

forgotten translations and a larger overview of political economy in national traditions. Moreover, some of the theses contested here (the predominance of *doux commerce* and free trade at the birth of political economy) have already been challenged in recent scholarship. Yet it remains true that *Translating Empire* is an impressive and original piece of scholarship opening new paths in the study of the history of political economy.

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SCIENCE GUIDED BY HERESY

Arthur Pontynen and Rod Miller: *Western Culture at the American Crossroads: Conflicts over the Nature of Science and Reason*. (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2011. Pp. xiv, 411.)

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The full title of Arthur Pontynen and Rod Miller's book *Western Culture at the American Crossroads: Conflicts over the Nature of Science and Reason* indicates how far from their own field of art history they range in this ambitious study. For them the fundamental problem with what they call "modernist-postmodernist" (5) culture is its "denial of Being as such" (7). Acknowledging the value of the critiques of conservative thinkers such as "Henry and Brooks Adams, George Santayana, Paul Elmer Moore [sic], Royal Cortissoz, Irving Babbitt, Russell Kirk, Richard Weaver, and others," Pontynen and Miller nevertheless insist that their arguments "were typically denied the success they deserved because of the untouched dominance of science as *scientism*" (41). It is not enough, Pontynen and Miller argue, to merely reject attempts to expand the authority of natural sciences such as physics and chemistry beyond their particular fields into questions of morality and ultimate reality while accepting their findings in physics and chemistry. The authors go further, asserting the contemporary validity of a physics that would provide, for example, "a scientific understanding of gravity as the impulse towards completion as an act of cosmic love" (11).

Pontynen and Miller state that the "foundational principle" of the science they endorse is not restricted to Christianity alone: "Greek, Jew and Christian accept the foundational principle that ultimately the universe is informed by purpose and obtaining glimpses of that purpose is the role of science and reason" (24). It appears, however, that only Christian theology can provide the proper framework for the kind of "moral" physics they call for: "The Trinitarian reconciliation of eternal Truth with temporal material existence is grounded in a qualitative, indeed moral, conception of physics. It is Incarnational and Trinitarian" (138). In particular, they endorse "the

optimistic scientific rationalism of the Augustinian point of view" (173). Scholastic theology, with its use of Aristotle, is suspect because while Plato "is associated with abstraction, eternity, absolute Being," Aristotle "is associated with the organic, the temporal, and with becoming," making Aristotle a dangerous influence. As Pontynen and Miller put it: "Remove final causes from Platonism and Augustinianism and they cease to exist. Remove final causes from Aristotle and you have much of modernist philosophy—particularly Darwinism—whether physical, biological, or social" (246–67).

The authors' call for a science guided by "Incarnational and Trinitarian" theology seems vulnerable to criticism from the viewpoints of both science and religion. Four times Pontynen and Miller refer to Dante's conception of gravity—"for Dante, gravity is love" (224; see also 31, 69, 356), but they never explain how the notion of gravity as love as employed in a "moral" physics would make any difference in any scientific activity except speculation. One may think that a "qualitative, indeed moral, conception of physics" would be highly desirable, but until one can give examples of that kind of physics doing the work currently being done by conventional physics, arguments for replacing the latter by the former will remain unconvincing. One also has to wonder about a conception of Christianity in which God the Father is identified with "Being" and Christ with "Becoming." The authors object to Isaac Newton's "denial of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ" on the grounds that it results in "a conflation of Being with Becoming, transcendence with immanence, objectivity with subjectivity" (90). But if the authors' criticism of Newton is justified, one might also object to their apparent conflation of the God of the Bible with impersonal "Being" and Christ with the philosophical conception of "Becoming." Those who challenge the ideas of others about traditional Christian doctrines such as the Trinity and the Incarnation should first be clear about their own commitment to orthodox Christianity. In this long book, despite repeated calls for a return to "Trinitarian science and reason" (64), there are no affirmations of a belief in the personal God of the Bible or in the particular individual Jesus as the son of God ("Jesus" does not appear in the index).

Pontynen and Miller claim to be building on, and surpassing, the critiques of modern culture made by figures such as Irving Babbitt, whom they credit with an "impeccable and sophisticated" critique that, however, fails to provide "an alternative to the foundational shift in science (Bacon) and reason (Rousseau and Kant) that is a formidable obstacle to a renewal of a culture of responsible freedom" (314). Despite their stated respect for Babbitt, the authors provide a portrait that is misleading in a number of respects, based largely on their reading of Babbitt's central work, *Rousseau and Romanticism*. Pointing out, rightly, that Babbitt criticized the philosophical heritage of both Bacon and Rousseau, they sum up his position by stating that "Bacon and Newton represent the positivism of fact and Rousseau and Emerson the positivism of feeling" (310). A look at *Rousseau and Romanticism*, however, makes it clear that Babbitt himself distinguished

sharply between Newton and Bacon and between Emerson and Rousseau; it was Bacon and Rousseau, he believed, whose philosophies were at the root of the contemporary malaise. Though Newton is a controversial figure for Pontynen and Miller, he was not for Babbitt. And while Babbitt sometimes criticized Emerson's romantic leanings, he repeatedly emphasized his own intellectual indebtedness to Emerson (see, for example, his introduction to *Rousseau and Romanticism* [Transaction, 1991], lxix–lxx). The most striking omission, especially for commentators claiming Babbitt as an ally against “the positivism of fact” and “the positivism of feeling,” is the failure to mention that Babbitt proudly labeled himself “a complete positivist” in contrast to “the incomplete positivist, the man who is positive only according to the natural law.” In explaining his kind of positivism, Babbitt affirmed a view of science directly contrary to that held by Pontynen and Miller: “I hold that one should not only welcome the efforts of the man of science at his best to put the natural law on a positive and critical basis, but that one should strive to emulate him in one's dealing with the human law; and so become a complete positivist” (ibid., lxxi, lxxii).

Though Pontynen and Miller are primarily concerned with “conflicts over the nature of science and reason,” as their subtitle puts it, they make use of their professional expertise in art history to demonstrate the ways in which the arts, especially painting and architecture, illustrate reigning notions about morality and ultimate reality. The erudition of the authors in the most diverse fields is impressive, and their ambition is great, but it seems doubtful that *Western Civilization at the American Crossroads* will be recognized as a work worthy to rank with the critiques of figures such as George Santayana, Russell Kirk, Richard Weaver, and Irving Babbitt, let alone one that takes their thought to a higher level. Pontynen and Miller's concluding call to “rededicate ourselves” to an “optimistic ontology” by embracing a “purposeful scientific rationalism” that is “Incarnational” (365) seems likely to go unheeded.

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AN INVENTED TRADITION

Robert Meynell: *Canadian Idealism and the Philosophy of Freedom: C. B. Macpherson, George Grant, and Charles Taylor*. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011. Pp. xv, 303.)

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Jack Layton, who died in August 2011, was the leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada. In his foreword to the book under review Layton mentioned