluation of William Desmond's critique of Hegel. Hodgson too willingly attempts to pigeonhole Desmond, a detractor on the issue of Hegel's fruitfulness for theology today. It would seem that anyone who disagrees with Hegel's conception of God, as the unity of the finite and infinite, reduces to either a Feuerbachian humanist, or a Kierkegaardian fideist (Desmond is labelled a Kierkegaardian). This is somewhat disappointing as an appraisal, since it seems to simply repeat Hegel's line of thought, without admitting any more nuanced voice into the discussion. All the same, despite these points of criticism, Hodgson does succeed in providing

a strikingly articulate explanation of Hegel's Christian speculative thought, as well as a powerful case for taking Hegelian resources seriously in today's theological climate.

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George Pattison *The Philosophy of Kierkegaard* (Chesham: Acumen, 2005). Pp. xiii + 205. £45.00 (Hbk), £14.99 (Pbk). ISBN 1 84465 031 6.

All too often attempts to derive a unified 'philosophy of Kierkegaard' culminate in fractured disarray or else in a systematic funnelling of Kierkegaard's thought which finds selective exclusion to be the necessary evil of coherence. George Pattison's book, however, does not simply excavate a particular 'philosophy of Kierkegaard' from the eclectic debris of Kierkegaard's theology, psychology, and literature; but rather questions whether any 'philosophy of Kierkegaard' is legitimate or even possible given the fluid interrelation of these tangled themes. One of the world's most prolific and incisive Kierkegaard scholars, Pattison manages to navigate Kierkegaard's ostensibly disparate thought via a course which, while drawing attention to the inevitably divergent paths of interpretation, does not become swept away into the interminable labyrinth of secondary Kierkegaard scholarship. Given the many false turns and dead ends of this labyrinth, Pattison achieves an expert clarity in introducing the core questions confronting any potential philosophy of Kierkegaard. But what elevates this book beyond the introductory is Pattison's illumination of the question *par excellence* which concerns Kierkegaard's relation to any philosophy which may bear his name: that is the avowedly religious dimensions of his thought – what Pattison distills as 'the infinite qualitative difference [between humanity and God]' and 'the absolute paradox [of the incarnation]'. For a book aimed at both philosophers and theologians (and presumably those in between) this is clearly the most divisive and contentious area in examining the enigmatic 'forefather of existentialism' and prophet of modern theology. It was after all precisely Kierkegaard's Christian confessions which were obscured, dismissed, or evacuated in the philosophical appropriations by Heidegger and Sartre; whilst the existential pathos of these religious anxieties struck an anticipatory chord of resonance with the modern dialectical and existential theologies of Paul Tillich and Karl Barth. But the question of where Kierkegaard belongs, or where he is to be shelved, is a dilemma rendered more interesting by its persisting lack of conclusion.

Falling under the publishing remit of Acumen's titles on 'continental European philosophy', Pattison's treatment is not only sufficiently accessible and clear for the uninitiated, it also importantly offers novel insights and questions for the possible relation of Kierkegaard's religious thought to the contemporary discipline of philosophy. Dividing the book into only four chapters, an introduction, and an epilogue, Pattison expertly and at times effortlessly covers a highly expansive yet focused view of Kierkegaard's thought.

Beginning with the 'Introduction: Kierkegaard and philosophy', Pattison first and foremost outlines the dubious task of identifying Kierkegaard as a philosopher in the traditional sense of the term. Kierkegaard's relation to philosophy is ostensibly problematized by his critical stance towards the misconceived task and remit of the discipline as it was manifest during his own time. Philosophy, especially in its Hegelian genre, fails to fulfill its claim to reconcile, mediate and even 'go further than' a Christianity which, according to Kierkegaard, remains a paradox more amenable to the 'leap of faith' of subjective passion than the sophistry of objective reason. Thus Kierkegaard's polemic that Christianity is and must be an 'offence' to reason threatens to bring any dialogue between his thought and the idiom of philosophy to a premature impasse. As such, Pattison explains, '[t]he problem seems to lie in the religious imperatives of Kierkegaard's self-confessed Christian commitment. In other words, the real stumbling-block to a thoroughgoing philosophical interpretation of Kierkegaard is that he himself fairly consistently (and plausibly) claimed that his authorship was first and foremost religious' (5). And yet, as Pattison sets out to demonstrate, Kierkegaard belongs at least contextually 'to the history of philosophy to which we are heirs' (7).

Kierkegaard has resounded, negatively and positively, throughout the dialogues of such philosophers as Jürgen Habermas, Michael Theunissen, Lev Shestov, Martin Buber, Edmund Husserl, Jean-Paul Sartre, Paul Ricoeur, and Jacques Derrida. Indeed, Pattison surmises, Kierkegaard is particularly relevant to the modern question concerning the demarcation of the defining boundaries of philosophy itself. Furthermore, it is Kierkegaard's concerns with the categories of 'subjectivity, the self, passion, character and so on' that reveal his 'important interests in at least one substansive philosophical question, namely, the question as to what it is to be a self or person' (8). However, it might also be added, that this is a modern philosophical fixation which certain postmodern philosophy has itself sought to call into question: vis-à-vis the erasure of the modern subject or self (although the dissolution of the self-reflecting/self-generating self arguably has its own incisive pre-emption in Kierkegaard). Essentially, it is upon this very question of the integrity of the self that Kierkegaard's religious suppositions become most problematic for a non-religious philosophy, and it is this tension that reverberates as the undertone of Pattison's book. 'The structure of this study is, then, provided both by Kierkegaard's place in the history of modern European

philosophy and by the points of convergence between Kierkegaard's central path of thinking and questions that concern us now' (9).

