

REVIEWS

N. Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.) Pp. x + 326. £12.95 pb.

Initially many might be tempted to equate Wolterstorff's topic with the subject of divine revelation; so the author opens by observing the difference, that speaking is only one aspect of how revelation might occur. Using Austin's notion of illocutionary acts as the basis for his discussion, he argues for two ways of conceiving how God might speak through Scripture. The less common he suggests is 'deputized discourse', where someone speaks on God's behalf, as in the case of the prophets; then, secondly, 'appropriated discourse', where God decrees that certain words spoken by others are to be taken as his own, the difference in the latter case being that the speaker at the time may have made no such explicit claim. Helpful analogies are drawn with the relations between secretaries and employers, ambassadors and presidents, and so forth. The argument is then developed in relation to a number of conversational partners, among them Barth, Ricoeur, Derrida and Frei. Barth is found quite distant from his own suggested model, since in effect on the Barthian view only Christ is God's speech and everything else derived reflection. Derrida is taken as a more extreme version of Ricoeur, with both seen as attempting to extricate the idea of text from any notion of reference. Though rejected, the views of both are handled with care, and even with surprising sympathy in the case of Derrida. A confusion is detected between the illusive search for authorial intention (which Wolterstorff also rejects) and intentional discourse, of which reference is an essential part, and which is publicly accessible. Meaning in context is, however, by no means the same thing as divine meaning. For its discovery a further level of reflection is required, and here Frei becomes an important dialogue partner. Like Frei, Wolterstorff wants to accept the primacy of the *sensus literalis* and, wherever possible, assume congruence between the apparent meaning of the text and divine meaning. However, he notes that, as Frei developed his own view, he moved to taking with increasing seriousness the authority of the Church's tradition of interpretation as providing the primary guide in identifying that further level of meaning, and this also becomes Wolterstorff's view. One must make what is said congruent with the meaning of the Bible as a whole.

Overall, this is an impressive work, carefully argued and well informed, not only philosophically but also theologically and more widely. There is, for instance, a clever use of the historian Simon Schama's inventive streak in *Dead Certainties* to obviate apparent discrepancies between the gospels and to speak of them instead as portraits of Jesus, where what is offered is what is 'plausible' rather than necessarily factually accurate. Occasionally, however, too much is attempted, particularly towards the close where the discussion is widened to include consideration of what form justification of God speaking might take, as distinct from its conceptualization. That could have been more appropriately handled in a separate volume, as the section is in any case too short, with its merely passing reference to warrant and other contested concepts, to advance the discussion much. Yet, despite the subtlety of his approach, I still find the two models Wolterstorff offers us deeply problematic.

Take first what is on his view the less significant of the two: deputized discourse. Certainly for most of Christian history there would have been little difficulty in agreeing to such a model, as much the same theology was applied in the reader's own day either to the Roman empire or the various nation states which supplanted it. But our own age is surely rather different, partly because we refuse to draw the implication so easily from judgement on nation to judgement on individual, but more importantly because we are much more aware of the complications of historical causation. Would not the two minor states of Israel and Judah have fallen anyway – sooner or later – to the larger powers around them, however their peoples had responded to the messages of the prophets? So, however, we read their pronouncements, it is hard to take them as deputized discourse in any simple sense.

Similar problems also beset his other model of authorized discourse. Consider how he treats the notorious end of Psalm 137: 'The church has rarely if ever concluded that, with these words, *God* was speaking that blessing. It has taken *God* to be expressing opposition to whatever opposes *God's* reign; and to get to that, it has always construed these words tropically as a metaphor cluster' (212). Historically, I think him wrong, but even conceding that point, are the difficulties not more substantial than he acknowledges? For even the metaphorical reading is surely troubling, since it seems to imply unqualified hostility, but has that not been one of the main problems of Christian history, the tendency to demonize one's opponents rather than realize that they also might have something valuable to say to us? The verse proposes the destruction of all that is opposed to God, not its conversion nor its transformation, which many (including myself) would regard as the better way.

