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Book reviews

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Peter van Inwagen *Ontology, Identity and Modality: Essays in Metaphysics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Pp. ix + 261. £45 (Hbk). ISBN 0 521791 64 2. £15.95 (Pbk). ISBN 0 521795 48 6.

Peter van Inwagen is one of the philosophers responsible for the recent interest in the metaphysics of material objects (See his *Material Beings* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1990)). *Ontology, Identity and Modality* is a collection of his essays on this and other topics in metaphysics. The title makes no mystery about the main issues. The first group of papers discusses problems of A-ontology and meta-ontology. A-ontology pursues the question of what there is, meta-ontology the methodological question how A-ontology should be done and the semantic question what its key-term 'existence' means (B-ontology is structural or formal ontology, a discipline van Inwagen claims not to understand, 2f). The second group of papers discusses ontological problems guided by the maxim: 'retain the standard view of identity, and try to achieve theoretical coherency by a suitable choice of metaphysical principles' (8). The topic of the final group of papers is the metaphysics and epistemology of modality. Should we think of possible worlds as spatio-temporal objects (concretism) or as proposition-like abstract objects (abstractionism)? Van Inwagen finds concretism unbelievable, opts for abstractionism and tries to deflect the main arguments against it.

Van Inwagen's papers are demanding and provocative. The title 'Why I don't understand substitutional quantification' characterizes van Inwagen's philosophical approach; (more apt titles for other papers might be 'Why I don't grasp the concept of a temporal part', or 'Why I don't know what the question of identity over time is'). While many philosophers working in metaphysics elaborate and refine existing ontological frameworks, van Inwagen questions their conceptual foundations. Typically, he gives a detailed exegesis of a philosophical text, assesses the statements made in the light of what we mean by the terms used, distinguishes different readings and argues for or against them in the light of the principles of classical logic. His main discussion partner and adversary is David Lewis (see essays 6, 10, and 12).

The first essay 'Meta-ontology', in the opening section, 'Ontology', argues that A-ontology should be done in the Quinean way: what we take to be there

becomes clear when we translate the theories we accept in first-order predicate logic ('the quantifier-variable idiom'). What is meant here by translation and how much quantifier-variable idiom should be revealed in a translation? van Inwagen addresses these questions and manages to give us an idea of how a metaphysician actually might put the Quinean thesis to good use. The next essay 'Why I don't understand substitutional quantification' is a criticism of the substitutional reading of the quantifiers and part of a defence of the thesis that there is no other form of quantification than first-order objectual quantification (3f). Van Inwagen argues that either substitutional quantification is simply objectual quantification over expressions, or one does not know what is said by a sentence with a substitutional quantifier (35f). The substitutionalist must reject the first option, hence substitutional quantification remains unexplained. The standard response of the substitutionalist is to point out that one cannot explain substitutional quantification without using a substitutional quantifier. Does this not simply beg the question? No, for the objectualist faces the same problem: he can only explain objectual quantification by using an objectual quantifier. If one wants to argue that substitutional quantification is unintelligible, one needs other arguments than those van Inwagen offers.

The third essay 'Creatures of fiction' is the only essay in the collection devoted to A-ontology. Van Inwagen argues that we have good reason to acknowledge creatures of fiction, posits of literary theory. When the critic says 'Mrs Gamp is one of the most plausible characters in Dickens's work', he refers to, well, a character or literary figure. We assume that there are characters when we talk and theorize *about fiction*, not when we 'consume' fiction. Van Inwagen's conception of discourse about fiction will strike someone who takes the notion of a pretence to be fundamental in an account of fiction as unmotivated. According to the alternative, fiction is constituted by doing as if one would tell a true story, warn someone etc. This suggests a unified approach to utterances like 'Mrs Gamp was a fat old woman' (inscribed by the author) and 'Mrs Gamp is one of the most plausible characters in Dickens's work'. The author pretends to assert something, we co-operate in pretending to accept what he says, pretend to feel fear etc. The literary critic also participates in this pretence when he theorizes *about* Mrs Gamp (Cf. G. Evans, *The Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982, ch. 10.3)). The pretence-theorist does not postulate fictional characters as theoretical entities of literary criticism. Van Inwagen does not consider this alternative, since he describes what the author of a fictional work does only in negative terms: descriptive sentences taken from a work of fiction are not about fictional entities and do not assert anything (42, 54). What is the author doing then? If we see him as pretending to assert etc., the above sketch of an alternative to van Inwagen's theory gains plausibility. The 'Ontology' section closes with van Inwagen's attempt to answer the question, in the essay of the same title, 'Why is there anything at all?', with the assumption that there is a necessary being.

