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Book reviews

Brian R. Clack *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion*. (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999). Pp. 200.

This is an astute account of Wittgenstein's two sets of notes on Frazer (published as *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*), one in which the author 'perspicuously represents' Wittgenstein's sometimes gnomic thoughts by setting them in the context of other thinkers of the period concerned with similar issues. It also succeeds very well as a general introduction to Wittgenstein, making it clear that these notes were a crucial part of his development. The story of Rumpelstiltskin and the nature of Wittgenstein's sense of its profundity (128) take us to the heart of the book. The issue is the connection between magic and metaphysics, and whether or not they both display a 'misunderstanding of the logic of the language'. Brian Clack is perhaps at his uneasiest here, with his series of conditionals about where Wittgenstein might be said to stand in relation to that solemn *canard* of philosophical anthropology, 'the failure to distinguish', whether it is a name from its object, or an ox from a cucumber or a twin from a bird. To 'fail to distinguish' is to *treat in the same way*, but is not yet or thereby to confound, since there may be some point. On the other hand we can often misunderstand the quick metonymies, the condensations, the primary process, of our own minds. On this latter ground Clack is sure-footed and excellent. He contends that though many followers of Wittgenstein are dismissive of 'metaphysics' in their writings, Wittgenstein himself treats magic and metaphysics in a similar way: human beings have in both of them made deep connections of thought and imagination, produced important symbolic representations, about which, nevertheless, they have also often been confused. Wittgenstein has been more interested in the profundity than in the confusion, and Clack brings this out well, showing quite tellingly how, in his remarks on the fire festivals, for instance, Wittgenstein sees some rituals as holding a mirror up to a terrible human nature that belongs also to us, and not just our ancestors.

Clack examines how commentators have tried to identify the differences between Frazer and Wittgenstein and finds wanting the dominant view that whereas Frazer is an (obtuse) 'instrumentalist', Wittgenstein is an 'expressivist'. Clack goes some way towards upsetting this particular dichotomy, and the related one between cognitivism and non-cognitivism, though he is perhaps not alert enough to

the concept of expression under which the expressivists may implicitly be working: ritual (like much art) is often a representation and (re-)enactment of the intentional object of the emotion it also expresses, and is to that extent a 'medium of expression' of a people's ideas and values (*pace* 166). Clack locates what he takes to be the crucial difference between the two thinkers in Wittgenstein's opposition to Frazer's thesis that ritual actions 'come about through a process of reasoning akin to hypothesis-forming and experimentation' (159). In contrast to this, Wittgenstein stresses the spontaneity of ritual action, as the natural behaviour of a ceremonial animal. Clack locates another main underlying difference between Wittgenstein and Frazer in the Spenglerian pessimism of the former and the Comtean progressivism of the latter. Frazer's positivist thesis is that humanity progresses from magic through religious belief to scientific thought, a position which reveals itself in Frazer's concern to *explain* the Arician rule of succession, and in his reflections on the 'false science' and 'abortive art' of magic.

The importance of the *Remarks* for the general philosophy *and* for the philosophy of religion starts to emerge in Clack's chapter on 'Perspicuous Representation' (*übersichtliche Darstellung*), in which he suggests plausibly that Wittgenstein's reading of Frazer helped him to work out this philosophical approach, which became central to the later work, 'arranging the factual material so that we can easily pass from one part to another and have a clear view of it' (cf 54), allowing us to 'see the connections', a method related to the therapeutic aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Clack draws attention to Wittgenstein's self-distancing from Russell's conception of philosophy as drawing on scientific method, so it is ironic that the sources of the method of perspicuous representation should be the scientists Heinrich Hertz and Ludwig Boltzmann. Wittgenstein is often concerned for a clarity in the face of which the philosophical problems disappear, and Hertz talks of the conditions under which we become 'satisfied' or realize the illegitimacy of a question that had concerned us, Boltzmann of how an appropriate description can silence a question. 'A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not *command a clear view* of the use of our words' (*Investigations*, 122). This 'bird's eye view' conception does not entail, as Clack says against Kenny, that the aim of philosophy is to give 'a very general view of the world, an overall understanding' (61). It is rather that clarity in particular cases is supposed to overcome particular confusions: a bird doesn't get to see the whole world, after all.

