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REVIEWS

David B. Burrell, *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions*. Pp. 225. £10.95 Pb. (Notre Dame Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994.)

This book is a sequel to the author's study *Knowing the Unknowable God* (University of Notre Dame Press 1986) which offered a comparative analysis of the medieval doctrine of God as expounded by Ibn Sina, Maimonides and Aquinas. Like its predecessor it is a comparative study in philosophical theology, which the author interprets as a 'subdiscipline of theology', since its method is 'tradition-directed', thereby locating philosophical inquiry into theological issues in the context of religious communities and their traditions. The starting-point of this inquiry is a two-fold dissatisfaction with tendencies in understanding freedom and creation in the modern West. The first is the tendency to interpret human and divine freedom as somehow pitted against each other so that God and human beings seem to be engaged in a continuous 'zero-sum game'. The second is the tendency to separate creation from redemption in such a way that creation is no longer understood as a gift, but as a given, which is to be approached in a naturalistic attitude. The strategy adopted by Burrell is to show how the understanding of creation is integrated in the comprehensive doctrinal schemes of medieval theological thought in Judaism, Christianity and Islam which are rooted in the communal practice of faith. The highly refined accounts of creation in the three traditions function in this way as the context for a conceptual description of the interaction of God and human beings where they are not perceived as competitors for a common space of action.

Burrell shows that Maimonides and Aquinas offer an interpretation of Genesis as a faith-assertion on the gratuitous origination of the world by God against the background of a neo-Platonic scheme of necessary emanation developed by al-Farabi and refined by Ibn Sina. The 'distinction' of God from the world (R. Sokolowski), which implies that God cannot be thought of as a being parallel to the world nor function as an explanation in the same sense in which certain aspects of the world might explain others, is preserved in each tradition by means of a conceptuality reflecting their respective foundational disclosure experiences. As Burrell illustrates especially with reference to Aquinas' metaphysics of act, the crucial conceptual innovations are to be seen as attempts at faithfully preserving the central tenets of religious tradition.

In his analysis of the way the relation between the creator and creation is described, Burrell compares the strategies to mediate the Qur'an's warning and guidance with the influence of Greek philosophy by contrasting the 'theological' approach of the *Mu'tazilites*, *Ash'arites* and al-Ghazali with the 'philosophical' approaches adopted by al-Kindi, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. The attempt of Muslim thinkers to offer a picture of divine hegemony throughout creation, which can both do justice to the Qur'an's authority and is conceptually coherent, has its parallel in the attempt of Maimonides to speak of a creator whose freedom has its paradigm in the covenantal relationship established in the giving of Torah. The particular problem of Christian thinkers posed by belief in the presence of God in Jesus was how to reconcile the freedom of the creator with the freedom of the creature, so that God is free enough to participate in creation without destroying its created integrity. Despite their differences the analysis of the three traditions points to a common feature: '… the way in which one is lead to conceive the creator/creature relation, along with the metaphysics one finds appropriate, will be a function of that tradition's reception of its founding revelation' (64).

The analysis of the creator/creature relationship leads to two further fields of inquiry: the notion of God's action in the world God creates and the understanding of the agency of creatures in creation. Burrell reconstructs Aquinas' picture of the unity of God's conserving action and God's creating, which implies that all of God's activity is to be understood on the model of creating as the bestowing of *esse* to creation. A corollary of this view is that any description of God's action as intervention is to be rejected since God as the 'universal cause of all being' (ST 1.45.1) already acts in every agent. If creating is the paradigm of God's action it would seem only logical to follow Maimonides' suggestion (as Aquinas does) to construe God's knowledge of creation not as speculative but as *practical knowing*: If 'God's knowing reaches as far as God's causality' (ST 1.14.11), it follows 'that whatever God brings about God knows, for God must know what God is doing' (72f.). Burrell approaches the question of creaturely activity from the apparent puzzle of Islamic thought that, on the one hand, God creates everything, including human action, while, on the other hand, humans must be the authors of their acts to such an extent that they can receive reward or punishment for their actions. He shows that the solution offered by al-Ashari that God is the sole source of all action, which is nonetheless appropriated by the creature in such a way that it can be praised or blamed for it, requires a categoreal distinction between divine action and all created activity. According to this distinction it is the exclusive characteristic of God's creative action to be capable of creating actions that properly belong to God's creatures. In comparison, the point which is articulated by Maimonides as the distinguishing characteristic of Jewish tradition is best expressed as a grammatical rule: Every description of God's creative agency must respect the freedom of

humans to respond to the gift of Torah. Christianity's insistence that Jesus' invitation to follow him by doing the will of God the Father amounts to fulfilling the created destiny of humanity is in Burrell's view consistently conceptualized in Aquinas' adaptation of Aristotle's means–end scheme. While means are a matter of deliberation and choice, ends are not, since they represent the created destiny of goal-seeking creatures endowed with freedom. According to this scheme the created will is a *moved mover*, activated by its object, which, ultimately, is the comprehensive good. On this account creatures are indeed capable of autonomous actions in a totally initiatory role, but this consists in the *refusal* to act in accordance with the good towards which humans are oriented. The upshot of this is an analysis of freedom as created freedom where 'the only absolute beginning available to human willing is self-destructive' (92).

