flexibility by princes. For many other Christian political thinkers, the common good of society is itself subordinated to the supremely transcendent common good of the universe, rendering such flexibility problematic.

–V. Bradley Lewis
Catholic University of America

David Oliver Davies: *Milton's Socratic Rationalism: The Conversations of Adam and Eve in Paradise Lost*. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017. Pp. ix, 163. $90.00.)

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What is knowledge and how is it acquired? How can we gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and our broader position within the world? Can knowledge be discovered alone or does it require collective exchange, deliberation, and conversation? These are but a few of the many complex questions at play in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, but they are the central questions motivating David Oliver Davies's nuanced and thoughtful investigation of the epic poem.

In *Milton's Socratic Rationalism: The Conversations of Adam and Eve in Paradise Lost*, Davies reconstructs several exchanges between the two (arguably) main characters in *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve. In particular, Davies draws attention to the "distinct mode of deliberative inquiry" enlisted in these exchanges, suggesting that these dialogues draw heavily on the Socratic dialogues of Xenophon and Plato (xi). This deliberative mode of discourse is defined in the book as "Socratic rationalism" and can be traced to Milton's private studies on the "divine volumes of Plato and his equal Xenophon" following his education at Cambridge (134).

Substantively, the book examines four intimate but nonetheless profound moments of self and mutual discovery in *Paradise Lost*, two in book 4, one in book 5, and the last in book 8. It is worth acknowledging, Davies notes, that there is a final exchange between Adam and Eve in book 10 which occurs after the Fall and, accordingly, lies outside of the scope of *Milton's Socratic Rationalism*. These rich exchanges between Adam and Eve are Milton's creations, one of his many revisions to the biblical story of Genesis, raising complex questions on the implications of this amendment to the original.

The conceptual relationship among reason, knowledge, and critical exchange figures prominently in *Milton's Socratic Rationalism*. In particular, Davies examines the tool of conversation or, more specifically, the back and forth of questioning, as a tool for discovery. Adam and Eve begin ignorant

of themselves and each other, but they slowly gain a deeper understanding of themselves and the world that they inhabit through their exchanges. Not only do these moments help us understand Adam and Eve's nascent states of consciousness, capturing the rational intelligence in their state of innocence, but they also clarify the ways in which their rational capacities are cultivated through conversation, providing us with a dramatic portrayal of Milton's account of rational self-discovery.

The most compelling features of *Milton's Socratic Rationalism* are its thoughtful reconstruction of several intimate but nonetheless key moments in *Paradise Lost*, as well as its charting of Milton's reappropriation of ancient narrative, structure, and rhetorical devices. For example, Davies examines Eve's first moments of consciousness in her reflective encounter with herself revealing her surprising sense of self even at this nascent stage of development. Interpreters of *Paradise Lost* have been quick to note that this visual depiction of Eve at the pool evokes Ovid's tale of Narcissus in *Metamorphoses*, raising a significant interpretive puzzle for readers of the poem: Why does Milton associate Eve, the mother of mankind, at such a critical moment of self-discovery, with Narcissus, who is infamous in mythology for his vanity and narcissism? Davies argues that Milton is explicitly drawing on Plato's *Alcibiades I* by highlighting the shared subject, narrative framing, translation, and other rhetorical strategies of the two texts. On his account, Narcissus, Eve, and Alcibiades share a journey of self-discovery, beginning as self-regarding, egoistic individuals but gaining further insight into the significance of others specifically *through* conversation. Another compelling example of Davies's nuanced analysis is his account of a meaningful shift in Adam's insight, specifically his "sudden apprehension" of the appropriate names for animals. This critical moment of understanding points toward a dissonance between Adam's natural capacity of reason and the more advanced skills of recognition and classification, demonstrative of a deeper kind of knowledge.

While Davies offers a detailed and rich reconstruction of these striking moments in *Paradise Lost*, the implications of his analysis are often left unaddressed. For example, Davies focuses on the role of reason in *Paradise Lost*, but does not explore how his account of reason as conversing relates to other conceptions of reason in Milton's political thought, such as reason as an expression of choice as conceptualized in *Areopagitica*. Moreover, it is not clear how closely the exchanges between Adam and Eve are modeled on the Socratic mode of discourse. While Davies stresses that they do not share "similarities of dramatic situation or character," these are two profoundly important aspects of the dialogues that inform not only the rhetorical register of the dialogues but also the theories of justice, knowledge, and wisdom that the characters interrogate in their exchanges (17). What is at stake in tracing Milton's adaptation of Socratic rationalism in the exchanges between Adam and Eve, even if they do not share these important rhetorical and conceptual features?

These two conceptual ambiguities are demonstrative, perhaps, of disciplinary boundaries. Davies is a literary scholar, and as such, he might be less interested in the philosophic and political implications of his analysis of the exchanges between Adam and Eve. This is affirmed by the lack of a proper conclusion in *Milton's Socratic Rationalism*, a missed opportunity to address the broader theoretical implications of his otherwise thought-provoking reconstruction of these exchanges. How does critical exchange further knowledge? What does Milton's adept use of Socratic discourse reveal about his politics, his rhetoric, and even his theology? How does Davies's account inform the way in which we read *Paradise Lost*, as well as our broader understanding of Milton's poetic and political legacy? The nuanced analysis that makes up *Milton's Socratic Rationalism* would have been enhanced by further engagement with these critical but ultimately overlooked questions regarding the theoretical implications of Milton's inclusion of these exchanges, as well as the rhetorical register in which they function in the broader context of the epic poem. Despite these conceptual shortcomings, *Milton's Socratic Rationalism* is a thoughtful book which deserves the careful attention of scholars of Milton, ancient Greek political thought, literary criticism, and the history of political thought.

–Amy Gais
Yale University

Heinrich Meier: *Political Philosophy and the Challenge of Revealed Religion*. Translated by Robert Berman. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. Pp. ix, 200.)

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Since his *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), Heinrich Meier has established himself as at least one of the most serious philosophic interpreters of Strauss. *Political Philosophy and the Challenge of Revealed Religion* confirms this assessment with an incisive analysis of Strauss's *Thoughts on Machiavelli* and "Niccolo Machiavelli" (Strauss's latest piece on Machiavelli which first appeared in the Strauss-Cropsey *History of Political Philosophy*) and Meier's own continued exploration of the thought of Rousseau, through an interpretation of high points in the *Social Contract*. (Unfortunately, this reader has not yet had the time to read Meier's much more in-depth exploration of Rousseau's *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*. Robert Berman has very adeptly translated both of these books, including Meier's inquiries into Rousseau.) If Meier's earlier work deepened