This is far from rejecting entirely his two proposed images, but it is to question whether they would not have been better developed to suggest rather more indirection than Wolterstorff seems prepared to admit. With

deputies we are concerned to get the essence of what their superior wishes to communicate, and are seldom concerned with every word; indeed, it is quite common to find the deputy or medium off-putting. Yet to go wholly down that track would not quite work either, for sometimes what is of special interest is the precise nature of the relation between the primary and secondary agent: in the case of God that he appears to be taking seriously a situation very different from our own. It is surely because of that very particularity that quite often no universal message can be read immediately from the text. Instead, a wrestling with the dialectics of past context and present relevance has to occur, that means that God can speak anew but seldom with some straightforward identity between past utterance and present speech. Though there are some hints that Wolterstorff is aware of this problem, his argument would have been more convincing, had he faced such complexities in some detail.

DAVID BROWN
University of Durham

Donald Rutherford, *Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.) Pp. xiii + 301. £35.00 hb.

For the greater part of this century there has been a tendency among Leibniz's English-speaking commentators to select from his philosophical system only those elements which can be neatly transposed to the concerns of contemporary English-speaking philosophy. Thus, what Leibniz had to say on areas of the subject now demarcated as 'philosophical logic' and 'philosophy of language' has been exhaustively studied and widely applied to debates on possible world semantics and individuation. (We can see this trend beginning with Bertrand Russell, continuing with C. D. Broad, and reaching its height in the work of Hidé Ishiguro.) One of the consequences of this very selective approach to Leibniz's philosophical thought has been a stark neglect of the fact that Leibniz himself conceived of his entire project as a systematic unity in which theodicy, ethics, metaphysics and natural philosophy would all contribute to a single vision of the actual world as the *best* of all possible worlds.

More recent English-speaking Leibnizian scholars have attempted to address this imbalance by adopting a much broader view of Leibniz's 'system', a view which, it must be said, does justice to Leibniz's own approach to philosophy. Donald Rutherford's intelligent book aims to reflect the unitary nature of Leibniz's thought in terms that are faithful to the philosopher's intentions. It is a welcome addition to the literature, which might be said to act as a 'standard-bearer' for recent English-speaking commentary on Leibniz's work.

The book is divided into three main parts. The first part addresses aspects

of Leibniz's theodicy. This section will be of special interest to readers of this journal. In the first chapter, Rutherford tries to show that the infamous notion of the best of all possible worlds has a philosophical basis in Leibniz's concept of the metaphysical perfection of the universe. In chapters 2 and 3 this thesis is sketched in further detail as Rutherford displays how various aspects of the notion of the best of all possible worlds – the most possible perfection, harmony and order – can be reduced to the prior concept. In emphasizing the notion of metaphysical perfection of the universe, Rutherford argues that we can begin to see Leibniz's notion of the best of all possible worlds as a more coherent idea than earlier commentators had supposed. For now, we can see the notion as an essential element in Leibniz's metaphysics, a discipline which he identified as the very means by which we come to know as much as we can know of God's perfections.

In the second part of the book, Rutherford endeavours to show the unity of Leibniz's treatment of metaphysics. He contends that Leibniz held to the ideal of metaphysics as a demonstrative *scientia* throughout his philosophical career. In chapter 4, Rutherford argues that while there is some evidence for the standard interpretation that, for Leibniz, thought and perception differ only in degree but not in kind, a more plausible argument can be advanced that thought and perception differ in both origin and kind. In chapters 5 and 6, Rutherford holds that Leibniz does not change his view on substance as has often been supposed. Rather than change his mind, Rutherford claims that throughout his life Leibniz merely stresses different characteristics that any substance must possess. This last point ties together with Rutherford's further view that Leibniz's theory of substance does not wholly derive from his theory of truth.