Clack offers us an illuminating account of the connection with Goethe's scientific method (66) – for Wittgenstein a method of conceptual enquiry – and his changing conception of the *Urpflanze*, making use of a paper by Mark Rowe which charts the development of that conception. The *Ur-phaenomenon* becomes the (heuristic) standard of comparison by which the generality of a claim can be tested, or similarities and differences discerned, rather than providing the terms of a precipitate general theory. Crucially, we have to include ourselves among, or at

least relate ourselves to, the phenomena, so that 'seeing the connections' includes seeing the connection with us. 'Crucially', because for Wittgenstein, one way of understanding rituality (as opposed to particular rituals, which depend upon context and specific cultural conditions) is to understand its connection with ourselves (cf 74).

Perspicuous representation is presented as an alternative to a Comtean-style explanation on the developmental model, which is 'only one way of organising the data', as Wittgenstein complains, one indeed which can divert our attention from their detail, and the ideas they make manifest, in our hurry to explain. But Wittgenstein is also opposed to the false science view of magic. Clack brings the two areas together by showing how for Wittgenstein the issue turns on the presumption of a form of explanation which views both ritual in general and magic in particular as forms of action based on a prior theory or belief at all (so whether the prior belief is *false* is only secondary). The crucial contrast is with what we instinctively and immediately do, rather than do on the basis of ratiocination, and in his chapter on 'The prohibition on explanation' Clack attempts to show how Wittgenstein's notion of a 'primitive reaction' is implicated in his view of religion. Clack remarks, 'We have seen how the language of pain is said to develop out of instinctual, non-linguistic behaviour. Similarly the language of religion (the articulation of religious *beliefs*) is an extension of certain primitive reactions, say a natural expression of wonder or of fear' (85). Clack is careful after this Winchian thought to deny that the religious belief is *equivalent* to the expression of wonder, but he does in this remark assimilate the language of religion to the articulation of religious belief. There is also a theistic assumption in the identification of the relevant primitive reactions as those of wonder or fear. Whereas a non-theistic Buddhist culture may have arisen out of a preoccupation with *causes*, a culture one might say of *reacting to the cause* which develops into an investigation of the conditions of human suffering.

However, Clack is interested in relating the primitive reaction view with the veto on explanation view, asking why the ritual impulse is not to be explained. It may well turn out that some primitive reactions can be 'explained' and others not, and the explanation that seems to work for one will not work for another. Surprisingly Clack draws a wrong conclusion from his account of ethology. He claims that for the ethologist primitive reactions are not '*ur*-phenomenal', since they *can* be understood in terms of something else: namely, in terms of the underlying theory of evolution' (90). Wittgenstein's point was that these reactions were ungrounded, ie not *based* on any prior belief or theory. This is not to say that they cannot be *understood* in terms of a theory (cf 134, where Clack appears to fall a second time into just this non-sequitur). Perhaps Clack is trading on an ambiguity in the notion of 'primitive', revealed in his talk of such reactions as '*Ur*-phaenomena', assimilating them to Goethe's notion of the *Urpflanze*. In the sense of the prefix '*Ur*', such phenomena would amount to a kind of original or source, like the primal