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The next section, 'Identity', starts with van Inwagen's argument for the thesis that there are no arbitrary undetached parts. The argument goes roughly as follows: if Descartes had an arbitrary undetached part, say, Descartes minus his left leg, we could, by amputation, bring it about that Descartes becomes identical with Descartes minus his left leg. After the amputation Descartes and Descartes minus his left leg have the same size, shape, etc. But *two* things cannot become *one*. Hence, there are no arbitrary undetached parts. The argument applies the methodological maxim that the standard view of numerical identity should be retained even if this requires that we abandon firmly entrenched commonsense beliefs. Of course, one may abandon such beliefs for theoretical reasons, but why are our beliefs about numerical identity sacrosanct? Even if we don't have an answer to this question, the papers in the 'Identity' section help us to measure the philosophical costs of holding on to numerical identity.

Essay 6, 'Composition as identity' discusses whether (mereological) composition is a form of identity. As one might expect, van Inwagen's answer is negative. He argues for this on the basis of a sentence by sentence exegesis and criticism of passages in D. Lewis's *Parts of Classes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991). One way to express the composition-as-identity thesis is: 'The fusion of the *x*s just *is* the *x*s', or 'The *x*s just *are* the fusion of the *x*s' (*They* are *it*, *it* is *them*, 83). Van Inwagen asks: how can the 'is' of identity connect a plural and a singular term? Don't we have here a syntactic problem? (100f). My linguistic common sense sides with Lewis: 'The Beatles' is a plural term ('The Beatles *are* from Liverpool'), 'the most famous pop group' is a singular description ('the most famous pop group *is* from Liverpool'). But 'The Beatles are the most famous pop group and the most famous pop group is the Beatles' strikes me and other speakers as syntactically OK. Plural logic takes natural-language sentences and regiments them. One may expect that one of the new logical constants will be a pendant to the 'is' ('are') used in these examples.

The essays 7, 'Four-dimensional objects', and 8 'Temporal parts and identity across time' constitute a package. Van Inwagen argues that we need no more than numerical identity to understand the problems of change and persistence. There is no need to introduce other relations, which hold between temporal parts and connect them to four-dimensional objects (four-dimensionalism). (He will use a very similar strategy to argue in 'Plantinga on trans-world identity' that there is nothing like identity *across possible worlds*.) Van Inwagen takes the contrary assumption to be due to a misunderstanding of the syntax and semantics of expressions used in the description of changes (126ff). For instance, the problem of change is often set up in the following way: Assume that A in t_1 is F, and A in t_2 is G. Add Leibniz's Law: For all x and y: $x = y$ iff x and y share all properties. How can A in t_1 then be numerically identical with A in t_2? 'They cannot' seems to be the right answer. Hence, we must find other relations that hold between them. The problem is then to specify these relations. Not so! According to van Inwagen,

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the mistake in the set-up concerns the interpretation of expressions like 'A in t_1' ('*Paris in the spring* is nice'). Authors like Quine and Lewis take 'in t_1' to form singular terms of temporal parts from singular terms for ordinary material objects. In contrast, van Inwagen argues that 'in t_1' is an adverb. Hence, semantically speaking, the above sentence should be parsed as 'Paris/is in the spring/nice' (126f). This position is sometimes called 'adverbialism' in the literature (surprisingly, van Inwagen seems to take adverbialism and the idea that things have time-indexed properties to be mere definitional variants (113)). Adverbialists take 'is' or 'has' to be the locus of time indication. Essay 7 addresses objections against adverbialism, and tries to show four-dimensionalism to be implausible for theoretical reasons. A central objection against adverbialism goes as follows: adverbialism leaves us in the dark about the relation having-at-*t*. How can it be defined on the basis of the relation of having (a property)? One can define it using the conceptual machinery of four-dimensionalism in terms of temporal parts but this option is not open to the adverbialist. Van Inwagen answers this question by reversing the order of explanation: the relation of having a property is derived from the more basic relation of having a property at a time (116). If we say that Descartes is a philosopher, we are saying that Descartes is at every moment of an important class of moments in his life a philosopher. This helps, but it does not help enough. In usual philosophical terminology one can say that the statement that Descartes is a philosopher and the statement that 2 is prime say that the relation of having holds between an object and a property. But it seems at least strange to say that 2 is at every moment prime: 2 is prime, full stop. The adverbialist needs to say more about statements that are not significantly tensed. If van Inwagen is right, the ontology of temporal parts is not forced upon us by our common way of thinking and speaking about material objects and the changes they undergo. Still, the four-dimensionalist might claim that his ontology would be an adequate replacement of our ontology. But then he must explain what the things are that he takes terms like 'Paris-in-the-spring' to refer to. Van Inwagen gives Lewis's explanation of the concept of temporal part a close reading and dismisses it (129ff).

Essay 9, 'Materialism and the psychological-continuity account of personal identity', contributes to the 'Identity' section by applying platitudes about identity to the view, prominent in the literature about personal identity, that persons can swap their bodies. A materialist who believes that persons are bodies faces a formidable difficulty: if a person is a material object, it cannot be another one at a different time. But exactly this is imagined in the body-swapping experiments.