In the final part of the book, Rutherford tries to show how Leibniz's view of nature can be understood as deriving from his metaphysics and theodicy. The system of monads should be taken as the metaphysical model of the best of all possible worlds. Rutherford offers the following interpretation of monads: monads agree in their *expression* of the universe. An agreement among the monads is one of the requirements for there to be perfection in the universe. In chapter 8, Rutherford offers a challenge to the traditional phenomenalist reading of Leibniz. While the author agrees that there are tinges of phenomenism in Leibniz's theory of matter, he denies that the theory amounts to phenomenism *per se*. Rutherford stresses panorganicism as a *via media* between necessitarianism and voluntarism. It is panorganicism, he argues, that allows us to describe the world in terms of both efficient and final causes. In the concluding chapter, Rutherford addresses Leibniz's position on the connection between the soul and the body. What is of interest here, is Rutherford's thesis that the doctrine of *vinculum substantiale* that appears late in Leibniz's career does not reflect the philosopher's real view but was advanced to appease a potentially troublesome critical constituency.

Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature is a learned and sensible book. Rutherford writes with clarity and his interpretations are always based on a sound knowledge of Leibniz's voluminous writings. Given the accessibility of Rutherford's exposition and arguments, this book will not only appeal to that community of scholars who trawl through the pages of Leibniz's large extant corpus, but it will also prove a useful guide for those discerning non-specialists who require a non-anachronistic, literate, and reliable discussion of Leibniz's 'system' of philosophical thought.

M. W. F. STONE
King's College London

Robin Le Poidevin, *Arguing for Atheism*. (London: Routledge, 1996.) Pp. 159. £37.50 hb, £10.99 pb.

Robin Le Poidevin has written a useful guide to certain metaphysical concepts introduced via issues in philosophical theology. Although subtitled 'An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion' several standard themes are not discussed, in particular: divine attributes, miracles, prayer, religious experience, and body and soul. The actual selection of topics appears to be governed by a principle suggested in the main title 'Arguing for Atheism'. Le Poidevin is concerned, in effect, with the question: should we believe in the existence of God as God is conceived of by theists, and as 'believing in the existence of' is understood by realists? His answer is negative; however, he also challenges the assumption that realism in religion is the only option. Instead, he recommends a version of instrumentalist fictionalism, giving more precise form to the sort of approach associated with Don Cupitt. In a final chapter he also invokes a metaphysical account of time as lacking temporal movement, in order to address our concerns about death and non-existence.

Part I (chapters 1–5) sets out the basic structure of standard cosmological, ontological and teleological arguments. Part II (chapters 6 and 7) discusses God and value. Part III (chapters 8–10) introduces fictionalism, instrumentalism and the static view of time. The coupling of these last two topics is somewhat artificial. Students might wonder what the relationship is between make-believe participation in religious worlds, and the unreality of temporal becoming. The point, I take it, is that the first allows one to enjoy religiously meaningful activity without a grounding in metaphysical realities; while the second shows how understanding (the) reality (of time) can make a difference to how one conceives the meaning of life.

Readers may not find this relationship so clear, or else be puzzled by it. Instrumentalist fictionalism appears to detach meaning from metaphysical reality, while non-perspectival temporal realism seems to reunite them. In the one case, peace of mind and the possibility of personal fulfilment are

secured by preserving the appearances; in the other they are achieved by denying them. My own estimate is that the inclusion of the final chapter on time indicates a personal enthusiasm and it might have been better placed as an epilogue outside the three-part structure.

So far as the argumentation is concerned, Le Poidevin does a good job of showing the basic structure of the standard proofs for and against the existence of God. It is also a virtue that he brings out something of the variety of commitments deriving from acceptance of a view of modality or causation. With regard to the latter, however, there is little discussion of, and certainly insufficient reference to, the range of positions taken on the nature of causal relations, including the non-trivial matter of the terms of these relations. Considering Richard Swinburne's appeal (in *The Existence of God*) to personal explanation at the point where explanation by reference to causal law gives out, Le Poidevin asserts that intentions are causes. He then counters Swinburne's denial that they are occurrent events by stating that dispositions are causes. They *may* be, but if so they do not obviously conform to standard conditions associated with efficient causes – for example, the ontological distinctness of cause and effect. A number of issues call for attention at this point: including whether there is to be a restriction on the nature of the relata of causation, and whether causation is uniquely efficient. Of course, an author can only do so much; but it would be as well in what is obviously aimed at a student audience to alert readers to the fact that relevant complexities remain to be resolved. The 'Further Reading' suggested at the end of each chapter tends to confine itself to citing items offering more detailed discussions of points presented in the text.