In Chapter 1, 'Existence', Pattison discusses the relation of Kierkegaard's theories of human existence to the German twentieth-century philosophies of *Existenz*. In terms of Kierkegaard's own nineteenth-century context, this inevitably directs the discussion towards his polemical relation to Hegel and Hegelianism. Here Pattison highlights the centrality of Kierkegaard's theory of 'subjectivity' as the decisive stance of the individual towards existence itself. This notion of the subjective struggle with existence leads to the Kierkegaardian category of 'anxiety', the topic for Pattison's second chapter. At this point, the religious suppositions of Kierkegaard's thought become increasingly apparent, despite Heidegger's attempts to transcribe an anthropology of *Angst* into a secular philosophy of *Existenz*. Here Pattison elucidates how Kierkegaardian anxiety is rooted in theories of freedom and the transition, or fall, from innocence to sin. It is through anxiety's deepening into 'despair' that the consummation of Kierkegaard's religious anthropology is discovered in decisively redemptive notions of 'Spirit' and God. Ostensibly it is in the presupposition whereby the path away from despair is one which directs the individual towards the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ that Kierkegaard's self is revealed to be irremediably theological. As such, 'Can the attempt to offer a Kierkegaardian anthropology without reference to these Christian presuppositions even get off the ground?' (82). It is this question which, while alluding to throughout the book, Pattison defers until the fourth chapter.

After considering the relation of Kierkegaardian anxiety to psychology, ontology, and phenomenology, Pattison proceeds to his third chapter, 'The good', in which a more textual focus commences with an examination of the idea of 'choosing the self' based in the second part of Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*. Kantian morality and *Purity of Heart* also come under consideration in this chapter's section on 'the unity of the self', while the more (in)famous *Fear and Trembling* is at the core of sections concerning 'the exception' and 'sacrifice and selfhood'. What these textually oriented sections demonstrate is that, philosopher or anti-philosopher, Kierkegaard's writings certainly generate fertile provocations and contributions to debates within contemporary moral philosophy – especially concerning the relation of the divine and the self to the ethical. Indeed, the interest elicited by *Fear and Trembling* from Jacques Derrida reveals how at least one of Kierkegaard's more enduring texts is arguably more vital and more amenable to philosophical readings – even readings against the grain of intent – than ever before.

Forming the focus for Pattison's discussion of 'The Other', Kierkegaard's often (until recently) under-examined *Works of Love* also reinforces this possibility of reinvigorated debate. Kierkegaard's diminished attraction for philosophy has often resulted from a perceived sin of omission in terms of the sacrifice of 'the other' upon the altar of the 'single individual' – 'the crowd', as

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many with even a vague familiarity of Kierkegaard know, being a notorious term of infamy in the Kierkegaardian vocabulary. As Pattison observes,

> We have already considered the charge of acosmism with regard to Kierkegaard's epistemology and ontology of the self [chapters one and two], but something similar now recurs in the sphere of ethics, namely, the charge that the Kierkegaardian self – and that includes the ethical no less than the aesthetic self – is all alone in the world. (115)

This indictment of Kierkegaard has been seen in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, and, as Pattison examines, in Martin Buber, T. W. Adorno, and K. E. Løgstrup. Rather than being a corrective to a void of other-oriented ethics, Adorno admonishes, Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* actually compounds the loneliness of the absurd love of the 'single individual'. Here Pattison carefully poises the reader in the heart of what is arguably the most energetic contemporary debate between philosophy and Kierkegaard.

But this is not what Pattison's book, quite rightly, perceives as the definitive validating issue for any potential philosophy of Kierkegaard. It is in Chapter 4 that Pattison centres upon the previously deferred examination of '[t]he infinite qualitative difference and the absolute paradox': the notions which encapsulate the heart of the religion/philosophy debate within Kierkegaard scholarship. The first of these, as Pattison points out, was adopted by the theologian Karl Barth as a motif for 'removing theology as a discipline exclusive to Christian faith from the scrutiny of philosophical reason' (134). As such, Kierkegaard's legacy appears more amenable to the immunization of religion against philosophy than the possibility of dialogue. The tension evoked by 'the infinite qualitative difference' and 'the absolute paradox' seems to assert an impassible gulf between reason and religion: one which apparently leaves us only with recourse to the 'leap of faith'. But does this antagonism between faith and reason contaminate the totality of Kierkegaard's writings to the extent of rendering them philosophically redundant? As Pattison suggests: '[t]hat Kierkegaard's idea of God is that God is necessarily incomprehensible or even actively offensive to reason might therefore seem to have retroactive significance for virtually every important aspect of his thought' (134).