This characterization of divine creative agency and human created freedom provides the backdrop for the technical philosophical considerations of chapter 7, focusing on the relationship between the two actors. Burrell shows that Aquinas' distinction and relation between primary and secondary causality can succeed in demonstrating both the primacy of the first and the efficacy of the second, while rendering superfluous all strategies which postulate a voluntary act of divine self-restriction (like the kabbalistic doctrine of *tsimtsum*), since God and humans are not conceived as operating, i.e. competing or collaborating, in the same realm. Similarly, Burrell shows that if the relationship between eternity and time is viewed in the context of an understanding of creation as bestowing of *esse* the eternity of the created source need not diminish the temporality of the created effects and *vice versa*. Employing this particular metaphysics of creation includes the need to give priority to the actual over the possible, since any account depicting the act of divine creating as an act of choosing to actualize certain individual essences among a range of possibles, cannot do justice to the unconditional character as the free bestowing of existence. The possible individual essences from which God chooses to actualize some must in some sense 'exist' before they exist – perhaps as ideas in the divine mind. Such a picture, however, is closer to that of a demiurge than to that of a free and sovereign creator. While the relationship between the creator and creation has critical implications for some metaphysical schemes, it also has constructive consequences for the depiction of the interaction of the two actors based on the pattern of love. For Maimonides the love of God represents the pattern of human response to God's giving of the Torah. In the Islamic tradition love can be seen as the pattern of the relationship between God and human beings as long as this does not imply any kind of similarity between humans and God, since the Qur'an states explicitly: 'for naught is His likeness' (42.11). In Christianity the love God has for creatures is made efficacious in Jesus as the Son (Word) of God who is the likeness of the eternal God.

This description of the relationship between divine and human freedom has numerous implications for the views of sin and redemption in the three traditions. For Israel the Torah provides the framework for speaking of sin and redemption since it offers the means by which to respond to God's gracious election in following or contradicting the Torah's guidance. In Christian theology Burrell points to Aquinas' view of a relationship of freedom and grace, based on the relationality of created existence. If human freedom is understood relationally as created freedom, grace can be understood as the fallen creature's restoration to a full personal relationship with God (uncrated grace), enabled by the gift of sanctifying (created) grace. Viewed from such a perspective, Burrell suggests, the notion of jāhilīya, denoting the ignorance and barbarism, which is the background for the warning and guidance offered by the Qur'an, seems to offer 'an analogue to the Christian doctrine of "original sin"', while the Sufi teaching of the progressive interiorization of the Word of God seems to supply 'a virtual doctrine of grace in Islam' (151).

In his concluding chapter Burrell argues that the doctrine of creation developed in the three traditions comprises three constitutive elements: a *source* of all being and meaning (God), the *word* of revelation pointing to God as the One who freely creates everything that is, and a *community* receiving and appropriating this revelation in reflection and celebration. This interpretation of the doctrine of creation, which takes up proposals from the recent work of Nicholas Lash, Burrell asserts, 'will be seen to require a perspective on the inner life of God which is either implicitly or explicitly trinitarian' (166). While Burrell acknowledges that the Christian move to 'articulate this pattern into the divinity itself', which he reconstructs from Irenaeus' response to the Gnostics, has tended to separate Christian teaching from the other two Abrahamic traditions, the presence of the structuring pattern of source, word and community in all three traditions is for Burrell an invitation to explore the analogous patterns they developed.

Although Burrell's study is a constructive proposal for interpreting the relationship between freedom and creation in the three traditions, there is an underlying polemic against two tendencies in philosophical theology which can account for the philosophical and theological barrenness it sometimes displays. The first is a style of inquiry which 'remains Eurocentric and confined to residual questions of inter-Christian debate' and so forfeits the potential gain of comparative inquiries. The second is characterized by an 'aggressive innocence of history' and so ignores the 'need of becoming literate in the history of theological refinement' (169).