The most interesting chapters concern the possibility of religion without God, in a sense popularly associated with atheist theologians and disbelieving clerics of the Church of England. For my own part I find the motivation for this hard to fathom. Considering Christian theism, for example, it is inconceivable that St Paul, the evangelists, the Apostolic Fathers, the victims of the Roman persecutions, the council members of Nicea, Chalcedon and Trent, the Eastern and Western Doctors of the Church, Mother Julian of Norwich, and so on, could have lived, died and inspired others had they not believed in the real existence of God as something prior to and independent of all frameworks of theory and practice.

The point is not merely historical. It is said of a well-known religious atheist that catching sight of a Catholic Truth Society pamphlet on transubstantiation he dismissed it as 'pure Locke'. I take it that his disgust was not with the fact that the Catholic account of the eucharist invokes an unsatisfactory metaphysics of substance (for the record it is *not* 'Lockean'), but that it ties sacramental practice to belief in the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements, and explains this by reference to the replacement of one substance-pair (bread and wine) by another (flesh and blood). Cer-

tainly this may be opposed as metaphysics or as dogma, but it is hard to reconstruct the meaning of the practice in a way that detaches this from dogmatic beliefs about the nature of reality. Likewise with prayers for the dead, and petitions for the living: no God, no good.

Le Poidevin has a somewhat sociological view of religious practice, seeing it as a periodic activity, though one pervasive in its effects. I am not sure what to say of the average practitioner but I am sure that for the authors of the creeds and of other statements of belief, religion was a matter of worship of a God whose being was the source of their being. Thus the real terror of sin and of annihilation; thus the truly profound gratitude of the mystics. It may be time for philosophy of religion to equip itself with better analyses of religion itself. If Le Poidevin is right in his argument for atheism, however, that will be a matter of dissecting a myth.

JOHN HALDANE
University of St Andrews

Ellen Kappy Suckiel, *Heaven's Champion: William James's Philosophy of Religion*. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996.) Pp. xvi + 158. US \$28.95.

Ellen Suckiel's new book is an articulate and, on the whole, persuasive account of William James's philosophy of religion.

'Scientific rationalism's' narrow view of empirical evidence and restrictive account of scientific method prevent it from recognizing the legitimacy of religious interpretations of human experience. James's work is designed to show religious naturalism's inadequacy. He accomplishes this by removing epistemic obstacles to religious belief, supporting religious belief by both pragmatic arguments and empirical confirmation, and arguing that an acknowledgment of the epistemic possibility of religious belief is needed to 'better appreciate and actualize the significant moral possibilities which... only the religious point of view can generate and sustain' (14). Chapters 1 and 2 describe scientific rationalism's challenge to religious belief, and offer a sustained analysis of 'The Will to Believe'.

Chapter 3 defends James's contention that religious experience underlies, and is more important than, its propositional articulations. Much of our knowledge is 'preconceptual' or 'non-propositional' – for example, knowledge by acquaintance, practical know-how, knowing that 'something sounds like Mozart' or 'looks like a Kandinsky', recognizing 'the smell of cinnamon or the taste of claret', an intimation that music reveals the deep structure of reality, Friedrich Kekule's dream of 'a snake seizing its own tail' that led him to the discovery of the benzene ring, and so on (40). The importance and pervasiveness of preconceptual knowledge in general creates a presumption in favour of the reality and significance of preconceptual *religious* knowledge.