And yet, does the realization that Kierkegaard may not have recognized himself as doing philosophy preclude contemporary philosophers from engaging philosophically with his writings? Historically at least this is conspicuously untrue. As such, Pattison asserts:

> It is mere intellectual laziness to declare that 'Kierkegaard is a fideistic irrationalist' and thereby absolve ourselves from having to think seriously about what he is saying. If even the tears and torments of the saints can become the matter of a philosophical hermeneutic, so too, we might guess, can Kierkegaard's boldest ventures in the language of faith. (134–135)

Of course this raises broader academic questions about the remit of philosophy's meditations; but it should additionally be noted that neither is it clear that Kierkegaard felt he was 'doing theology', strictly speaking, since what he saw as

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contemporary 'theology' repeatedly elicited his scorn for becoming a genre of 'dogmatics' itself saturated by Hegelian philosophy. Indeed, it should be borne in mind that Kierkegaard made some fairly acidic comments on academia per se. The fact remains, however, that Kierkegaard grappled with many of the questions with which philosophy has continued to engage and, even if his approach is not strictly philosophical, he is philosophically aware and prepared to propose a perspective on the limits of philosophy (and theology). Hence Kierkegaard is prepared to venture into the language of philosophy in the description of religiousness even if only under the rubric of ironic exposé (e.g. *Philosophical Fragments*, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*). Furthermore, the openness or undecidability of Kierkegaard's writings render generous opportunity for philosophy, theology and other disciplines to find themselves sharing the same ground in their exploration of his corpus.

There are many questions left open or hanging, but that is so often the way with Kierkegaard. Potentially it is in this openness, or to employ a Kierkegaardianism this 'suspension' of certainties, that dialogue between philosophy and theology, faith and reason, may flourish. Kierkegaard quite simply refuses to be *either* philosopher *or* theologian – though he is avowedly religious – and this contributes to the multiplicity of readings. To this end, for example, rather than polarizing the philosophy of Heidegger and the religious thought of Kierkegaard, Pattison inserts his own suggestion that there may actually be 'a significant affinity between the Heideggerian poet [of postmetaphysical thinking] and Kierkegaard's conception of Christ as the communicative event of the divine presence' (171). Here one is presented with 'a theology with very different presuppositions and methods from the theology criticized by Heidegger as onto-theology' (171). But the suspicion remains, Pattison concedes, that this does not resemble philosophy 'but a kind of quasi-philosophical religiously toned poetry; that, far from being presented with respectable philosophical arguments, we are being targeted as potential victims of a kind of intellectual seduction; that we are being moved rather than persuaded and being offered rhetoric rather than thought' (171).

So what is one to do with the turbulent Dane? 'Is philosophy today to have him only on the terms of his being read as a post-onto-theological poet?' (171). At this point, in 'Epilogue: The Christian witness and the simple wise man of ancient times', Pattison appositely draws out Kierkegaard's esteem for Socrates: the one whose wisdom resided in knowing that he knew nothing. If Kierkegaard's writing subverts Hegel, anticipates Derrida, and is undermined by Heidegger, it is, perhaps surprisingly, the prophet of Western philosophy, the Socratic gadfly, whom Kierkegaard confesses most vocational affinity with. It is more a question of method than ideology, and it is the ironic and self-effacing inquisitions of Socrates which Kierkegaard feels are most availing. Where one is led by Kierkegaard to the sacred heart of Jesus, there is also the daimon of Socrates.

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All in all, Pattison must be commended for delivering a far more balanced and justly contextual overview of Kierkegaard's works (while consciously setting aside the temptations and riddles of Kierkegaard's psycho-biography) than many philosophers whose own works have assimilated and transformed his writings (e.g. Sartre, Heidegger, Levinas). Although resolutions are, inevitably, thin on the ground, Pattison successfully encourages us to hear the murmur of a philosophical heart beating somewhere in a web of literature both playfully ironic and devoutly religious. What is of most contemporary relevance is that Kierkegaard and philosophy are concerned with many of the same questions vis-à-vis the aporia of self-knowledge and the epistemological uncertainties of modernity. Kierkegaard may have concurred with the sentiment of Heidegger that a philosophical theology is a square circle (though what Kierkegaard and Heidegger would mean by these terms is unlikely to concur); yet Pattison concludes this book with the shrewd yet esoteric observation that: 'if Christ and Socrates can here stand for the worlds of faith and philosophy respectively, Kierkegaard's own authorship might equally suggest the reflection that the dissimilarity between faith and philosophy consist precisely in their similarity.' (183)

In noting the similarity between Socrates and Christ 'which consists precisely in their dissimilarity', Pattison's conclusion is deliberately provocative and abandons one wanting more to be said about Kierkegaard's Socratic approach to philosophy (a philosophy perhaps more authentically philosophical than the sophistry of Hegelianism to which Kierkegaard often referred in employing 'philosophy' as a term of derision). But this provocation is by no means unsuitable for a book which serves to stimulate thought in those new to the mischievously earnest intricacies of Kierkegaard's works. A provocation. An either/or with a twist. How Kierkegaardian.

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Clare Carlisle *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Becoming: Movements and Positions* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2005). Pp. xi+173. $55.00 (Hbk). ISBN 0 7914 6547 0.

Clare Carlisle, the Leverhulme Research Fellow at the University of Leeds, has written an expert study which examines the roles of movement and stasis in three of Kierkegaard's most prominent works. A volume in the SUNY Press series on theology and continental thought, it explores the conceptual and metaphorical significance of Kierkegaard's deployment of movement as an expression

of the inward spiritual process of the subjectively existing individual. The merit of *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Becoming* is that it illuminates Kierkegaard's broader philosophical arguments by discerning the meaning of movement in his 1843 pseudonymous texts *Either/Or*, *Repetition*, and *Fear and Trembling*.