Burrell's book is a powerful illustration of the philosophical and theological promise of overcoming these inhibiting features of work in philosophical theology. Philosophical theologians who are convinced of the advantages of Scotist metaphysics over Aquinas, or who see the strength of Luther's and

Calvin's view on freedom and grace compared with the Thomist view presented here, will take issue with some of Burrell's philosophical and theological conclusions. In view of the intellectual achievements of his approach they would be well advised to emulate his style of inquiry, even where they disagree with the results.

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Willem B. Drees, *Religion, Science and Naturalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) Pp. 314, £40.00 (US $59.95)

This book is, in essence, a study in what remains of (western) religion when the commitments, categories, and constraints of *hard* naturalism have their way with it. Drees draws on a wealth of research from historians, cultural evolutionists, brain scientists, theologians, philosophers, and physicists to develop a comprehensive, intelligent, and above all, *naturalized* account of religion. To penetrate (western) religion's self-understanding and identify its scientifically respectable soul, Drees deploys with resolute determination a very rigid and invasive instrument – what he calls (following Strawson) a 'hard naturalism'. This naturalism is *hard* in the sense that it is ontologically revisionary: it does not yield or accommodate itself to the manifest images that structure and sustain the framework of (western) religious traditions. Thus, in cases where the scientific understanding of reality conflicts with the ontological commitments underwriting the traditional posits of (western) religion, the appropriate canonical science must be given hegemony to explain (naturalize) or explain away (eliminate) the ontological troublemaker. However, despite religion's intimate involvement with manifest images, Drees insists that his hard naturalism is *not* irreconcilable with religion: any religious outlook which does not presume any inner-worldly entities, events, relations, or properties that are ontologically irreducible to naturalism's primitives, is compatible with his naturalism. Thus, if religion has a natural and therefore legitimate role in the economy of human knowledge, speculation, and hope (and Drees does not doubt that it does), it is primarily in relation to 'limit questions' – those questions that point beyond space-time. As Drees sees it, the notion of an atemporal transcendent deity who provides the final context of the natural world's temporality is a naturalistically innocuous idea, so it may function unproblematically as a regulative ideal, assisting in giving the human quest its indefeasible and therefore unending raison d'être. Bear in mind, however, that even if one rejects this interpretation of religion's residual role in human affairs, Drees's book is still well worth the read: on his way to this minimalist position, he discusses, clarifies, interrogates, and criticizes a vast amount of the recent literature on science/religion issues.

His first chapter offers a helpful typology of science-religion relations, defines what he takes the terms 'science', 'naturalism', and 'religion' to mean, and previews some of the issues that are broached later in the book. This chapter is essential for understanding the philosophical commitments that both underwrite Drees's particular version of naturalism, and constrain his reflections on science's relation to religion.

Chapter 2 is an examination of the different readings and stereotypes that have been given to two historical foci of science/religion encounter – the Galileo affair and the rise of Darwinism. Drees demonstrates that, contrary to the simplistic conflict-model of an advancing science forcing a retreat on religion, these were not merely conflicts between religion and science, but were also formative occasions of contention and change *within* religion and science. He also explores the limitations of those 'apologetic histories' that depict the rise of modern science as somehow essentially dependent upon certain strains of the Judeo-Christian view of creation.

Chapter 3 examines the impact contemporary science has had on notions of divine activity in the world, and questions the use that certain theologians have made of contemporary science (both in terms of using scientific models to delineate religious reality, and of using arguments for scientific realism to support theological realism). Here one finds some rather sophisticated and critical discussions of the notions that Polkinghorne (chaos theory) and Peacocke (top-down causation) use to establish elbow room for God *in* the world. Drees also questions Plantinga's reliance on evolutionary theory to criticize naturalized epistemologies that are *not* cojoined with theism. Drees concludes this chapter with the deflationary claim that although scientific theories may have some heuristic value for theological understanding, they do not, owing to their provisional character, lend any real credibility to theological notions.

Chapter 4 is where Drees poses the question: if one accepts that human religious and moral experience are tightly linked with both the structure of our brains and the natural and cultural forces operative in the environments of our ancestors, how does this affect the status we can legitimately ascribe to religion and morality? That is, he explores the implications for religion and morality which derive from the 'fact' that the believer's and the moral person's phenomenologies can be explained by a naturalist evolutionary view of the world. Here one learns that the implications are not of equal consequence: morality comes through the ordeal of naturalization looking more like its prior self than does religion. This is because moral experience has no built-in ontological commitments (here I believe Drees deems unworthy of discussion, or perhaps simply fails to recognise, the metaethical views of a growing number of ethicists). Hence, moral phenomenology can be wholly redescribed in terms of proximal neurophysiological processes under the impress of distal environmental pressures *without* impugning any of morality's

necessary ontological commitments. However, since (western) religious traditions interpret (at least some) religious experiences as distally caused by a transcendent being, the redescriptions that naturalization require (e.g., the elimination of all transcendent reference) amount (almost) to a pathologizing of religious phenomenology and behaviour. This engaging and controversial chapter ends with a brief survey of Burhoe's, Theissen's, Kaufman's, and Eaves's differing 'theologies of evolved human religion'.

