

Book notes

EDITED BY MARTIN STONE

Eugene Thomas Long *Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion* 1900–2000. (Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy of Religion, vol. 1). (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000). Pp. xii + 538.

Part of the significance of this book lies in the fact that it is the trailer for what would appear to be a substantial series of monographs on movements and issues in philosophy of religion of the last 100 years. Page x contains a tantalizing outline of this series (to be edited by Long). Further details are awaited with interest.

The present book is a very substantial introduction to many of the movements and trends in the philosophy of religion which will surely figure in the series. It employs a very broad understanding of the philosophy of religion. The subject is initially defined as being concerned with such issues as 'arguments for and against the existence of God, religious knowledge, the nature and attributes of God, human destiny and the problem of evil' (1). But the survey chapters cover many authors who one would not normally classify as philosophers of religion, for example: Berdyaev, Evand Pritchard, Toynbee, Geertz, Sartre, Wittgenstein and Derrida. Long divides his survey into four historical periods (philosophy of religion: at the turn of the twentieth century, between the wars, after mid-century, at the turn of the twenty-first century). Each part then has separate chapters on a prominent movement or philosophical style in its period. The work provides judicious summaries of author after author within the overall narrative and its value for most readers will lie in its ability to fill in the gaps of their knowledge with movements and thinkers with which they are unfamiliar. But it is in a way unreadable. It provides little in the way of critical perspectives on movements and authors (designedly so: see 4) and little in the way of overall interpretation of the development of the subject. The authorial presence and voice are minimal. This means that the entire work is like a lengthy list. When Long is describing movements and authors with which one is familiar there is little to engage the attention, for he is not saying anything about them with which one could argue. Roll on the series.

[P. A. B.]

Christopher Stead *Doctrine and Philosophy in Early Christianity: Arius, Athanasius, Augustine*. (Variorum Collected Studies Series). (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000). Pp. xviii + 314. £55.00 (Hbk). ISBN 0 86078 830 X.

This collection is the sequel to Stead's volume of papers *Doctrine and Illusion in the Christian Fathers* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1985). With the exception of two articles, the remaining essays have been previously published. The central focus of the collection is the work of Arius,

Athanasius and Augustine. Contemporary philosophers of religion, particularly those who rally to the cause to self-styled 'Christian philosophy' in North America, will learn a great deal from Stead's erudite yet modest analysis of some of the central doctrinal claims of Western Christianity. Topics such as divine simplicity, theological language and the Trinity are discussed in full and engaging detail. Stead also discusses the Neoplatonism of Arius and Augustine, and a number of exegetical issues. Two previously unpublished papers on 'The intelligible world in Platonic tradition, Marius Victorinus and Augustine', and 'Augustine's universe', are also included. The collection is accompanied by a substantial introduction and is attractively bound by the publishers. It will be of interest to students of ancient philosophy, patristics and the history of Christian doctrine.

[M. W. F. S.]

Brian Davies OP (ed.) *Philosophy of Religion: A Guide and Anthology*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Pp. xv + 754. £17.99 (Pbk). ISBN 0 19 875194 X.

Brian Davies's large anthology provides a compelling, comprehensive, authoritative, yet accessible introduction to the philosophy of religion. Bringing together some of the best writing on the subject from classical, medieval and contemporary authors, he sets before the student the main questions and issues that Western philosophers have addressed when they have thought about religion. Divided into seven sections, each subject to further divisions, Davies's anthology considers the relation between philosophy and religious belief, the existence and nature of God, the problem of evil, morality and religion, and the question of life after death. Davies proves himself to be a conscientious and adept editor. He does not merely collate and compress several different texts around a common heading, but is at pains to set his individual selections in context and then guide the reader through the issues they provoke. Detailed advice on further reading is also offered. There are very few omissions in the collection. That said, it ought to be noted that the anthology does reflect a view of the philosophy of religion that is wholly indebted to English-speaking philosophy. For this reason, there is little mention of so-called 'Continental philosophy' and feminism (although reference is made in the bibliographical section to work on the philosophy of religion by feminist authors). These omissions, even if they could be agreed to be genuine, are very minor. For the result of Davies's considerable efforts is a very worthwhile anthology on the philosophy of religion. It will be appreciated by students and teachers alike.

[M. W. F. S.]