Carlisle's interpretation gives inwardness a central place as a kind of *movement*: the relation between the task of becoming inwardly and the category of movement is found to be an important thread connecting the 1843 texts as a kind of trilogy. Movement, or lack of it, is the metaphor by which Kierkegaard expresses his characters' deep internal struggles: their aesthetic complacency, their fear of risk and decision, their subjective paralysis of ethical deliberation or preoccupation with the past. Carlisle makes explicit the elegant role of movement as the individual's internal, subjective transition: her analysis captures a crucial conceptual idiom previously neglected by most of the scholarly commentary on Kierkegaard's thought, and her exposition of it is enlightening and persuasive.

The book is organized into three main parts, broadly characterized as 'History', 'Commentary', and 'Analysis', and each part consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the ancient philosophical debates on the 'Metaphysics of motion' and the puzzle of change, paying particular attention to Aristotle's understanding of *kinesis* as the process of transition between potentiality and actuality, and the logical role of the principle of contradiction in *kinesis*. The second chapter, on the 'Logic of becoming', surveys the relevant history of this theme after Aristotle up to Hegel, and sketches with clarity Hegel's dynamic logic, which introduces the principle of mediation and displaces the law of contradiction: since for Hegel all existence is characterized by becoming, truth itself must be becoming, in constant 'motion'. Chapter 3 then focuses on 'Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel', illustrating the Danish philosophical scene of Kierkegaard's student days, and noting its particular preoccupation with Hegel's system. This chapter establishes Kierkegaard's contemporary context by giving appropriate weight to both the philosophical and theological debates over Hegelian thought during the 1830s and 1840s. The historical background of these chapters orients the interpretive project: Kierkegaard reclaims Aristotle's transitional process of actualization and applies it to the internal and spiritual self rather than the metaphysical category of substance. Carlisle demonstrates how this enables Kierkegaard to oppose both the entrenched academic intellectualism which characterized speculative philosophizing as well as the Hegelian emphases on necessity, transparency, and exteriority evident in the immanent movement of the dialectical process of history.

The second part contains a chapter on each of the 1843 texts, and it is here that Carlisle is at her finest. She makes good use of other Kierkegaardian writings to support her exegetical project, though her primary task in this part is to engage each text closely and thoroughly. Chapter 4, on *Either/Or*, locates the theme of subjective becoming in the inward movement from the aesthetic to the ethical

sphere. The choice presented by the judge to the aesthete represents at once Kierkegaard's recovery of the principle of contradiction and his application of it to what Carlisle calls the subjective or inward 'plane of motion'. If for Aristotle *kinesis* involves capacity for movement and actualization, the aesthete of *Either/Or* lacks this very capacity for movement in his internal self, being unable to make the self-movement of decision. The aesthete's ambivalence and indifference result in his spiritual impotence; the aesthete's inward freedom of choice is restrained, and he is powerless to make the self-movement. Indeed, he feels powerless and static: 'time stands still, and I with it'.

The fifth chapter is on *Repetition*, and it is appropriate that this chapter stands as the literal centrepiece of the book, for it thematizes movement most explicitly through its interaction between Constantin Constantius and his interlocutor, the young fiancé. Carlisle unearths the several layers of movement operating in the text, of which two are especially worth highlighting. At the conceptual level there are the complementary notions of recollection and repetition. Constantin considers them to be 'the same movement, only in opposite directions', for recollection is a reflective process of retrieval which emphasizes 'ideality' and knowledge, and moves toward the past, whereas repetition is an existential process which moves one toward the future, recreating in reality that which was mere ideality. As Carlisle later puts it, the 'idealizing direction of knowledge is replaced by the actualizing direction of existence' (92). Paralleling this is the dramatic level of *Repetition*'s two characters: Constantin and the young man are initially seeking the same kind of result, yet they figuratively *move away* from each other. The philosophically reflective and theoretical Constantin begins with a serious conceptual interest in repetition, yet moves toward experimental curiosity in his attempt to achieve repetition through the mere replication of his trip to Berlin; he lapses into resignation and discontent, renouncing his reflective endeavours, and in doing so, it appears that Constantin wants something more like re-lived recollection. The young man, however, though beginning in an inert and immobile state of melancholy, recognizes his subjective role and what he must do to change and effect his own becoming. He realizes his need to go beyond the advice of Constantin and undergo his own movement of becoming.

Chapter 6 examines *Fear and Trembling*'s many facets of movement in Johannes de Silentio's contemplation of the story of Abraham. Prominent here is the language of religious movement as a 'leap', and the expression of love as the passionate 'double movement' of accepting suffering in resignation and experiencing joy in faith. There is also the recurrent theme of elevation and descent, a movement depicted explicitly in Abraham's journey up and down Mount Moriah, yet which also mimics the constant inward struggle of Abraham's trial, as he desires a Kierkegaardian repetition in the restoration of Isaac. But Carlisle notes another movement of ascent up the 'scale of value' constructed in *Fear and Trembling*. This spiritual, existential scale of value provides a vertical hierarchy

for the aesthetic, ethical, and religious stages; it also enables the reader to view the pseudonym Johannes as having moved beyond, and so above, Hegel, yet still remaining below Abraham. Abraham occupies the highest rung of this scale, and is looked at with awe and dread by Johannes for being able to do what he cannot: make the movement of faith.

