

## Book reviews

Religious Studies 55 (2019) doi:10.1017/S0034412518000756  
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Paul O’Grady *Aquinas’s Philosophy of Religion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Pp. 264. £22.50 (Pbk). ISBN 978 0 2302 8517 0.

Aquinas has a complicated relationship to contemporary philosophy of religion. As a key historical enquirer concerned with questions bearing some similarity to those on our syllabus, he can hardly be ignored. Yet his presuppositions and concerns differ at important points from those usual in analytic philosophy of religion; to cite one relatively well-known example, his thinking about God and evil is framed by his rejection of the suggestion that God is a moral agent, which is foundational for much of the present-day literature. Negotiating these waters of similarity and difference is a skilled task, and there is room for a student-accessible introduction which communicates Aquinas’s ongoing relevance without forcing him into a mould better suited to Alvin Plantinga or Richard Swinburne. Paul O’Grady’s excellent little book achieves this.

The book first engages with methodological and historical questions. This provides the necessary contextualization of Aquinas’s work. There is a particularly rich discussion of the relationship between faith and reason, during which Aquinas is compared sensitively with contemporary views, and a brief but important discussion of the position, common in theology departments, that Aquinas was not a philosopher. The eye for contemporary salience persists as O’Grady discusses a selection of topics – theistic arguments, atheistic arguments, and the divine nature – always careful to note where and how Aquinas differs from present-day viewpoints.

There are some engaging discussions along the way. I was particularly taken with an excursus on naturalism, taking off from Aquinas’s acknowledgement of an Ockham’s razor type principle in *STh* I, q2,a3,ob2. The manner in which Aquinas does philosophy flies flatly in the face of the dominant naturalism, and this presents a challenge to the claim that he is enduringly relevant, whilst making him a possible source of challenges to that dominance. And indeed O’Grady, after discussing Bonjour and Borghossian’s anti-naturalisms, wants to

maintain that Aquinas combines the merits of both and that his philosophy of mind and language provides the materials for answering the naturalist.

Inevitably there are problems in the book. I was irritated by the identification of Wittgensteinian Fideism, a view supposedly held by Wittgenstein himself and D. Z. Phillips, as an approach to philosophizing about God opposed to that of Aquinas. There is now a wealth of literature, starting with Phillips himself and continued by authors like Mikel Burley, challenging the fideistic and non-cognitivist reading of this tradition. It is unfortunate that it persists in a book which acknowledges the work of Wittgenstein-influenced Thomists such as Herbert McCabe and Brian Davies.

In the great scheme of things, however, this is a minor quibble. This book is very good indeed. I would use it for graduate and upper-level undergraduate courses on Aquinas, and include it on reading lists more broadly. It deserves, however, a much wider readership than that.

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*Religious Studies* 55 (2019) doi:10.1017/S0034412518000744  
© Cambridge University Press 2018

Alan L. Mittleman (ed.) *Holiness in Jewish Thought*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Pp. x + 241. £65.00 (Hbk). ISBN: 978 0 19 879649 7.

What is holiness in Judaism? Is it one thing or many? Is 'holy', in this tradition, synonymous with 'good', or does it point to something in addition to, or different from, the ethical? Of what importance is holiness to Jewishness and of Jewishness to holiness? These are among the hard and pressing questions that *Holiness in Jewish Thought*, an interdisciplinary collection of essays, addresses. The volume consists of an introduction, ten essays and an afterword, and is organized roughly chronologically: beginning with Leviticus, it moves through the rabbinic period, the mediaeval Jewish philosophers, Hasidism, and finally on to modern thinkers.

In the first essay, Elsie R. Stern attempts to redress the imbalance in our readings of the theologies of the Pentateuch, which are heavily weighted towards the covenantal and anthropomorphic. She does so by attending to its relatively neglected priestly theologies. The priestly theology is the theology of the priestly source, the placeholder author of a number of biblical texts primarily in Leviticus. Rather than read a theology directly from these texts – a theology which is typically found 'alienating' (14) or 'theologically empty' (17) – Stern asks what the point of the