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plant, which could not therefore be explained by anything prior. If something was thus genuinely '*Ur*' then that would rule out, for instance, any further evolutionary origins. But primitive reactions are not primal in this sense. Such instinctive reactions for Wittgenstein are 'primitive' if they are not based on thought or belief etc. That does not rule out explanatory theories, and, as Clack makes clear, Wittgenstein seems simply uninterested in certain explanations, because he is interested in something else. Clack's own nicely turned example of the Green Man (110) is pertinent. One is aware of the vivid green of the forest in the spring, one is aware of energy and dangerous vital force, and one of the things that we do is personify. But why shouldn't that also count as a primitive reaction? It is also a process we can stand back from, recognizing, nevertheless, the perception of the phenomena that personification secures. More generally, should we agree with Wittgenstein or Rhees that a ritual like 'Carrying out Death' involves a misunderstanding of the logic of the language? It seems much more likely that a prior propensity to personify *causes* us to misunderstand the logic of our language, since we bring it to our philosophy and it leads astray our metaphysics. Similarly, is a 'false picture' (123) involved in scapegoat rituals? Well, only when people believe that the ritual will rid them of their sins. Otherwise it is a fascinating piece of poetic condensation under the pressure of urgent desire. Clack makes an excellent connection here between Wittgenstein's response to Frazer and that of G. K. Chesterton, so that we come to see another principle of unity between magical beliefs, ritual actions and folk tales. It is the idea of what grips the imagination in story and poetry. What is at issue is not belief, but ideas that exert fascination. If we take seriously the idea that magic and ritual are products of imagination and poetry (including dream and psychotic vision), then we can begin to see what is wrong with the Frazerian view that bases such practice in (false) belief. The belief that sticking pins in an effigy will cause someone harm is hardly formed ahead of the impulse to stick in pins, it is not *based* on the belief. Nevertheless it is easy to see how such a practice can be *sustained* by such a belief, arising out of the vividness and intensity of the impulse, how a real efficacy can be misunderstood and mislocated. Clack offers the example of the traditional belief that people die or are born as the tide ebbs or flows. Frazer is criticized for pointing out that the belief is an error based on misapplying the Law of Similarity, which Clack says will seem gratuitous to someone who is thinking in terms of the poetic. The imaginative connection between death and the ebbing tide forces itself upon the attention, but it impresses itself in the form of a *belief*, perhaps in the way that in certain cases of mental illness clearly symbolic representations take the form of delusions. The assertoric form is assimilated into that of belief, or as Clack puts it, following Chesterton, the thought is accepted before there is time to believe it. This is not quite right, the problem is that those who accept it do so unwittingly *in the form* of belief. The confusion lies in the form of assent. This is the proper place to locate superstition.

Clack makes telling connections between Wittgenstein, Spengler and Oakeshott. He refers to the latter's striking remark that religious belief provides 'a reconciliation to the unavoidable dissonances of a human condition' (162). But is this a *profound* remark? That clearly depends upon what is to constitute such a reconciliation, we need to be *shown examples* if we are to start to understand what the possibilities of reconciliation are. Clack is silent about that, in a way which is implicated in his assessment of Wittgenstein's saying and showing distinction. He suggests that the distinction is reflected in the remark that the life of the priest-king *shows* what is meant by the phrase 'the majesty of death'. Clack makes the familiar but hardly clinching observation that it is false that the values of a community cannot be stated but only shown on the grounds that Wittgenstein himself has no difficulty in 'describing' the relevant value as 'the majesty of death'. But this is a misunderstanding of the relationship between the phrase and the rite, which is an asymmetrical one – you do not see the force of the phrase unless you have witnessed such dreadful ritual enactment and had it work upon you, which shows you what the phrase means just in affecting you. One could well be disappointed by the conclusion that part of Wittgenstein's purpose 'is to show that a people's character is *manifested* through its religious practices and beliefs' (162) or that 'the collective religious practices of a people … make manifest the values and ideals which lie at that culture's heart' (163) – or one might be if one did not take seriously that distinction between saying and showing, since one might believe that one knew what certain values amounted to simply by having them described – rather than one's subjectivity being formed around or in contest with them.

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David C. Lamberth *William James and the Metaphysics of Experience*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Pp. xiii + 256. £37.50 Hbk. (US$ 59.95)

William James is widely regarded as a significant philosopher whose writing is engaging, suggestive, and insightful. What is not as well recognized is that underlying James's apparently diverse interests and ideas, often presented in an informal lecture style, is a coherent, systematic, comprehensive metaphysics. David Lamberth proposes to demonstrate that this is so. By examining James's writings during the last two decades of his life, Lamberth seeks to identify the basic components of his 'metaphysics of experience' and show their historical development. His purpose is primarily interpretive or reconstructive rather than critical, and, in particular, he wishes to stress the centrality of religion in James's philosophy.

Lamberth begins his account with a discussion of James's radical empiricism as presented in articles written in 1904–1905 and published posthumously as *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. He distinguishes and explicates seven components:

(1) the methodological thesis of radical empiricism tying philosophy to the experienceable;
(2) the factual thesis that relations are themselves part of experience;
(3) the metaphysical thesis of pure experience;
(4) the functional doctrine of direct acquaintance (immediate knowing);
(5) the functional account of knowledge about (conceptual knowing);
(6) the pragmatic conception of truth; and
(7) the thesis of pluralistic panpsychism. (4–5)

The last item, Lamberth acknowledges, is a later refinement not explicitly discussed in the 1904–1905 articles.