In the third and final part, Carlisle has chapters devoted to rounding out the portrait of Kierkegaard's work and its application by more recent philosophy. The seventh chapter is entitled 'Becoming a Christian', and ties these themes to Kierkegaard's Christian writings, specifically his nine upbuilding discourses of 1843. Here, and throughout the book, Carlisle's approach is exemplary in its treatment and discussion of the theological-spiritual project that Kierkegaard advances, demonstrating the unifying purpose of his entire authorship. Chapter 8, 'Beyond philosophy?', considers whether Kierkegaard is rightly understood as a philosopher, given his religious emphasis and his demotion of philosophy to the aesthetic sphere. Carlisle argues that he is, for at bottom Kierkegaard is engaged in an ontological enquiry, one intended to lead to the teachings of Christianity. The final chapter, 'Repetitions', connects Kierkegaard's thought to its later reverberations in Nietzsche and Heidegger, demonstrating how his own themes undergo 'repetitions'.

Carlisle's work, though excellent on the whole, leaves some unanswered questions. There is little discussion of whether the subjective movement can be effected by individual effort or voluntary will. Carlisle implies that the movement is self-initiated, but this is controversial and subject to countervailing themes of renunciation and passivity which, in some key passages, seem to be necessary conditions for the movement to take place (this is evident in the case of Constantin, where his intentional pursuit of repetition is misguided and hinders its enactment). Relatedly, the implication of self-initiation leaves less room for understanding faith as a divine gift, representative of God's movement toward us, which is a prominent theme in other writings of Kierkegaard.

It is debatable, moreover, whether the subjective movements of the 1843 texts are tokens of the same type: Carlisle presents movement as a unifying interpretive scheme but perhaps at the expense of depicting it too univocally. Is the inward actualizing movement of *kinesis* the same type of movement as the repetition which the young fiancé craves? De Silentio adamantly notes the difference between the movements of infinite resignation and of faith, and Climacus in the *Postscript* (294f.) indicates that the 'essential relation' of the ethical and the religious is disanalogous to the relationship of the aesthetic to the ethical; these suggest a nuanced distinction between types of movement lost in Carlisle's account.

There is also a text that appears to have been overlooked by Carlisle, and which would have greatly enriched her discussion and bolstered her thesis: the oft neglected *Johannes Climacus, or De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*. This too is one of

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Kierkegaard's 1843 texts, written around 1842–1843, during the same period as *Either/Or*, *Fear and Trembling*, and *Repetition*, though it went unpublished in Kierkegaard's lifetime. Had Carlisle incorporated a chapter, or short discussion, on its relevance to her argument, she would have demonstrated in a more exhaustive way the centrality of subjective movement to Kierkegaard's thinking during these formative years. *Johannes Climacus* depicts a young philosophy student by that name who undertakes as his goal the Cartesian dictum to doubt everything. But he soon realizes the paralysing effects of this cognitive enterprise: Johannes is unable to function or move, stuck in a position of epistemic stasis. This piece holds the seeds of Kierkegaard's 1843 themes: in the last pages, he introduces the crucial idioms of reflection, consciousness, and repetition. He states that 'reflection is *disinterested*', and that when 'ideality and reality touch each other, then repetition occurs'. And Kierkegaard himself describes the narrative of *Johannes Climacus* in terms of an intellectual movement and its constraining effect: when Johannes succeeds in doubting everything, and

> … he has gone as far in that direction as he can go and wants to come back, he cannot do so. He perceives that in order to hold on to this extreme position of doubting everything, he has engaged all his mental and spiritual powers. If he abandons this extreme position, he may well arrive at something, but in doing that he would have also abandoned his doubt about everything. Now he despairs, his life is wasted … . Life has not acquired any meaning for him, and all this is the fault of philosophy. (*Pap*. IV B 16 *n.d.*, 1842–1843)

Carlisle's work would have been more compelling had she applied her interpretive skills to this text.

This volume will interest Kierkegaard specialists, yet it is written with a clarity and style which also make it suitable as an introduction or a supplement to close study of the early pseudonymous works.

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T. J. Mawson *Belief in God: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Pp. x + 272. £50.00 (Hbk), £16.99 (Pbk). ISBN 0 19 927631 5 (Hbk), 0 19 928495 4 (Pbk).

Although there are many introductions to the philosophy of religion, this book is distinctive in at least two ways. First, it does not attempt to offer a neutral account of a range of positions on each topic; although, for the most part, each chapter may be read as an entity in its own right (there are occasional minor

references to earlier chapters), the treatment of each topic contributes to the argument of the book as a whole. In this respect it aims to cater for the needs of not only those who are just beginning to study the philosophy of religion, but also those with a deeper interest in the subject at postgraduate level and beyond. Second, each topic is copiously illustrated with – often quite extensive – analogies, a feature which may make it particularly attractive to those teaching philosophy of religion at A level and, indeed, to undergraduates.

The book focuses on the claims of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam that a personal agent accounts for the existence of the physical world. In the first part, Mawson argues that the theistic concept of God is coherent and substantial. He examines nine properties which theists hold to be essential properties of God, and four which are held to be accidental.

In the section on personhood, Mawson argues that a person is rational, has beliefs, is treated as the object of moral respect, and reciprocates that attitude in his or her actions, which include verbal communication. A person may sometimes fail to show one or more of these properties, but anyone who failed to show any of these properties over an extended period of time would undermine their status as a person. This entails that foetuses and severely mentally retarded human beings do not count as persons but, Mawson claims, many creatures which are not persons, such as dogs, are beings towards which one should behave morally. God has these essential properties of personhood maximally – i.e. He is supremely rational, He has an infinite number of beliefs all of which are true, and so on. Thus, if God exists, He is a person in the same sense that we are persons, although He is much more of a person than we are.