The following section, 'Modality', contains four essays written from the standpoint of an abstractionist *aka* modal ersatzist. 'Indexicality and actuality' clarifies Lewis's thesis that 'actual' is an indexical whose reference varies with 'the location' of the speaker. After distinguishing several reading of the thesis and

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either finding them not to be indexical theories at all (172f), or to extend the notion of context of utterance (174f), he homes in on what he calls the *strong theory*: at every world 'the actual world' is a rigid designator of that world. Let '@' be the name of the actual world, then the strong indexical theory makes '@ might not have been the actual world' a necessary falsehood. Lewis has acknowledged this point and distinguished between a shifty and a fixed sense of 'actual'. In the shifty sense, 'the actual world' can refer to a world which is not the world of the context of utterance (D. Lewis, 'Postscript to ''Anselm and Actuality'' ', in *Collected Papers I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 22). I have already touched on 'Plantinga on trans-world identity' when discussing van Inwagen's strategy concerning identity across time. 'Two concepts of possible worlds' is a detailed exposition and comparison between concretism and abstractionism. Concretism, the view that possible worlds are spatio-temporal objects, is incredible, but some incredible things are true. Van Inwagen aims to show that there are alternatives to this incredible but powerful position by strengthening abstractionism. According to van Inwagen, the abstractionist takes either states of affairs or propositions as primitives in his ontology. Possible worlds are then maximal *possible* states of affairs or maximal propositions (the abstractionist cannot have reductive aspirations). There is one spatio-temporal world and its states, properties, and relations make a certain maximal proposition true, while it could have made other maximal propositions true that are not true. Van Inwagen discusses illuminatingly the objection that we cannot understand the relation of making-true that holds between the spatio-temporal world and a certain maximal proposition (232ff). But problems with modal ersatzism might start earlier: the fundamental notion of states of affairs is introduced by Plantinga (see his *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 44) with just an example and Van Inwagen does not improve Plantinga's treatment. If there is the possible (but unfortunately still non-actual) state of affairs of 'Mark Textor being married to Jennifer Lopez', one wants to know whether this state of affairs involves me and Jennifer and if it does, how. The problem is pressing for an abstractionist who holds that states of affairs are simple. The abstractionist's proposition-like objects seem to me in need of much clarification.

The collection closes with a sceptical assessment of the utility of possibility claims in philosophical arguments. Drawing on Yablo's epistemology for modal beliefs which sees them justified by imagined verifications, van Invagen concludes that most of our modal beliefs are unjustified.

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Alastair Hannay *Kierkegaard: A Biography*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Pp. xvi + 496. £30.00, $39.95 (Hbk). ISBN 0 521 56077 2.

Although the life and writings of Søren Kierkegaard were matters of considerable public fascination in Copenhagen during his own lifetime, it was not until the early decades of the twentieth century that Kierkegaard's work attained both a wide readership and the attention of the scholarly community. The 'discovery' of Kierkegaard by David Swenson, who then determined to make Kierkegaard's works available in English translation, the interest of German and French philosophers at the turn of the century, and the enthusiastic reception of Kierkegaard by the German dialectical theologians after the First World War combined to put Kierkegaard on the map. An industry of Kierkegaard scholarship began, encouraged by Swenson himself and promoted further by Walter Lowrie – whose biography of Kierkegaard, published in 1938, became a standard reference for students of Kierkegaard. Then, in 1973 Josiah Thomson published another biography, in which the life and times of Kierkegaard were treated but without any extensive consideration of his intellectual achievement. Although many smaller biographical treatments of Kierkegaard have appeared since – some of them very good – the vast extent of secondary literature on Kierkegaard's thought and the flourishing of scholarly interest during the latter half of the twentieth century has surely warranted a new biographical study, and especially an intellectual biography, as has now been provided for us by Alastair Hannay. The concurrent appearance in Danish of Joakim Garff's biography of Kierkegaard confirms that there was a need to be met.

The purpose of an 'intellectual' biography, Hannay explains, is to enable the reader 'to grasp in recapitulation the genesis and substance of the subject's intellectual achievement' (viii). But there is more to it than that. Hannay means us not only to learn something about the writings of his subject but, through a study of those writings, to learn something about the author himself. There are difficulties here. If an author's works are read with a view to learning something about the author, might that not deflect us from the purpose of the works themselves? How much are the texts an exposure of the author himself? The question becomes particularly acute in the case of Kierkegaard, who published much of his work pseudonymously and with the posthumous request that not a word of those writings be attributed to him. Hannay is alert to this problem, but he contends that 'Kierkegaard deliberately and in the end provocatively exposed himself to the reactions of his contemporaries, many of whom firmly believed that they did see him in his texts' (xii). That contention becomes, for Hannay, a '*leitmotif*' of his account of Kierkegaard's life. Kierkegaard, Hannay believes, saw himself as taking

part in a drama unfolding on the European and world-historical stage. His own role was one of opposition to what was taking place in the intellectual life of Europe. Hannay further explains,

> If life was his topic, it was primarily his own life that provided the source material, and that life then became a self-written and self-produced stage-piece in which his own writings were the lines, and in the writing of which his own role, as he wrote it, became ever more clearly drawn. (xii)