The fifth and final chapter offers Drees' own interpretation of science, reality, and religion. Here he seeks to steer a middle course between those radical naturalisms that dismiss all forms of religion and the richer naturalisms that salvage a realist reading of religion only by minimizing the sciences. Drees' own brand of naturalism recognizes, as he put it, 'the importance of religion as one of the factors that shape [*sic*] our … view of the world'. However, I suspect some readers will recognize Drees' naturalism to have shaped his view of the world such that it no longer has room for a religion of any *real* importance.

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Leszek Kolakowski, *God Owes Us Nothing: A Brief Remark on Pascal's Religion and on the Spirit of Jansenism*. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995.) Pp. X + 238. £17.95.

This book is not about what it first appears to be about. The full title and the first part, on the condemnation of Jansenism, lend the impression that Kolakowski is offering a sociological speculation on a fateful historical irony. In a series of short expositions (the make-up of Part One), he communicates the gist of Augustine's polemic against Pelagianism and contends that the Jansenists were the rightful heirs of Augustine in their struggle against Jesuit modernists. When the Catholic Church came down authoritatively on the side of the Jesuits, it abandoned, claims Kolakowski, its centuries-long commitment to its Augustinian doctrines of sin and grace and thereby divested itself of the one theological tradition that might have stood in the way of 'the grim menace of the burgeoning Enlightenment' (p. x).

If this were a book about the role of religious conflict in the shaping of modernism, we would have a right to expect in the second part, whose topic is 'Pascal's Sad Religion', some further development of the primary historical thesis. But the interest of Kolakowski's Pascal lies elsewhere. He presents his Pascal as a Jansenist by personal conviction; but as a public intellectual, one who writes to persuade others, his Pascal leaves out the heart of the Jansenist credo. Nowhere in the *Pensées*, remarks Kolakowski, will you find an articulation of Augustine's doctrine of gratuitous grace, the teaching that

the distribution of grace is independent of any economy of human merit (in other words, God owes us nothing). Instead there is The Wager, which, as many a commentator has remarked, seems to replace a moral economy of redemption with calculated self-interest. Kolakowski never takes a position on whether The Wager subverts a morally based view of redemption, even more perhaps than would a doctrine of gratuitous grace. He simply notes that Pascal may not have had a good way to make Augustine's doctrine appealing in an apologetic context, a comment that is apt to deepen the puzzlement many readers will be feeling shortly into Part Two. What light does Pascal shed on the question of Jansenism's failure, if his main work of apology, the *Pensées*, is not especially Jansenist?

In the preface, Kolakowski assures his readers that, however important Jansenism is for understanding Pascal, he will not be reducing Pascal to Jansenism. Having read all of what follows on the spirit of Jansenism and the religion of Pascal, I find it hard not to read irony back into Kolakowski's assurance. If any kind of reduction takes place, it is of history to a person. Jansenism is important in Kolakowski's account because it is only against the backdrop of Jansenism that the limits of Pascal's apologetic genius can be discerned. By beginning first with history, Kolakowski nevertheless sets up his 'brief remark on Pascal's religion' to address a particular moment of religious inarticulacy, when genius of even Pascal's gifts lacked the words to free educated minds from the tyranny of modern diversions. Historians and sociologists will be disappointed. There is very little indication in the book that Kolakowski is interested in the fuller story of why Augustinian theology succeeds, at one point in his history, as a catholic alternative to an austere and elitist path to redemption, and fails, much later on, as a reaction to the very catholicity it once championed.

Ultimately Kolakowski's Pascal is less a window to the past than a cipher of the present. He reveals something of the pathos of the religiously committed intellectual, caught in the current of modernism. Today's modernism is ironically a disavowal of modernity, and all its pretensions to provide a comprehensive and unitary ideal of human reasoning. Kolakowski has spent the better part of his distinguished career inveighing against perfectionist delusions, whether they come in the form of social utopias or heavens on earth. He speaks out of a sense of the reality of sin and grace, but like Pascal before him, he has been more effective conveying the force of sin; in any age where efficiency is the sign of the rational, it will always be easier to believe in sin.