Mawson argues that 'incorporeality' is not the best term to describe the claim that there is no part of the physical universe at which God is more present than any other. If there is a God, it would not be incorrect to say that the physical world as a whole is His body – or a part of His body – because the physical world satisfies 'two conditions which are jointly sufficient for a section of matter to be a part of his body: every part of the physical world is one he knows about directly and every part is one he can control directly' (27). Mawson suggests that 'transcendence' is a better term; God transcends the physical world because He is not constrained within it. The most appropriate contrasting term is therefore not 'omnipresence', intended to convey that there is no part of the universe from which God is absent, but 'immanence'; God is immanent in the physical world because He is 'not in any way ignorant of it or unable to control it by direct acts of his will' (*ibid*).

In the next chapter, Mawson argues that an omnipotent being is the most powerful being it is logically possible there could be, with 'the most power-granting set of abilities that it is logically possible anyone might have' (33) – even if only an omniscient being could fully understand what this entails. He then argues that God is eternal in the atemporal sense and knows timelessly that which

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is, from our perspective, past and future, thereby avoiding the pitfall of the temporalist who, wishing to maintain the notion of a God who genuinely changes in response to prayer, is obliged to conclude that God knows neither our future free actions nor the consequences of His own actions. For Mawson, we are free at any time to make God have the atemporal belief that we do *x* or the atemporal belief that we do not do *x*. Aquinas would not have been happy with this Boethian argument, however, since it makes God dependent for His knowledge on human free choices.

In Chapter 3, Mawson argues that, while freedom to choose to be less than perfect is a good for us, it would be a liability for God. He gives examples of circumstances in which it might be reasonable to fail to do the best we could for someone in order to conserve time and resources for ourselves, or to fail to do what we ought for someone (in Mawson's example, return lost money) on the grounds that our needs are greater than theirs. An omnipotent, omniscient being would never be in a situation in which He would need to do the less than perfect action; thus, the ability to do so would be a liability for Him.

The first part of the book concludes with two chapters on God's accidental properties. In Chapter 4, Mawson argues that God creates the world in the sense that He keeps it in being, and that everything which is not God ultimately depends on Him. In the following section he discusses the Euthyphro dilemma, although it is not identified as such. He argues that God is the creator of value in that moral principles depend for their existence and character on His creative will; moral standards do not exist independently of God. This does not mean that God could make torture, for example, good, because '[w]e can just see that there's no possible world where torturing puppies is good' (74). Later Mawson argues that, given the way God has made the world, torture is 'of logical necessity bad' (79); since persons must be shown moral respect, God would not be able to do anything which would frustrate them unnecessarily in their flourishing.

In Chapter 5, Mawson argues that God does not give us a clear revelation of the truth of His existence and the nature of His will in order to maintain the 'epistemic distance' between His creatures and the truth of theism, thereby preserving our freedom to choose to be less than perfect. But God does reveal to us ways in which we can express our gratitude to Him as our ultimate benefactor, because this enables us to express ourselves as persons in relation to Him. If, however, the main purpose of revelation is to show us that we should carry out certain religious practices, this interpretation of revelation is significantly weaker than that held by many theists.

In the section on God as offerer of eternal life, Mawson argues for the plausibility of bodily resurrection. Against the anti-realist view that what constitutes personal identity is a linguistic construct and is therefore a matter of choice, he argues that it is a matter of fact whether it is the brain, heart, or something else which is the vehicle of personal identity, and that God can ensure that this

reaches heaven. Mawson argues that, if there is a God, He will bring about the resurrection of human beings, some higher animals, and those lower creatures whose permanent ceasing to exist would be bad for those who care about them. At the last judgement we will have a full understanding of God's existence and will not be able to refuse to accept Him. Neither will God refuse to accept us; even Hitler and Stalin will be sufficiently punished by being brought into God's presence.

Mawson, then, has argued that the concept of God is coherent. In the second part of the book he considers whether the concept is instantiated. He begins with a chapter on the nature of good argument. The chapter includes several paragraphs on the question of whether belief in God could be properly basic. Mawson claims that belief in God cannot be properly basic for anyone reading his book because they will be aware of arguments for and against the existence of God and will have thought about them. The argument is developed in an extensive endnote. Nevertheless, it seems unwise to dismiss the whole enterprise of Reformed epistemology without giving due consideration to a possible response. Reformed epistemologists, too, are aware of arguments for and against the existence of God, but find them inadequate as a basis for belief.

In the remaining chapters, Mawson addresses himself to the holder of the 'fifty/fifty position' – someone who has inductively sound arguments for both the truth and the falsity of theism. The chapter on the ontological argument considers the 'classic' version of the argument (with no mention of the claim, significant in the twentieth century, that there are two forms of Anselm's argument), and a version based on the notion of possible worlds. Mawson concludes that all versions of the argument fail to see the difference between manoeuvring within a concept and discovering whether the concept is instantiated.

The chapter on the argument to design (a description for which Antony Flew (*God and Philosophy*) and J. L. Mackie (*The Miracle of Theism*) should, perhaps, be credited) considers Paley's argument and the fine-tuning argument. Although Mawson is able to suggest responses to all of Hume's objections, even when these are supported by the theory of evolution, he claims that the fine-tuning argument falters both because there is no reason to suppose that fine-tuning is caused by God, and because fine-tuning could be explained by alternative hypotheses – Mawson suggests that it is simpler to posit that the order in the universe 'points to an infinite series of universes, each of which instantiates one of the infinite number of possible sets of boundary conditions and laws of nature' (152). Admittedly, this hypothesis posits more tokens – i.e. more universes – but there are fewer types – i.e. only universes, as opposed to one or more universes and God.