That is the conviction around which Hannay's story is organized. It is a conviction that requires of Kierkegaard that he be not only a writer but also a director working at the creation of particular impressions and special effects centred on his own person. Admittedly, there is some evidence in the *Journals* in particular upon which one could construct such an account of Kierkegaard, but whether this *leitmotif* should be the organizing principle around which his whole life's work is to be understood and evaluated will surely be one of the most strongly contested features of Hannay's work. Such a strategy requires us to believe that Kierkegaard was essentially an egotist who was more concerned with his own world-historical role than with his professed intention to make clear what it was to be a Christian within a culture that had confused the matter. For this reader at least, that proposition is very difficult to accept. Closer to the mark is Hannay's appreciation of the importance of the concept of 'the individual' in Kierkegaard's work. 'The movement described by the whole authorship is *from* the public *to* the single individual', Kierkegaard remarks and Hannay notes (355). But again, the religious aspect of this movement is ignored. Vernard Eller may be overstating it a little when he remarks in his *Kierkegaard and Radical Discipleship* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968, 107) that *Den Enkelte* [that individual] is for Kierkegaard a synonym for a life in communion with God, but there can be no denying that the notion of the individual is frequently qualified by Kierkegaard as the individual 'before God'. Without that qualification the popular misconception of Kierkegaard as an individualist gains ground.

Hannay proceeds with his account of Kierkegaard's life in a roughly chronological fashion, although he is happy to divert from this course as and when his thematic concerns require it. Thus, he begins with a speech that Kierkegaard made as a student, the first occasion, Hannay explains, when 'the ideas that came to invest his works first made their entry on the public scene' (xii). Having thus set the stage, Hannay then offers, in Chapter 2, an account of the early life of Kierkegaard, in which family relationships are drawn and early contacts with Møller, Sibbern, Gruntvig, Martenson, and others are essayed. Particularly interesting is the treatment of the relationship of Søren with his brother Peter. Hannay keeps a constant eye on that relationship throughout his account of Kierkegaard's life, and Peter's worldly and ecclesiastical advancement becomes something of a foil against which are set Søren's own efforts to script a place for himself in history.

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We remain with Kierkegaard's student years through the first six of the eighteen chapters of the book, a rather lengthy treatment of the period before the authorship proper begins, but justified on Hannay's account because it is here that the seeds of later conflicts are sown – with Heiberg, with Martenson, and with Mynster in particular. Here as elsewhere, Hannay brings to light aspects of Kierkegaard's engagements with the intellectuals of his day that will serve future generations of Kierkegaard scholars well. The early conflicts with Martenson are thoroughly examined, and, though philosophically and theologically important, they are shown to be not without their petty aspects. The conflicts with Heiberg too are helpfully illuminated. Hannay attributes much of Kierkegaard's later polemic against Hegel to his early encounters with Heiberg and Martenson, and with the particular form that Hegelianism had taken in their hands. He suggests that under slightly different circumstances – presumably the existence of more likeable advocates of Hegel's philosophy in Denmark – Kierkegaard might have become a defender of Hegel. That proposition seems unlikely to my mind because it belittles, I think, the profound conflict Kierkegaard saw between the main lines of Hegel's philosophy and the Christianity of the New Testament which Kierkegaard set himself to defend.

Unconvincing too, in these opening chapters, is Hannay's portrayal of the youthful Kierkegaard's non-committal relation to the Christian faith as the beginnings of 'a lifelong ambivalence towards Christianity which allowed him to hold it at a distance' (39). Hannay maintains that line throughout the book, but he does so in open conflict with his acknowledgment that in 1838 Kierkegaard experienced a 'reconciliation' with Christianity (118). That strikes me as a determined antipathy to Kierkegaard's Christianity on the part of Hannay himself, borne out by his scant regard for Kierkgaard's own claim to be concerned primarily with the question of how one may become a Christian, and by his almost complete disregard of the content of Kierkegaard's several series of discourses which manifest a profound and sustained devotion to the Christian scriptures and to the Christ who is their subject. This reluctance to admit the importance of Christianity for Kierkegaard is apparent too in Hannay's rejection of Kierkegaard's own claim that even in *Either/Or* he had been 'religiously committed' (186). Hannay cites in support of his view the passage from the *Postscript* in which Johannes Climacus suggests that *Either/Or* had an ethical rather than a religious orientation (187), yet he fails to note Climacus' further claim in the same passage that when one has understood the existence-relation between the esthetic and the ethical – precisely the subject of *Either/Or* – one indeed becomes aware of the religious. Here and elsewhere, Hannay's rejection of Kierkegaard's own account of his authorship is a puzzling and dissatisfying feature of the book. As Julia Watkin has recently noted in her book *Kierkegaard* (London: Continuum, 1997, 1–3) it is an unfortunately common strategy amongst those who read Kierkegaard, to distort, to downplay or even to ignore his Christian commitment.