With this analysis of James's radical empiricist *Weltanschauung* in place, Lamberth maintains that the basic elements of this perspective can be traced back to 1895. James's 'The Knowing of Things Together' includes reference to the first five of the seven components mentioned above. Having established this early dating for the development of James's metaphysical ideas, he goes on to argue that aspects of James's view of religion in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) 'are consistent with and even dependent on radical empiricism and its thesis of pure experience' (5–6). He then provides a commentary on *A Pluralistic Universe* (1908), arguing that the refined radical empiricism which incorporates the pluralistic panpsychist position articulated in that text can be seen as 'James's final and most philosophically encompassing and coherent view' (204). It is a spiritualistic vision of reality, to be differentiated not only from scientific naturalism or materialism, but also from traditional or dualistic theism and absolute or monistic idealism.

Lamberth concludes his study by turning to contemporary issues. There is a brief, somewhat incidental, consideration and criticism of Rorty's non-realist interpretation of James's theory of truth and of Putnam's claim that James is committed to a notion of 'absolute truth'. He then offers some suggestions as to ways in which a reconsideration of James's views can contribute to current debates in philosophy and religion – leading us to appreciate the value of an integrative, inclusive philosophical system based on concrete, lived experience, and to think about religion in ways that avoid naive theological realism or reductive criticism.

Lamberth's book is detailed, often rather technical, extensively foot-noted – and quite convincing in its central argument that there is considerable systematic continuity and coherence to be found in James's writing and that his metaphysics merits our continuing consideration. Furthermore, he has illuminating things to say about many specific aspects of James's philosophy. Examples include his discussion of pure experience as both metaphysical and phenomenological, his

account of the history of the composition of the lectures constituting the *Varieties*, and his emphasis on the importance of intimacy as a philosophical criterion developed in *A Pluralistic Universe*.

The identification of James's mature philosophical view as 'pluralistic panpsychism' is debatable. While James was surely sympathetic to various versions of panpsychism and saw such views as akin to his, it is unclear whether he adopted this label for his own position – or whether it is a helpful or misleading label to use in referring to his metaphysics which affirms 'pure experience' as the basic reality, accounting for both mental and physical phenomena. Be that as it may, what Lamberth appropriately wishes to emphasize is that James offers us a more refined and richer account of pure experience in *A Pluralistic Universe* than he had previously developed, an account which stresses its dynamic and flowing quality. The active pulses of experience, now characterized as the 'manyness-in-oneness' transcending all conceptual distinctions, overlap and interconnect, continuously passing into each other. Reality is confluent from next to next. Our experiences are continuous with those in the universe outside us by which we are affected – and which in turn we affect. It is a universe 'in the making', and what will be is in part up to each of us. It is this metaphysics which provides a basis for James's views on religion, as Lamberth emphasizes.

Religion, for James, reflects our fundamental understanding of ourselves in relation to the reality that underlies all finite objects and events. The position of radical empiricism is that we are participants in a pluralistic, developing world of interrelationships. It is an open, melioristic universe in which we can make a difference, and a universe in which our spiritual yearning for harmony and intimacy can be satisfied. Such a view cannot be guaranteed logically; we must proceed on faith. And, as James repeatedly argued, faith – trusting that the universe allows for possibilities of meaning and fulfillment, and acting accordingly – is often a necessary condition for such fulfillment to be realized.

James discusses what is divine in terms such as a 'superhuman consciousness', a 'wider self', or 'finite god(s)' – terms that are rather vague and perhaps misleading. Just what does he mean? As Lamberth makes clear, James is not referring to an independent, omniscient and omnipotent deity such as is affirmed in traditional theism. I believe that these terms rather serve as images that express and evoke a vision of what cannot be adequately conveyed in conceptual categories: that the inmost nature of reality has affinity with our own experiences and moral aspirations; that our lives are continuous with a wider world, a world which we can embrace, a world in which we can feel at home and to which we can contribute. Following his own suggestion in Lecture 1 of *A Pluralistic Universe*, James's religious perspective might best be identified as pluralistic pantheism.

While Lamberth's account of the development of James's metaphysics is based on a detailed analysis of various texts that James wrote, there are two of James's books to which he surprisingly gives little or no attention: *The Will to Believe* and

Some Problems of Philosophy. Consideration of these works would give even further support to Lamberth's claims regarding the continuity of James philosophical and religious thought.