Chapter 4 discusses James's attempt to defend the cognitive import of our religious feelings and intimations against the attacks of scientific rationalists. He does this by arguing that science, too, has emotional and intuitive roots, and that 'any philosophy which renders deceptive our deepest feelings and responses would ... disable our existence' by leaving 'us bereft of emotional, moral, and volitional investment' (64). But Suckiel thinks that James's argument can be strengthened. The fact that autistic men and women can't respond religiously suggests that the capacity to do so is normal. If it is, then it is inconsistent to trust our other capacities while at the same time insisting that our (perfectly normal) 'religious intuitions, feelings, and experiences' are deceptive (67–68). (Suckiel asserts that this argument doesn't make the 'dubious' metaphysical assumption that Gerald E. Myers attributes to James, i.e. that 'our subjective natures, feelings, emotions and propensities exist as they do because something in reality harmonizes with them' [63]. But Suckiel appears to me to be mistaken on this point. For James *does* appear to make just this assumption in 'Reflex Action and Theism' and elsewhere. Furthermore, a belief that our cognitive faculties are reliable [non-deceptive] just *is* a belief that 'something in reality harmonizes with them'.

Chapter 5 argues that James was an anti-realist. Questions of truth and objective reference arise only within conceptual paradigms that are adopted for pragmatic reasons. Suckiel is well aware that, throughout his career, James said many things that appear to commit him to realism. Her ingenious response to this difficulty is that James's apparent concessions to realism are simply a rhetorical strategy. For example, James's principal concern in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* was to convince an audience of scientific rationalists that the decision for or against religion, or other metaphysical hypotheses, can't be settled on purely 'intellectual' grounds but only on pragmatic ones. Since this is true even if realism is correct, James saw no need to offend his audience by challenging their realist preconceptions. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James's intention was only to speak in favour of the religious hypothesis's empirical verifiability. This is perfectly consistent with his anti-realism because he construed empirical verifiability pragmatically (i.e., according to Suckiel, non-realistically). But since empirical verifiability is also consistent with realism, James saw no reason to introduce his anti-realism in this context either.

Chapter 6 persuasively argues that James's appeal to pragmatic consequences isn't narrowly self-regarding. For one thing, faith is an expression of our will, and James thinks that not only is our will the deepest fact about us, it may also be our most effective means of communicating with the deepest structure of reality. For another, the consequences which certify the truth of religious beliefs are successful adaptations to the spiritual universe. Suckiel argues that James's religious metaphysics helps explain his 'spiritual Darwinism'. God is finite and our faithful response to Him is needed to 'make

goodness prevail'. But God is also the embodiment of value. So, in so far as we create value, God Himself (as James says) draws 'vital strength and increase of very being from our fidelity'.

The concluding chapter discusses James's account of the religious hypothesis's empirical implications. James rejects any form of supernaturalism that makes no empirical difference. Absolute idealism, for example, is religiously inadequate because it only places a new interpretation on the facts; its God doesn't insert Himself *into* them. So what empirical difference does the religious hypothesis make? James's primary appeal is to experiences of 'communion' between the self and the 'higher universe'. But the *Varieties* asserts that this isn't sufficient to make the religious hypothesis scientifically respectable. The 'higher universe's' effects must be 'material' as well as 'psychological'. Yet even though James expresses confidence that the religious hypothesis has material consequences, he finds himself unable to specify them. Suckiel argues that (1) James's inability to do so is the result of the fact that there aren't any – 'personal communion' alone is essential to religion, and that (2) by the time he wrote 'Reason and Faith' James had seen this. More precisely, James saw that the religious hypothesis doesn't entail new empirical facts but, instead, calls into question naturalism's claim that the world of empirical facts is the whole of reality.

While Suckiel's book is generally excellent, I have three criticisms. The first is comparatively minor. The other two are more serious.