Despite this, however, there are places in his book where Hannay perceptively elucidates Kierkegaard's concern with the relation between philosophy and Christianity (see, e.g., 195, 229) and in which he comments helpfully on Kierkegaard's critique of such figures as Hegel and Kant. But again, it is puzzling to find him suggesting that 'we don't have to assume that Kierkegaard actually inhabited a religious life-view to suppose that he wanted his readers to see that such a life-view was the one his writings were trying to drive them towards' (175). The reason we don't have to *assume* it, I would suggest, is that Kierkegaard makes his own commitment to Christianity abundantly clear. Hannay would rather have it, despite occasionally admitting evidence to the contrary, that Kierkegaard was for much of his life simply defending the faith to which his father, Michael, was undoubtedly committed, but in relation to which Søren himself remained ambivalent.

There is no doubt that Hannay knows Kierkegaard's work well. His account of it is in some respects magisterial, and there is much to be learned from him concerning such matters as the engagement with Regine, the Corsair affair, the disagreement with Mynster, Kierkegaard's critiques of Kant, Hegel, Heiberg, and Martenson, and his concept of a life-view, to name but some aspects of Kierkegaard's work upon which Hannay's commentary will be of enduring value. The relation of Kierkegaard to Kant and Hegel and his concept of the life-view were extensively treated in Hannay's earlier work, *Kierkegaard* (London: Routledge, 1982), but Hannay is well worth hearing again on these matters. Indeed, it is on the philosophical aspects of Kierkegaard that Hannay is most sure-footed. This is true not only of the philosophical debates in which Kierkegaard engaged directly but also in the concluding chapter in which Hannay considers the aftermath and continuing influence of Kierkegaard, especially in relation to the existentialism of the early twentieth century, and to the rather differently oriented Georg Lukacs.

Hannay notes in this final chapter the difficulty of assessing Kierkegaard, and he rightly warns of the danger of supposing Kierkegaard to be a representative of all that *we* appreciate. The range of causes to which Kierkegaard has been enlisted, many of them in conflict with one another, surely makes such a warning apposite. 'The deliberate domestication of an author in this way', Hannay remarks,

> … can lead to absurd results. If, to be welcome in one home, the author must shed habits that make him welcome in another – and that process is repeated for as many movements as claim his sponsorship – in the end there may be no more to the brand name everyone cherishes than a heterogeneous sampling of what is local to themselves. (439)

The challenge thus made is that scholarship should endeavour to let Kierkegaard speak for himself. Does Hannay himself do that?

This reader is not so sure. I remain unconvinced that Kierkegaard is best understood as a dramatist and director who is concerned, above all, to write himself into the unfolding of European history. A much stronger case needs to be made, I think,

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for departing so dramatically from Kierkegaard's own 'report to history' concerning the motivations and the content of his work. For all that Kierkegaard's journal entries manifest considerable confidence both in his own intellectual and literary gifts, and that his contribution would be judged favourably by history, there is little sign in Hannay's account of the profound humility, especially in the face of 'the Christian requirement', nor of the concern to follow the guidance of God, that are also apparent on many pages of Kierkegaard's works. While not perhaps enlisting Kierkegaard to his own cause, Hannay appears reluctant to take Kierkegaard at his own word when describing what the intent of his authorship was.

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Laurence Paul Hemming *Heidegger's Atheism: The Refusal of a Theological Voice*. (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002). Pp. xi + 344. $45.00 (Hbk). ISBN 0 268 03058 8.

This book introduces some much-needed structure, sophistication, and close attention to textual detail into what are by now well-worn and increasingly convoluted debates about Heidegger's relation to theology and religious belief – debates which initially focused upon, and still typically circle more or less distantly around, the suggestion (first advanced by Karl Lowith in the 1950s) that Heidegger's conception of being is essentially a reconceiving or displacement of the traditional Christian conception of God. Hemming's contention is that these are entirely the wrong terms in which to investigate this relationship, and that they have systematically distorted our understanding of Heidegger, and of the possibilities he holds open for contemporary theology.

It is not at all surprising that the relationship between Heideggerian phenomenology and faith should preoccupy not only students of Heidegger's philosophy but also many contemporary philosophers of religion and theologians. *Being and Time* grew out of lectures on the Pauline Epistles (amongst other topics), and it repeatedly deploys a number of concepts – guilt, fallenness, conscience – whose religious (more precisely, Kierkegaardian) earmarks are hard to miss, and indeed explicitly acknowledged in the text and its footnotes, although often by way of strenuous denials on Heidegger's part that these terms retain their theological inflection in his phenomenological appropriations of them. His later philosophical writings constantly circle around conceptions of the divine, the sacred and the holy – whether in his invocations of 'the last god' in the 1930s, or in his essays from the 1950s and 1960s concerning the 'fourfold' of earth, sky, mortals and gods. And Heidegger's life was marked by his Catholic upbringing, a

period of time spent training to be a priest, and his striking influence upon such formidable theologians as Bultmann and Rahner. At the same time, however, he never wavered from his often-expressed conviction that genuinely philosophical thinking was and must be essentially atheistic, and from repeated criticisms of the philosophical tradition as mired in Christianized misconceptions of its basic subject-matter – as ontotheogical in a sense that his own thought was committed to destructuring. This simultaneous nearness to and distance from the religious is perhaps best captured in his early remark that when philosophy is properly atheistic, 'only then is it honest … before God'.