Lamberth notes that James's first mention of 'radical empiricism' occurs in the introduction to *The Will to Believe*, published in 1896, but he does not give much attention to the ideas James presents in the essays in this collection. Although these essays do not provide us with a systematically developed metaphysics, some of them do presuppose many of the fundamental ideas that James was later to explicate more fully. As James put it, his essays 'should be taken as illustrations of the radically empiricist attitude rather than as arguments for its validity'. Of particular significance, I think, is James's view of faith (or belief) in each of the first three essays – our faith that 'life is worth living', as he puts it in one of the essays, can help create the fact that it is. This view is entirely in accord with the 'faith-ladder' at the conclusion of *A Pluralistic Universe*.

Some Problems of Philosophy is the unfinished text that James was working on before his death in 1910 and was published posthumously. Although incomplete, it is perhaps James's most systematic metaphysical treatise, and, as an expression of his final thoughts on the subject, it is difficult to understand why Lamberth omits any consideration of it. Although the terms 'radical empiricism' and 'pure experience' do not appear – and pansychism is not mentioned – the ideas discussed with regard to such topics as percepts and concepts, the one and the many, novelty, and causality are altogether consonant with the major elements of his 'metaphysics of experience' that Lamberth has identified. The appendix that James asked to have published as part of the text is entitled 'Faith and the Right to Believe'. Here, in what might be regarded as James's last word regarding religion, he again reiterates the view of faith that he had presented in the much earlier *Will to Believe* essays – a view which can now be read in the light of his fully developed pluralistic and melioristic metaphysics. The continuity in James's overall religious perspective is undeniable.

Lamberth's study is a valuable addition to the growing body of secondary literature regarding James's life and thought. His sensitive and insightful interpretation of James's metaphysics should lead to greater understanding and appreciation of James's ideas ' and, I would hope, to a wider recognition of their continuing applicability and value in contemporary philosophy and theology.

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Scholten, Clemens *Antike Naturphilosophie und Christliche Kosmologie in der Schrift: 'De opificio mundi' des Johannes Philoponos.* (Berlin and New York NY: Walter De Gruyter, 1996). xi + 488 pp.

John Philoponos, who died in Alexandria around AD 570, is rightly acclaimed as one of the greatest thinkers of his – and arguably every – age, who related the biblical account of the creation of the world to the ruling scientific theories of his day about the origins of the cosmos. Yet he is little known and research into his work is neglected. Historical theologians consider him too concerned with scientific and philosophical matters. Some of his theological positions were also condemned as heretical (monophysite and tritheist). Modern philosophers and historians of science find his thought contaminated with Christian doctrine. Moreover, he lived in the early Byzantine period of transition between late antiquity and the Middle Ages. Studies like the one undertaken by Scholten are therefore rare. It is significant that his German translation of *De opificio mundi*, published alongside this study in the series *Fontes Christiani* (Freiburg: Herder, 1997) is the first ever modern translation of the work as a whole.

Together with that translation, this study can only be considered a landmark in the study of the cosmology of John Philoponos. Its scope is vast and its findings are innovative and groundbreaking. It is divided into two parts, the first concerned with introductory questions (*Grundlegung*), the second with executing the analysis of the work (*Durchführung*). The introductory part contains an overview of the history of research and a literary analysis of the text, its genre, its history of transmission, structure and style. It also discusses the possible purpose of the text, its date, sources, and problems concerning its study today. The second part provides a guide through the text. It is a mixture of commentary, topical essays (on angels and space, the elements, light, the sky, planets, spheres, heaven and earth) and source book. The reader may experience this at times as a weakness. Points may be missed, if the primary source is not ready at hand, while at other times one may feel oneself inundated with extended passages from related sources. The findings of this study, however, hugely compensate for such minor disadvantages. 'John Philoponos is the first who successfully responds to the hitherto dominant view among Christian theologians that the world is flat, a view he rejects, by developing a Christian cosmology based on the Biblical account of creation, which meets the criteria of the scientific theories of his time' (420). Yet Scholten thinks it would be quite wrong to believe that John Philoponos tried to harmonize, or reconcile, biblical faith with scientific theory. He was a Christian theologian who believed that only the biblical account could claim ultimate validity. For John Philoponos it was the biblical account which had to be, and could be, followed in the case of doubt. Where scientific theories ran into troubles, where they became contradictory or aporetic, the biblical account provided guidance. As John