(1) Suckiel's argument is occasionally marred by imprecision. For example, her discussion of 'preconceptual knowledge' in chapter 3 blurs potentially important distinctions. Human sensory experience (as distinguished from sensory perception) may not be propositional but it isn't clearly non-conceptual (i.e. unstructured by concepts). Again, desires, intuitions, and intimations are propositional attitudes although the propositions they take as objects are often vague and imprecise. Intimations of a beyond or transcendent triggered by music, for instance, are intimations that there is a beyond or transcendent. Or, again, the dream of 'a snake seizing hold of its own tail' that led to Kekule's discovery of the benzene ring wasn't non-conceptual. (It was structured by the concepts of a snake, seizing, etc.) What Suckiel primarily objects to is the claim that 'our deepest sensitivities, preferences, and desires' are 'preeminently subject to validation by intellectual criteria alone' (47), and that all genuine knowledge is knowledge *about*. I agree with both points. But neither entails that knowledge doesn't involve a propositional component (let alone that it is non-conceptual). Belief in James's religious hypothesis, for example, has a propositional object (that there is a 'higher universe', and so on) but is not 'preeminently subject to validation by intellectual criteria alone'. My knowledge of my wife is 'passional' and not merely intellectual. But, on one widely received account, emotions incorporate propositional beliefs. Thus, my trust in my wife in-

cludes the belief that she is trustworthy. In short, Suckiel's claim that much human knowledge is preconceptual is both dubious and inessential to the main thesis of chapter 3.

(2) Suckiel argues that passages that appear to commit James to anti-realism are to be taken at face value while those that seem to commit him to realism are a rhetorical device. Her interpretation is ingenious, and has the virtue of taking James's thought seriously (as interpretations that ascribe a tolerance for contradiction to him do not). I am nevertheless unhappy with it because it ascribes a certain disingenuousness to James. For it isn't merely that James doesn't display his alleged anti-realism in such works as *The Will to Believe* and the *Varieties* (which would be permissible). He frequently talks, in these works, as if he *were* a realist, i.e. what he says implies (at least contextually) that he *is* a realist. What is needed is an account of James's position which accounts for the apparent inconsistency without either accusing James of tolerating contradictions or denying that one of the two sets of passages which give rise to the apparent inconsistency is to be taken seriously.

(3) I have two objections to Suckiel's final chapter. First, that religious experiences and the religious hypothesis they suggest call the sufficiency of the world of material facts into question doesn't entail that the hypothesis does not have 'material' consequences. Nor does James say that it entails this. Second, that religious experience (merely) discloses a larger dimension of reality that encompasses and overflows the world of material facts without materially affecting it is very close to the sort of interpretative supernaturalism that James rejects as religiously inadequate. On Suckiel's view, the only material effects that the higher universe has are those mediated through the actions of men and women who enjoy the appropriate subjective experiences (mystical states, conversion experiences, and the like). But this isn't sufficient to distinguish James's religious hypothesis from the absolute idealism and other forms of interpretative supernaturalism that he rejects. For they, too, can insist that placing a new interpretation on the facts transforms us and, by doing so, affects our activity and, through that, the material facts. What is missing from Suckiel's account is any assurance that all will be well with the world of empirical facts – an assurance which James appears to think is demanded by ordinary religious consciousness.

In spite of these criticisms, however, I recommend this book. Those previously unacquainted with the breadth, variety and depth of James's writings on religion will find a helpful and, on the whole, balanced introduction. Those familiar with James will profit from the book's many fresh insights.

WILLIAM J. WAINWRIGHT
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee

Lucas Siorvanes, *Proclus. Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996.) Pp. xii + 340. £35 hb.