Hemming's book aims to provide a way of understanding this apparent tension or paradox in Heidegger's thought that will reveal its internal coherence, and suggest a number of fundamental lessons for contemporary theologians. The starting-point of his analysis is a distinction between the Christian God and the ways in which certain conceptions of the Christian God have been woven into human thinking. Heidegger's rejection of Christianity is a rejection of the latter – of any conception of God as the metaphysical ground or foundation of the world, and of human beings in particular. Here, Heidegger sees Christian theology as informing and being informed by ontology, the philosophical science of being. This science, originating in ancient Greece but fundamentally redefined in medieval Scholasticism, came to conceive of the cosmos, (beings as a whole, including human beings), as an effect or product, and of God as its producer or causal origin. Such a conception of the cosmos, by viewing beings as a whole as if they constituted one aggregate being, a single superlatively large or super-effect, occludes what Heidegger calls the ontological difference – the distinction between beings and being, between things and the how and what (the fact and the manner) of their existence. And the correlative conception of God as a super-cause of that super-effect transforms Him into a superlatively powerful kind of being, and reduces him to the supplier of an essentially metaphysical need – the answer to a philosopher's misbegotten question about beings in general and about human beings in particular.

What the existential analytic of *Being and Time* reveals, on Hemming's account, is that human beings in their being (*Dasein*) are not grounded or founded outside themselves – in God, or indeed in any other external or transcendental source or origin. They are rather groundless: such moods as anxiety reveal that the structures of meaning which underpin our essentially worldly modes of existence, and hence our capacity to go outside ourselves in comprehending and questioning the beings we encounter, are themselves without underpinning; our capacity for transcendence has no transcendent ground. The ways in which things reveal themselves to us and matter to us are not ours simply to accept or reject – they constitute a field of significance into which individuals and groups are unavoidably thrown; but they have no basis beyond or outside the distinctively human mode of being. It follows that the human self must relate to

itself as questionable; how it is to live, indeed whether it is to continue to live, are not determined for it by its relation to anything outside it, but are rather settled through its existence – by the ways in which it chooses to answer the question that its existence inevitably poses to itself. Our existence, one might say, is no more than a fact; it is given to us (we do not choose whether and when to exist), but its meaning or significance constitutes itself only through our asking what that meaning might be, and through our answering that question in how we live – in how we orient ourselves temporally, in our existential realization of some present possibility that the past makes possible for us, in every future moment of our finite lives (our Being-towards-death).

This disclosure of the finitude of the human subject, its essential relation to nothingness (in death, in time, in choice), renders philosophically misplaced any attempt to ground the self (or its world – since *Dasein* is essentially Being-in-the-world) in God as its prior cause, and hence generates a radical critique not only of theology prosecuted under the sway of modern metaphysics, but also of modern metaphysics as prosecuted under the sway of Christianity. It also generates a critique of any modern metaphysics of the subject as itself a ground – of value, of knowledge, or of the world. To say that the self grounds itself is really just another way of saying that it is groundless, but a way which misleadingly suggests that its self-grounding might somehow be or be put beyond self-questioning, when such self-questioning is the only possible mode of that self-grounding. Hence, Hemming argues that Heidegger's analysis of human being is under the shadow of the death of (the ontotheological) God – is made possible by it and takes it as its central preoccupation – from the outset, long before his extended encounter with Nietzsche in the 1930s.

But the God of misbegotten metaphysics (whether understood as present or as absent, and hence as leaving room for the self to occupy its place) is not the God of faith. Heidegger's existential analytic of *Dasein* leaves plenty of room for theology understood as what one might call an ontic science: a systematic study, not of God (which would imply that God was a kind of object, however unprecedentedly powerful), but of faith – that is, of a certain kind of mode of *Dasein*'s being, of the human way of being open to the world. Theology can, of course, be corrected by Heideggerian fundamental ontology, since the latter's analysis of *Dasein*'s being delineates structures that necessarily inform any and every mode of *Dasein*'s concrete existence, including those of faith; but this means that theology must also itself set constraints for fundamental ontology, since the latter must be consistent with every way in which *Dasein* lives out its life – and hence theology may even contain pointers from which any fundamental ontology can benefit (as Heidegger claims to have benefited from Kierkegaard's writings). Nevertheless, fundamental ontology is itself atheistic in its basic orientation; it must not presuppose the truth of the deliverances of *any* ontic science, since that would amount to setting unjustifiable limits on the

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degree to which and the directions in which it can realize the basic human capacity for self-questioning.