Philoponos was able to show, it actually anticipated a number of theories, which were later reinvented by science. Scholten rejects the traditional labelling of John Philoponos as a Christian Aristotelian. He was a Platonist (in the Alexandrian tradition), although his thought, like that of many later Platonists, contains a number of distinctly Aristotelian elements. Like Plato and Aristotle he believes that there is only one cosmos, stationary and infinite, yet limited in space, except which there is strictly nothing. It consists of nine spheres, made of crystallized water and air, eight for the planets, a ninth one for the first heaven of the Bible. The space between the first and the second heaven is taken up by particles of the kind, of which the neo-Platonists thought the heaven is made. The sublunar space is taken up by the four elements. A vacuum does not exist.

Despite going into such detail in discussing the scientific cosmological explanations of his day, Philoponos's concern remains fundamentally theological. Far from merely reproducing the scientific account, he puts it in context, e.g. when he warns against the identification of certain material forces in space and time with angelic beings, or God. Yet it seems that theologians have never really taken on his challenge, but either given way to purely scientific explanations, or persisted in regressive positions concerning the validity of the biblical account. Thus ironically, while much of the scientific material with which Philoponos worked may no longer be valid today, a lot may still be learned from his way of dealing with it theologically. It is the unique achievement of Scholten's study to have pointed that out and put the theologian John Philoponos on the map.

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Hilary Bok *Freedom and Responsibility*. (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998). 220pp.

Bok defends an account of free will that is compatibilist – but compatibilist in a form that takes freedom and moral responsibility to be practical, not theoretical concepts.

Freedom is taken to involve some sort of availability of alternatives by way of action – an availability that is a condition of being morally responsible, so that when we act badly we can be fairly blamed for what we do. According to Bok, libertarianism and compatibilism, or at least libertarianism and conventional compatibilism, both make a similar mistake about freedom. They both see freedom as a concept that is to be employed from a theoretical standpoint, the standpoint we adopt when we seek merely to describe and causally explain actions as events within the world. But trying to make sense of freedom as a theoretical concept is disastrous. It leaves the free will problem entirely insoluble.

Conventional compatibilism maintains that actions are events like any other kind, with ordinary event-causes. But then, sticking as it does with the theoretical standpoint, this conventional compatibilism provides no satisfactory rationale for accepting the standard compatibilist conditional analyses of freedom. The compatibilist can offer to analyse freedom to perform an action A as a disposition or capacity to do A if one chose. But why is what one would do if one chose decisive to what one is actually free to do when one hasn't actually chosen? And what of the freedom to choose, which, the libertarian reminds us, seems presupposed, and which we have yet to explain? Nor does conventional compatibilism provide any very compelling rationale for ever holding agents peculiarly responsible for the outcomes of their actions. An action, as just another event in a world of events, is but one cause among the many that there are for a given outcome – in particular there are also the many prior causes of that action going back in time. Why ever stop at the action and its agent as the peculiar object of blame?

Libertarians draw a lesson from the failure of conventional compatibilism. Free and morally responsible actions must not be mere effects of other events. But free actions must not be random either. Freedom, as a theoretical concept, must still be explained in terms of causation – but causation of a new and different kind. Free actions must be agent-caused and not event-caused. They must be caused by the agent himself. Thus libertarianism. But again we meet with difficulties. Agent-causation is mysterious, involving as cause, not events that are empirical but an agent that is non-empirical. Appeal to agent-causation is also viciously regressive: for is not the causing of the action a further action into the causation of which we again have to inquire?

To understand freedom, we need to realize that the concepts of freedom and responsibility are ones we use from a practical standpoint – the standpoint which we occupy when when we are seeking to decide how we shall act, and are deliberating about which action we have most reason to perform. Freedom is a concept used by deliberators who are capable of determining their actions through practical reasoning; and it is used to pick out the relevant set of alternative options between which they can choose. Or as Bok rather laboriously puts it: 'For without some conception of which proposed courses of action we can legitimately regard as alternatives and which we cannot, we would be unable to determine which courses of action we can legitimately regard as possible objects of choice' (106).