In 430, the year of the death of St Augustine, the 18-year-old Byzantine Greek Proclus left his home to pursue the study of philosophy in Athens. Under the tutelage of the impressive Platonist Syrianus, he began to absorb the history of ancient philosophy. By the time he was 25 years old, he was recognized as the authentic successor of the chain of leaders of the school that held Plato as its founder. In this role he continued until his death in 485. Although there was a succession of scholiarchs up to the dissolution of the Academy in 529 by the Emperor Justinian, even some of considerable ability like the final one, Damascius, Proclus was the last truly outstanding figure in the 1000-year history of pagan Greek philosophy. His writings constitute a sort of *Summa* of his tradition. Nevertheless, he is also perhaps the least known. There are many reasons for this. First, is the obvious impediment of chronology. Proclus is far too late for the serious attention of most scholars of ancient philosophy and yet too early for medievalists. Second, his thought is compacted and obscure and highly derivative in relation to the tradition he appropriated in a way that bears comparison with only one other figure in the history of philosophy, namely, G. W. F. Hegel. Finally, although there are two extant systematic treatises of Proclus, *The Elements of Theology* and the six-volume *Platonic Theology*, much of his thought is contained in massive and relatively inaccessible commentaries on the works of Plato. For these reasons and others, it is not surprising that little serious philosophical work has been done on Proclus. The only comprehensive studies in modern times have been L. J. Rosán's *The Philosophy of Proclus* (1949) and W. Beierwaltes' *Proklos. Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik* (1965). A sophisticated, philosophical study of Proclus taking into account research over the last thirty years, especially on Plotinus, Porphyry, and the Athenian and Alexandrian School of Neoplatonism, is much to be desired.

Siorvanes' book aims to serve this goal. It begins with a chapter 'Proclus' Life, Times and Influence'. The chapter breaks no new ground but supplies much useful information. Unfortunately, missing from it is a basic orientation to the writings of Proclus, including what is extant, what is lost, and, roughly, what is contained in each. The bulk of the book includes four chapters, 'General Metaphysics', 'Knowledge and the Levels of Being', 'Physics and Metaphysics' and 'The Challenge of Reality: Stars and Planets'. The first two are very tough going, even for someone with a fairly good knowledge of the history of ancient Greek philosophy. They range over a large number of topics, including the hierarchy of being, the so-called henads, and the distinctive Proclean account of unity.

When confronted by a philosopher as obscure as Proclus, it is distressing, though not surprising, to encounter in a monograph mere paraphrase when

analysis is so desperately needed. Siorvanes is undoubtedly correct that metaphysics is the centre of Proclus' philosophy and, indeed, of Neoplatonism generally. But the author of this book treats the complex metaphysics of Proclus more in the manner in which a literary history might describe who did what to whom in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* than in a way that would be helpful to those seeking to understand why the Neoplatonists believed the things they did. For example, on the crucial and notoriously difficult question of Proclus' account of the priority of reality to thought, Siorvanes says, 'the object of thought has priority over its thinker and its thoughts. So far, the line of argument takes us to a world where everything is as it is because somehow a thinker has created it (54)'. This is not at all useful even if it can be construed not to be self-contradictory. Or, again, '[f]or post-Aristotelians, "being" was ambiguous (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7.1ff). On the one hand, it indicates this or that being, something which *is*. On the other, it encapsulates what things must have in order to count as beings: being-ness. To say that this or that thing *is*, includes the notion of its what-ness, by which it is identified: in this case its being-ness (161)'. Apart from the citation of a text from Aristotle as evidence for *post*-Aristotelians, such a confused and empty statement is exactly what the student of Neoplatonism does not need. In addition, although Siorvanes refers frequently to Plato, Aristotle, the Neopythagoreans, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Plotinus, Iamblichus and Syrianus, the discussion of the essential historical background to much of Proclus's doctrines is haphazard. Enough material is available to us now to make out better than the author does what were the issues that troubled Proclus and why he is variously led from time to time to support the positions of conflicting traditions.

The last two chapters of the book are more successful. In fact, they support the claim that the greatest contribution of late Neoplatonism is to the history of science, especially cosmology and physics. For in rejecting the authority of Aristotle and embracing their own Platonic tradition as actually a source of innovative thinking, they laid the groundwork for the likes of Kepler and Newton. The last chapter in particular is a useful introduction to the recent work on John Philoponus and the early pre-history of modern science. It seems fairly evident to this reader that the author is more at home in talking about issues like the void, the elements, and natural and planetary motion than he is in talking about cognition, essence and existence. It is equally evident that the author is not entirely comfortable with English and that generally he has not succeeded in conveying the subtleties of Proclus' thought. I think we are still waiting for the philosophical book on Proclus that Siorvanes perhaps hoped to write.

LLOYD P. GERSON
University of Toronto