

BOOK NOTES

EDITED BY BRIAN R. CLACK

Alexander Broadie. *The Shadow of Scotus: Philosophy and Faith in Pre-Reformation Scotland*. Pp. vii + 112. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996.) £17.95.

This book is an edited version of Professor Broadie's 1994 Gifford lectures delivered to the University of Aberdeen. Professor Broadie is well known to the world of letters as a distinguished historian of medieval Scottish philosophy. *The Shadow of Scotus* presents its reader with a pithy yet informative survey of the ideas of the Pre-Reformation Scottish philosophers John Duns Scotus, John Ireland, John Mair of Haddington and George Lokert of Ayr. Focusing on the concepts of faith, intellect and will, Broadie places the above philosophers within the framework of the dispute between nominalism and realism which so typified medieval philosophy and theology from the late thirteenth century to the dawn of the Reformation. Broadie's study begins with a fascinating discussion of Scotus' account of the will as the faculty of freedom. He goes on to detail the theological and philosophical problems which developed out of this account and then proceeds to explain how subsequent theorists such as Ireland and Mair attempted to address these problems. While the principal focus of the book is a study of the work of Scottish thinkers, Broadie never loses sight of the more general features of medieval philosophical culture in which these thinkers practised their art. To this extent, the reader receives a good deal of elementary instruction in the topics and issues of medieval philosophical theology. Of particular interest is Broadie's careful yet sympathetic discussion of the medieval notion of *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding) and of its role within the ongoing debate between religious faith and philosophical speculation in the medieval period. The book contains much to interest the beginner as well as those already acquainted with the stock issues and debates of medieval philosophy.

M.W.S.

Vincent Brümmer & Marcel Sarot (eds). *Revelation and Experience*. Pp. 180. (Utrecht: Utrechtse Theologische Reeks, 1996.) £26.

This volume collects papers delivered at the 11th Biennial European Conference on the Philosophy of Religion, held at Soesterberg in 1996. All the eight papers deal with the theme of revelation, and take the form of paired essays. Reiner Wimmer and Joseph Houston address the issue of what makes an experience revelatory; Simo Knuuttila and Luco van den Brom examine the relationship between language and revelation; and the contributions of Henk Vroom and Jörg Dierken focus on the implications of religious pluralism for the concept of revelation (can and should one judge the revelatory claims of other religions if they clash with one's own?). Among the best of the papers are the pair on revelation and gender by Janet Martin Soskice and Eberhard Hermann respectively. Soskice sensitively addresses the question of

whether women require a new revelation (she argues that they do not, but need to develop new ways of reading the Bible), and discusses in the course of her paper numerous fascinating episodes in theological history, such as the debate among the church fathers as to whether there would be women in heaven. Hermann's contribution is also worthy, applying to questions of gender and religious realism the 'view of life' theme he so memorably elaborated in his *Scientific Theory and Religious Belief*. The collection closes with a useful appendix by Gijsbert van den Brink on the state of philosophy of religion in the Benelux countries.

B.R.C.

Clement Dore. *On the Existence and Relevance of God*. Pp. ix + 143. (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996.) £35.00.

This is a bizarre book, though not so much in subject matter as in execution. Dore's aims are fairly standard in philosophy of religion. He wants, firstly, to establish that it is rational to believe in God (to this end, he defends a version of the ontological argument, and attempts a refutation of the problem of evil). Secondly, he wishes to show how God relates to morality, and his material on this subject constitutes the most interesting part of the book. Here, Dore advocates ethical supernaturalism, conceived as a kind of non-semantic attitude theory, based on the notion of God as Ideal Observer. Dore applies this ethical theory to questions of contraception and abortion. Finally, the third aim of the book is to show how God is causally connected to his creation, and Dore attempts this by defending a version of theistic (Berkeley-like) phenomenalism. Many a philosopher of religion will, no doubt, be fascinated by Dore's arguments, yet this book can hardly be seen as satisfactory. This is largely because the book seems to consist of a large number of disparate reflections, connected by no discernible motif. Hence, we end up with a curious potpourri of tenuously linked subjects (e.g. predestination, Kripke, contraception), arbitrarily thrown together with no apparent purpose and no overriding theme.

B.R.C.

Daniel L. Pals. *Seven Theories of Religion*. Pp. vii + 294. (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.) \$19.95.

In this very good book, Daniel Pals offers introductions to seven crucial theories of religion. He begins with the intellectualism of Tylor and Frazer, before offering accounts of Freud, Durkheim and Marx. These familiar theories are all handled well, but what makes the text most useful is the inclusion of three lesser-known approaches, those of Mircea Eliade, E. E. Evans-Pritchard and Clifford Geertz respectively. As well as offering clear expositions and assessments of each theorist, Pals also charts the changing face of the study of religion, exploring how the search for the historical origins of religion was abandoned, and how the reductionism inherent in Freud and Durkheim is overturned in the work of Eliade and Evans-Pritchard. Pals concludes, rightly, that while the earlier theories provide us with significant views of religion, the future belongs, not to general theories, but to the new particularist approaches. Written in a pleasing and fluid style, this book will be beneficial to a wide range of readers, and particularly to those coming to the subject of the explanation of religion for the first time. It would also function as a useful text

for courses on the theory of religion, where it will well supplement such works as Morris's *Anthropological Studies of Religion* and Clarke and Byrne's *Religion Defined and Explained*.

B.R.C.

Ilkka Pyysiäinen. *Belief and Beyond: Religious Categorization of Reality*. Pp. 177. (Abo Academis Tryckeri (Religionsvetenskapliga skrifter nr 33), 1996.)

The focus of this book is on the universal structural properties of religious doctrinal systems and their relation to human cognition, and it functions as a contribution both to the methodology of the study of religion and to the understanding of the phenomenon of mysticism and the concept of the sacred. Pyysiäinen locates the key concept of religious doctrinal systems in 'the sacred', which 'expresses those vital distinctions that enable a community to define themselves as a separate entity' (p. 21). The author provides a careful treatment of the sacred, showing how it serves as a system of categorization, principally related to bodily and territorial boundaries (here Pyysiäinen provides a fascinating account of the crucial role of the forest in the inward mentality of the Finnish). Religion, then, functions as a categorization of reality, yet mystics seek to go beyond the veil of categorization, and thus Pyysiäinen turns to an analysis of mysticism, which he explains in neurophysiological terms. The mystic uses his/her religious tradition to get 'behind' the veil of that system of categorization and to reach the 'unconditioned', and thus 'religious doctrinal systems contain both a specific way of categorizing reality and a way of calling this system of categorization into question' (p. 142). This book will be of interest to those with an interest in mysticism, the theory of religion, or Buddhism (for the author provides an extended treatment of the 'unconditioned' in the Pāli Nikāyas). And the book is admirable on a number of counts, principally Pyysiäinen's mingling of philosophy of religion and ethnography, his willingness to discuss neglected themes (folklore, say, or the effects of LSD), and careful etymological analyses of the crucial terms 'mysticism', 'sacred', and 'culture'.

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