Freedom to do A therefore comes to A's being such a deliberatively available option for an agent: which simply comes to its being true that the agent would do A if he chose. Where an agent is free to A, he also ipso facto counts as free to decide to do A (120). To be a free agent, then, is just to have a capacity for practical reason, and for action on the basis of that reason. As for moral responsibility, to hold oneself responsible is simply to examine one's past actions for discrepancies between one's practical standards – one's beliefs about what in general one has reason to do – and what one actually did, with a view to preventing such dis-

crepancies reoccurring. To be morally responsible then is for one to have the capacities that make such appraisal appropriate; and these are the capacities to reason practically and to decide and act on the basis of that reasoning – the very capacities that constitute one's freedom.

Bok fails to address one crucial difficulty in particular. Freedom, as understood by Bok, simply picks out those actions which we actually would manage to perform were our practical deliberations to move us to decide to perform them. And it is clear why, as practical deliberators, we might want to pick out such actions. They are actions which we have a clear capacity to perform on the basis of practical deliberation in their favour, and so which are worth considering in our practical deliberation on that score at least. Freedom, then, is just a capacity to act on the basis of prior action-rationalizing deliberation. But is this a notion of freedom as traditionally understood – a notion of control over action sufficient to ground moral responsibility?

Just as I can perform actions on the basis of deliberation about which actions are justified, so I can form beliefs on the basis of deliberation about which beliefs are justified. Why is the former capacity an exercise of freedom or control, but not the latter? For I take it that forming beliefs on the basis of deliberation is not an exercise of freedom. When I finish deliberating, it is not obviously up to me or within my control which belief I arrive at. Whereas once my deliberation is over it is very much up to me which action I perform. Bok might reply that our beliefs are not subject to our choice – to a deliberatively based decision making capacity – as actions are. But then nor are choices or decisions to act themselves: I can no more take particular decisions to act on the basis of deciding to take them than I can form particular beliefs on the basis of deciding to form them. Yet we think of decisions as free as belief formation is not. My deliberations leave my actions up to me; and they do so because they leave it entirely up to me which actions I decide to perform.

Again, just as I can with action, so too I can monitor past discrepancies between my beliefs and my general standards of rational belief. But in so doing, whilst I might condemn some of my past beliefs as irrational or silly, I am not obviously holding myself morally responsible for the beliefs. And this brings in a further issue. To understand moral responsibility we need to understand the related notions of blame and guilt. And blame and guilt refer to the breach, not merely of some general normative standard of reason (as through acting in a way that is no more than silly), but of an obligation. Blame and guilt refer to wrongdoing – and that idea of doing wrong plainly involves the notion of a breached duty or obligation. But no account is given by Bok of obligation.

The freedom that underpins moral responsibility is not adequately understood just as the exercise of a capacity for deliberatively based rationality; and the standards which we can be blamed for violating are not sufficiently characterized simply as normative standards or standards of reason. In supposing otherwise Bok

is not unrepresentative of the rather unreflective rationalism that currently dominates much American moral theory, and which so often advertises itself as being either (loosely) Kantian (as here) or as contractualist. The book is not, therefore, quite as new and as interesting as the puffs on the cover suggest. But it is relatively clearly written and it is relatively short.

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Stephen R. L. Clark *God, Religion and Reality*. (London: SPCK, 1998). Pp. ix+177. £17.99 Pbk.

In this short book Professor Clark sketches out an ambitious neo-Platonic metaphysic, as a defence of orthodox theism. It is unclear, however, for whom the book is meant. In the first three chapters Clark nails his colours to the mast of 'rational realism', claiming that rationality presupposes that there is a Truth independent of us, and a world impervious to human redescription. In these three chapters there is much good knockabout stuff: with a lot of quotation (something which characterizes the book as a whole), especially from G. K. Chesterton. Clark takes on Rorty, Cupitt, and others, and briskly attacks relativism, syncretism, and postmodernism. Even if philosophy can support Christian theism, as he thinks, Clark warns us that there are also the perils of bad philosophy to be reckoned with. Throughout the book he often reveals a distaste for many aspects of the modern world and for 'progressive' opinions.