Hatred can be quite efficient, such as when it is allowed to mask itself as social reform or progress, and to make use of bureaucratic organization and technical know-how. Its final product is always death, an inevitability that is usually noticed only in retrospect. There is by contrast no economy of love, no way to translate a gift of life into a product. It is therefore no accident that

Pascal lacks an apology for grace. His wager on God must turn on faith, and not, as is sometimes thought, on prudence. To a heart moved by calculable interests alone, there would never be motive enough for wagering. It goes beyond efficiency to rely on a being who owes you nothing. If you do, you are either saintly or pathetic.

I suspect that faithful intellectuals have to live somewhere between the two. Kolakowski writes that 'every generation has a Plato, a Kant, a Pascal of its own' (p. ix). I would add that it probably has to have more than one. Kolakowski is a good Pascal for us, not least because he shows how not to be Pascal: 'Let us … admit that there is no idea, however attractive and however promising, that by its very content is invulnerable to the infiltration of evil and cannot become prey to the dark side of human nature' (p. 185). Not even the idea that we are vulnerable to evil.

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T. D. J. Chappell, *Aristotle and Augustine on Freedom: Two Theories of Freedom, Voluntary Action and Akrasia*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995.) Pp. 214, £40 hb.

The central thesis of Chappell's ambitious and clearly written book is that the discussions of freedom of action advanced by Aristotle and Augustine are more alike than has been previously recognized. Chappell endeavours to substantiate this view by advancing three claims: (i) that Aristotle and Augustine are more concerned to describe the condition of freedom than to prove its existence; (ii) that for both philosophers the activity of describing freedom is accomplished by a description of voluntary action; and (iii) that both philosophers conclude that the consequence of abandoning belief in freedom entails the abandonment of a belief in voluntary action. The upshot of Chappell's argument is a portrait of Augustine that locates him much more within the tradition of ethical rationalism that one naturally associates with Aristotle and his heirs rather than within the tradition of voluntarism. If Chappell is to be believed, the traditional reading of Augustine as a simple voluntarist is to be turned on its head.

In a brief review it is impossible to do justice to the complex philosophical and exegetical issues raised by this challenging thesis. I shall therefore only comment upon one issue that bears upon the central issues introduced by Chappell's provocative and welcome book. One of the pervasive contrasts that is usually invoked to explain the difference between Aristotle and Augustine on freedom of the will concerns their respective attitudes to what we might refer to as moral failure. For Aristotle, the exercise of practical reason seems to entail a natural tendency in agents to reasonable behaviour

and hence to virtue. Thus, if an agent has deployed effectively their skills of practical reasoning and if their character does not capitulate to any weakness of will, then we can expect that agent to act well. In other words, we can expect that agent to bring about the good. For Augustine, however, the active will is sometimes good but more often than not bad. We are free to act upon our *voluntas* (will), but *voluntas* is not free to will the good. That Augustine was less optimistic than Aristotle on these matters is usually explained by reference to his invocation of the Fall and to the persistence of sin. The fallen will for Augustine is an undeniable fact about the conditions of human life. Our divorce from God occasioned by the Fall has made the will, with its tendency to depravity, superior to reason.

Chappell addresses these differences in an interesting and suggestive way. He argues that the locus of difference between Aristotle and Augustine is not one of 'theory' as detailed above in the claims listed as (i)–(iii), but rather in Augustine's denial that the theory can ever fit the present fallen state of human nature. The freedom of the will in Aristotle renders weakness of will abnormal and, more controversially, impossible; for Augustine the facility which human beings possess to err is never a mystery to be explained away, it is an essential fact about the human condition.

There is much in Chappell's argument that is both plausible and commanding of the reader's time and attention. I felt, however, that its principal conclusion could be developed further by a more extended study of *De trinitate* in which Augustine argues at length that the primacy of faith is shown to be a necessary means to the recovery of God's likeness whenever it is conjoined to an understanding of the truths that repose in the Christian faith. The maxim that imperfect human beings cannot exist without some vestige of their original perfection is yet another example of the ways in which Augustine uses the Platonic legacy in order to explain the sinful nature of mankind.

Notwithstanding this minor plea for a development of the book's main dialectical structure, it is important to communicate the relevance and intrinsic interest of Chappell's essay. He has succeeded in presenting a lucid and credible case for a thesis which hitherto has not received the attention it deserves from historians of moral philosophy and moral theology. While both general and specific features of his analysis of the relation of Augustine to Aristotle will no doubt provoke critical scrutiny, the range and depth of his arguments and the daring unorthodoxy of their conclusions, will certainly serve to stimulate more exacting treatments of this topic in the years and months to come. For this alone Chappell's efforts are to be congratulated.

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