How, then, might Heidegger's existential analytic of *Dasein* guide or inform theology? Well, since it shows that God is not a being, and hence not knowable as entities are knowable, it implies that nothing can be said of God's being, or of God's entering being, until God speaks. In other words, faith appears as a mode of *Dasein*'s being in which it is the recipient of revelation, of an address. What this mode of address might be, and what is said through it, are matters of faith, and hence the province of theology; what fundamental ontology tells us is that these matters, being a mode of *Dasein*'s being, must be understood as a mode of *Dasein*'s self-interpretation and self-disclosure – a way in which *Dasein* comes to itself and to its world, a way in which it answers the question its own existence poses to itself through existing. In this sense, the self is the horizon in which God is and must be revealed; but every such revelation of God (being a revelation of that which is not a thing, not a being) must be a failure or a falling short, and hence any response to that revelation (for example, love of God) will strive forward, but it can never attain its object or goal – and if it ever does, it will know that that is not its goal, but rather an idol. Furthermore, every such revelation will be individual, particularized; it will always take place within a world, for a particular *Dasein* in relation to particular others, and hence in a specific relation to human being as a whole. Here, Hemming acknowledges that his remarks are underpinned by a Christology that he has no space to articulate; but that acknowledgement alone reinforces the point that, at this concluding stage of his book, his analysis has begun to shift from a philosophical to a theological register. Here, in short, is where his methodological atheism runs out.

This is the central argumentative spine of the book, but it by no means exhausts the topics Hemming covers; some – such as an incisive critique of Marion's work on Heidegger, and a taxonomy of early and persistent theological misappropriations of Heidegger – will be of more interest to theologians and philosophers of religion than others, which have more to do with properly understanding Heidegger's thinking in its own terms. The most important of these is a detailed critical discussion of the apparently undismissable desire of Heidegger commentators to understand Heidegger's development in terms of a turn (*die Kehre*) – a fundamental reorientation of his thinking that is usually dated to the early 1930s. As Hemmings points out, more recent work on Heidegger's work in the 1930s, as well as his pre-*Being and Time* lectures, has produced so many instances of concepts supposedly exclusive to his post-*Kehre* thinking already at work, and has identified so many pre-1930 points that might be called fundamental turns in his thinking, that this trope is being systematically emptied of its meaning. Hemmings also shows, illuminatingly, that Heidegger himself is very far from endorsing this way of reading his texts. But perhaps most interestingly, he argues that those commentators who find themselves unable simply to dispense

with that trope might be seen as responding to something real in Heidegger's work: for his original and essentially unchanging conceptualization of *Dasein* makes turning an internal feature of its mode of being. *Dasein* exists as the clearing – the site at which beings reveal themselves in their being – precisely insofar as it necessarily turns questioningly towards itself by turning towards the entities in its world, and by turning away from what it has been towards what it will be. In short, *Dasein*'s turning is another way of articulating its mode of existence as questioning and temporalizing. And this reinterpretation of *Dasein*'s being allows Hemming to suggest that Heidegger's supposedly late, post-*Kehre* emphasis upon 'event' (*Ereignis*) is in fact internally related to, and hence always already at work in, his emphasis upon *die Kehre*.

Those already well-versed in Heidegger's texts, as well as in recent Heidegger scholarship, might find that these facets of Hemming's argument are more original and stimulating than his primary preoccupation; for the distinction he draws on Heidegger's behalf between the God of faith and ontotheological misappropriations of God in Western metaphysics and theology seems fairly straightforward and by no means unfamiliar. What makes it philosophically interesting is more the detailed, careful, and wide-ranging way in which its finer details and central implications are traced out across a complex field of dense, challenging, and highly sophisticated primary and secondary texts. Few people are as familiar with and attentive to the full sweep of Heidegger's writings as Hemming proves himself to be; and those in the fields of theology and philosophy of religion who are desirous of finding inspiration and sustenance for their endeavours from this particular domain of philosophy can rest assured that Hemming is a reliable and sophisticated guide.

I cannot avoid noting, however, that Hemming's prose style does not match the high standards of his scholarship. This book is poorly written – not because it falls into 'Heideggerese' (a trap its author mostly avoids with dexterity), but rather because it is grammatically clumsy in ways that repeatedly cloud the sense of its specific claims and its general argumentative drift – to the point where it is hard to believe that a copy-editor was involved at any point in the book's production. Such failures to provide appropriate support for an author are perhaps a more common fault in academic publishing than they used to be; but it is particularly disappointing in this case, since it might well discourage readers from staying with the book long enough to benefit from its considerable intellectual substance.

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Tobias Hoffmann *Creatura Intellecta: Die Ideen und Possibilien bei Duns Scotus mit Ausblick auf Franz von Mayronis, Poncius und Mastrius*. (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters, Neue Folge, 60) (Münster: Aschendorff, 2002). Pp. v + 358. € 46.00 (Pbk). ISBN 3 402 04011 5.