The cosmological argument, considered in the form put forward by Frederick Copleston in his debate with Bertrand Russell, is also rejected. The argument requires us to accept the principle of sufficient reason, but, since the majority of

those who specialize in quantum mechanics claim that certain happenings are genuinely random at the sub-microscopic level, 'it's not at all indefensible to posit that the Principle of Sufficient Reason does not hold without exception within the realm of physical stuff' (161).

Mawson regards the argument from religious experience and the argument from reports of apparent miracles as rather more promising. He argues that it might be reasonable to form a view about the existence of God on the basis of our own experience if this is not contradicted by numerous and consistent testimonies of others, or on the basis of others' religious or irreligious experiences if these are numerous and consistent and there is no evidence of an ulterior motive for persuading us to believe. The chapter on miracles focuses on miracles defined as transgressions of laws of nature and the objections of Hume. Mawson concludes that, although Hume fails to show that his reasons for the unreliability of testimony are applicable in every case, his 'contrary-miracles argument' does make it difficult for us to argue for one religion over another.

In his chapter on the problem of evil, Mawson argues that natural evil is the consequence of natural laws which are necessary if we are to have the freedom to be less than perfect to one another. Although this sometimes leads to great suffering, if this is seen as 'a prelude to an infinite afterlife of perfect fulfilment in God's presence', our freedom 'will be judged worth the suffering that accompanies it' (212). God would not be justified in allowing creatures to suffer to an infinite extent at any given time, but it is, Mawson suggests, 'obvious' that this does not occur in our world. These claims, while not uncommon, will be abhorrent to some.

In his final chapter, Mawson argues that it is sufficient to believe that it is more probable than not that there is a God, and concludes with 'a rather unusual argument for its being unreasonable not to have faith in God' (226). This argument, as Mawson admits, is a version of Pascal's Wager. He acknowledges that the argument is weakened if failure to wager in favour of belief does not lead to hell, but suggests that even a weak reason for doing something is still a reason for doing it. Following Anthony Kenny, he suggests that one can be helped to believe by praying for guidance and that 'as a matter of fact', this will 'increase one's chances of ending up believing that there's a God' (232). Leaving aside the questionable efficacy of this strategy, Mawson does not mention that a similar argument may be found in Pascal, who suggested that the would-be believer should live the religious life in its entirety. Only one of the philosophical difficulties with prayer is mentioned – and this much earlier in the book (37) – leaving us with several significant but unaddressed questions.

I conclude with a few minor reservations. The book 'is written with the intention that every argument in it be understood by everyone who might read it' (3). While students at Mawson's own institution (Oxford) may have little difficulty, there are some sections which may vex those of more modest ability. The first

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part of the chapter on miracles is particularly opaque, for example. Mawson admits this and offers clarification by means of an analogy (184–186) but, as in several other cases, the ensuing example is so complex and lengthy that the main points remain difficult to grasp.

Lastly, the book has a number of features which make it less helpful to the beginner in philosophy of religion. It has little sense of chronology – e.g. Paley is just 'a man called William Paley' (133) – a rather brief index, and a very basic list of contents. The chapters are divided into sections but these are, for the most part, untitled. The informal writing style is approachable, but some of the vocabulary is uncommon and/or colloquial, making the book more difficult for non-native English speakers. Nevertheless, the book is both lively and thought-provoking, and represents a useful contribution to the literature in the subject.

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John Foster *The Divine Lawmaker: Lectures on Induction, Laws of Nature, and the Existence of God*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Pp. viii + 191. £35.00. ISBN 0199250596.

The notion 'law' seems to have arisen primarily in social contexts, referring to rules set by kings or other powers that be. Speaking of 'laws of nature' thus invites the question whether the meaning of the term in the new context is sufficiently analogous as to say that there might be someone who has set these laws. This book deals with the argument from laws of nature to a giver of those laws. Foster holds that 'laws of nature' provide a strong basis for an argument for the existence of God. This is the topic developed in ten concise lectures, originally given at the University of Oxford.

Such an argument about the divine giver of laws, obviously of interest to readers of *Religious Studies*, requires a careful consideration of the notion of a law of nature in the first place, and this brings Foster to a discussion of the problem of induction. A common-sense understanding of laws of nature suggest that we conclude to their existence on the basis of regularities perceived in past observations. Foster makes clear that this cannot be a valid deductive argument, but that this does not work as an inductive argument either. An inductive argument from finite regularities to laws assumes the uniformity of nature, which is precisely what is to be shown and thus begs the question.

He then decides to bite the bullet, not providing an inductive argument for laws, but rather accepting the fact that induction seems to work as the basis for an argument that one might call 'transcendental' or, as he takes it to be, 'inference to the best explanation': induction works because there are laws (universal and naturally necessary regularities) which express the way things necessarily behave and interact in a regular way:

> … we can be justified in postulating laws as a way of explaining the regularities which have held good in our past experience, and can then appeal to the presence of these laws to justify the belief that the regularities will, or will on certain conditions, continue to hold for the unexamined cases (44).

He calls this the nomological-explanatory solution to the problem of induction. Thus, the law is itself postulated as an objective, ontological feature of the behaviour of individual objects; induction relies upon the postulated lawfulness.