The remaining hundred pages of the book constitute a closely reasoned neo-Platonic metaphysic, presenting afresh many of the insights of Plotinus and St Augustine. The argument is very concentrated and the style clotted, so that these pages do not make for easy reading. In a brief but tortuous chapter Clark argues that the existence and unity of the universe can only be explained in terms of the existence of an infinite and omnipresent Necessary Being. Then he restates Plotinus' argument that our ability to reason and to reach the truth presupposes that there already is an intellect knowing the truth: contra materialists and emergentists, our intellectual powers cannot have been generated from a soulless aggregate. There follow discussions of beauty, pantheism, C. S. Lewis's argument against Determinism, final causes, the Problem of Evil, revelation and reason, tradition and common belief in religion, and many other topics. The final chapter ('The Last Things') constitutes a tract for the times, in which Clark reminds us of the dependence of science on theism, of our duty to love the world that God has made, and of the faith of the three Abrahamic religions that God's purposes are not confined to this world.

The book is a very stimulating one, full of interesting ideas, and often displaying wisdom. The main problem I have with it is in seeing for whom it is intended. It

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is too difficult for beginners, as so much is compressed into a brief compass; and it is too short for more advanced readers, who will find themselves constantly questioning Clark's claims and the steps in his arguments. All sorts of questions are raised which, because of the book's brevity, cannot be treated properly. For example, in his short, Platonic, discussion of beauty Clark fails to consider the view of some modern thinkers that beauty can be objective and at the same time supervenient on other qualities. Similarly, the Problem of Evil is covered in two pages: Clark argues that the possibility of God's becoming incarnate is a postulate of reason, for only thereby could He know or understand what we endure; but he makes only a few remarks about why we have to endure it.

A lot of the book is based on work already published by Clark, while some of it looks forward, perhaps to further amplification. As it stands, it is a kind of prolegomenon to a future neo-Platonic metaphysic, or a sketch of one. As such, I welcome it; but, like Oliver Twist, I would have liked more, by way of clarification and explanation.

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Keith E. Yandell *Philosophy of Religion: A Contemporary Introduction*. (London: Routledge, 1999). Pp. xviii + 406. £12.99 Pbk.

The flowering of philosophy of religion in journals and monographs in the last thirty years has also resulted in a number of fine textbooks and introductions. Yandell's deserves a place with the best. When writing an introduction to philosophy of religion, the author faces a number of choices. Shall she write within a particular tradition, or in a context of world religions? Shall he survey a number of positions, with some argument on his own, or shall he focus on making arguments like a philosopher? Shall she compose an anthology of readings, or write in her own voice about various viewpoints? Yandell takes the latter choice in all three cases. He has written a book which makes substantial arguments in his own voice, while yet discussing major viewpoints. He engages the philosophical dimension of several major world religions, from within the analytic tradition of philosophy. Yandell focuses on six religious traditions: the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and the Indian traditions of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. In this way Yandell's text differs from several popular introductions in print today.

Given the choices he has made, Yandell succeeds admirably in the task of writing a contemporary introduction to philosophy of religion. The prose is clear and engaging, and should interest both the undergraduate and the more specialized reader. I certainly enjoyed reading the volume myself, although I hardly agreed with Yandell on every point. I take it that simulating interest and argument

in the reader are the chief goals of a text like this, not proving a point beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Part One begins with an overview of what both philosophy and religion are. I found Yandell's definitions to be reasonable, e.g., philosophy of religion is the rational assessment of religious claims, both their sense and their truth value. He then engages the various types of religions, religious experience and religious doctrines. His focus is on the true diversity among these phenomena, over against those who find religions to be, at bottom, about the same thing. There is a substantial critique of Hick which I found most convincing, and specialists would do well to consider it.

Parts Two, Three and Four cover the religious conceptions of Ultimate Reality. The focus is upon arguments for and against monotheism and non-monotheistic conceptions of the religious Ultimate. The debate between Abrahamic and Indic traditions, as Yandell lays them out, is especially interesting. Yandell champions monotheism, but clearly respects the other traditions he debates. These sections are well worth reading, especially if one is going to lecture on the topic of philosophy of religion in a world-religious context. Students should find them very stimulating. I did think that some of the arguments are rather too quick, but then remembered the purpose of the book. The book concludes with a section on the relationships between ethics, religion, and reason.

Those who teach courses with set texts will find this volume a good supplement to books which survey various options, or include anthologies of various views. Those who lecture on the topic will find it well worth the price of the book (which thankfully the publisher has kept low). In short, this book deserves to find its place on the shelf of many teachers and students of philosophy of religion.

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