The epistemological weakness of induction, as one may have extrapolated wrongly, is not resolved by this understanding of laws. Thus, we may have to revise again and again our understanding of the uniformity of nature, but that is not what is at stake here. The issue is whether there is such an uniformity at all, and thus whether we have any reason to avoid ad hoc strategies or a totally sceptic, agnostic attitude about cases not yet examined, including future events. Foster does consider some alternative grounds for accepting our reliance upon induction, such as past success and pragmatic usefulness, but finds them all wanting. He also comes to discuss possible objections, such as the question of whether one could not do without any explanation of the regularities, but finds such dismissal of the search for an adequate explanation unsatisfactory.

Once Foster has argued for his nomological-explanatory view of laws, he is able to move towards the more metaphysical issues, first of which is to argue for the character of a law as expressing a natural necessity. This brings him closer to discussions typical of the ontological argument (in its modal forms at least) than to the cosmological argument and the argument from design. The move is not immediately from laws to an explanation of lawfulness or of these specific laws, but via regularities to laws, claiming that we need a particular concept of necessity to make sense of the concept of laws of nature. 'It is an argument over the intelligibility of the notion of a law, and that, in the end, we can only satisfactorily deal with this problem in a theistic way' (79). The nomic necessity he explains as weaker than logical necessity, as there could be possible worlds in which these natural necessities (laws) would not be the way they are in our world.

In this context he comes to discuss David Armstrong's view. Armstrong has defended a similar solution to the problem of induction by appeal to laws of nature as forms of natural necessity. Armstrong has moved on to construe laws of nature as relationships between universals (all F's are R-related to G). The implied realism with respect to universals is one of the points on which Armstrong's view

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might be challenged. It did not become clear to me in what way Armstrong's approach offered any deeper understanding of the nature of laws, rather than offering a particular reformulation of it.

At some point, Foster seems to despair of whether a consistent notion of laws is possible. An alternative might be to abandon the role of laws in explanatory accounts. Foster considers explanations rooted in personal agency to be the only non-nomological explanation of regularities: 'So to the question ''Why are things thus regular?'', the answer in each case would be ''Because this being or these beings have deliberately made them so''' (128). The intentional acts of these beings would be free in the sense of not being constrained or determined. Foster then, in the eighth of his lectures, comes to present the theistic account, more or less along lines typical of Richard Swinburne and others. Foster opts for divine eternal temporality, as a timeless view of God would treat God as an abstract entity, lacking the concreteness of a personal being. In this lecture, he also cones to argue for the divine as being eternal, that is, without beginning or end of the temporal existence, and for the being's omnipotence and omniscience.

In the lecture on theism the issue of laws of nature, or of regularities, has receded in the background. The ninth lecture returns to this topic, by suggesting that there are, roughly speaking, three basic schemes for the creation: all of reality for all times at once created directly in a single divine master act, direct creation of events instant by instant, and initially creation with certain prescribed modes of transition from one stage to the next one. Only the third scheme has a causally significant role for laws; the first and second scheme do not need anything like laws, though humans might discern laws as reflections of divine consistency. This third model does allow for a consistent concept of 'law of nature'. Thus, the idea discussed a few lectures earlier that there is no such consistent concept, and hence that the only recourse we have would be personal explanation, is to be abandoned.

In its place, Foster sees a different argument as possible and successful. If there are laws, there must be something that imposes that regularity on the universe. He concludes that:

> … whatever view we take of the existence and explanatory role of laws, the need to explain the basic regularities leads us, in one way or another, to a theistic conclusion. If nomological explanations are excluded, there is a strong case for explaining the regularities by appeal to the agency of God. And if nomological explanations are accepted, there is a strong case for concluding that it is God's imposing of the regularities that creates the relevant laws. (160)

The third model (with laws created by God) is preferable, as it also allows for a meaningful concept of dispositions, such as a particular glass being fragile, even if these dispositions do not manifest themselves in actual events.

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I found this an interesting and well-argued book. However, I am not fully convinced that the emphasis on the problem of induction in the earlier chapters was really helpful to the main point. In scientific practice, laws of nature are not empirical generalizations and extrapolations, but creative constructs in which new concepts may be involved, invoking a world with additional entities and causal processes may be postulated. In fundamental physics, laws have become fairly abstract notions, even to the point where the notion of law itself dissolved into the concept of symmetry (though symmetries are closely related to conservation laws and forces). Thus, induction could have been less prominent, with more attention given to the practice of inference to the best explanation and other hypothetical-deductive models, and to the transformation of laws into symmetries in current theoretical physics. But that having been said, I found the discussion on laws illuminating and, by and large, convincing.

The later stage in the argument, from laws to God, raises other questions. Towards the end Foster discusses two models – direct creation of every event or creation of initial conditions and laws. Both lead to theism, but there is no reflection as to whether they lead to the same variant of theism. It seems that one model is quite voluntarist, and in its second version may well lead to occassionalism, as God creates everything instant by instant.

It also appears as if the author is less concerned about circularity than in his discussion of induction, as the understanding of God introduces assumptions that are precisely those that have to be argued for if this is to be an argument for the existence of God. Thus, the claim is strong ('we have seen that the only plausible way', 145), without giving proper weight to the various conceptual and substantial choices made on the way. I have not been convinced that a more modest conclusion, that upon a theistic perspective laws of nature can be understood as God's creation, would not have been more in line with the arguments presented.

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