Traceable to Augustine, and before him even to Plotinus, the question of the divine ideas – God's knowledge of universals and in some accounts even of particulars – is one of the many areas in which the medieval theologians made significant contributions. It is also an area that is again beginning to surface in analytic philosophy of religion, and the production of this book on one of the most important and interesting medieval writers on the issue is thus timely. Scotus' position mediates between the more extreme views of various opponents. Against Aquinas, he holds that God's knowledge of creatures requires 'objects' of that knowledge distinct somehow from the divine essence, and that such objects must needs be produced – quasi-caused, as Scotus thinks of it – by God. But against Henry of Ghent, he does not believe that such produced thought-objects have any real kind of being – they do not have what Henry calls *esse essentiae*, the being of (mere) essences. Rather, God produces thought-objects that have what Scotus labels *esse intentionale* or *esse cognitum* – the non-real being that is proper to merely mental objects, things that are merely objects of thought. This might not seem very illuminating, but it does serve somewhat to mitigate problems in opponents' positions. For example, it is hard for Aquinas to explain how it is that, in knowing His own essence, God thereby knows all creatures too. What is it about the divine essence that allows a perfect concept of it to include the contents of all other concepts too? Equally, Henry has to posit some real, non-actual realm, external to God, where the non-actual essences somehow have their *esse essentiae*.

Thomas Hoffmann in *Creatura Intellecta* provides a workmanlike account of Scotus' position, making good use of the full range of Scotist resources, including unpublished material from Scotus's final account of the issue, the Parisian commentary on the *Sentences* – the so-called *Reportatio*. The result is, on the whole, a success. Hoffmann engages fully with most relevant primary and secondary sources, and has produced a work that not only provides a good account of Scotus' position, but outlines areas where interpretation is contested. Hoffmann's own preferred readings are closely rooted in the texts, and are invariably sensibly presented and argued. In addition, he provides readings of some of the more important early Scotists, and later (seventeenth-century) Scotistic commentators.

For all its complexity, surprisingly few exegetical controversies surround Scotus' teaching on the question of the divine ideas. One which arose early in Scotus

interpretation, and which has resurfaced in recent years, is the precise status of logical modalities (possibility, necessity, contingency). Hoffmann sides with Calvin Normore against Simo Knuuttila and Ludger Honnefelder in claiming that, if *per impossibile* there were no God, there could be no logical possibilities. This makes logical possibilities dependent on God – specifically on the divine intellect producing such possibilities as the relations of compatibility between different thought objects. It is important to see what is not under dispute. Scotus is explicit that the divine ideas are produced *naturally* by the divine intellect, and this means (among other things) that God could not have produced ideas other than in the way He did, and that God could not have produced the relations between ideas other than in the way that He did. This is what Scotus means when he claims that logical possibilities are causally ('principiatively' in the Scotist jargon) from the divine intellect, but *formally* from themselves. (Scotus did not, for example, make such matters dependent on the divine will in the way that Descartes later did, such that God could have brought it about that what is now logically impossible was in fact possible.) Hoffmann adds his own important consideration in favour of the Normore interpretation: Hoffmann notes that, according to Scotus, God is necessary for modalities since God is the cause of intelligibility. Possibility presupposes intelligibility; hence God is the cause of possibility. The problem with this interpretation is that Scotus considers counter-possible cases in which the only mind to exist is finite – non-divine – and seems to suggest that modalities would be just as they are even in such cases. This seems to entail that God cannot be a necessary condition for modality; any mind, as it were, would do. Hoffmann has difficulties interpreting the counter-possible passages, suggesting that, even if the truth of such statements is not due to God (since on the counter-possible hypothesis He does not exist), the concepts that compose the sentence – the intelligible components of the sentence – are still (factually?) the result of God's having thought of them.

I find this interpretation of these counter-possibles very implausible. That Scotus makes God the factual cause of intelligibility, and thus possibility, does not entail that God is necessary for intelligibility, and thus possibility. There seem, in fact, to me to be two possible ways of reading the relevant parts of Scotus. On one, Scotus is committed to the view that possibility requires intelligibility. But intelligibility can come from any mind thinking intelligible things. Indeed, intelligibility might not require any mind at all. A finite universe, without God, and inhabited merely by non-rational beings, is still intelligible. On the other possible reading, intelligibility requires the existence of a mind, but Scotus is simply not committed to the view that possibility requires intelligibility. One or other of these must be entailed by the view that a universe uninhabited by any minds at all is a sufficient bearer of (broadly) logical possibilities and necessities – a view that it seems to me can certainly be found in Scotus. There is a further problem too, one which Hoffmann does not discuss. In at least one late text, Book IX of his

Metaphysics questions, Scotus seems to suggest as a 'more probable' view that logical modalities would obtain even if there were simply nothing at all: a suggestion that Hoffmann would need to treat very carefully indeed.

Hoffmann's book is exegetical in the manner of so many German dissertations on scholastic issues. Given the interest that the subject is currently receiving, it is a shame that Hoffmann did not allow himself to show more awareness of the philosophical problems a position like Scotus' might be susceptible to. I will mention just one, again raised in passages in Scotus that Hoffmann neglects. Scotus holds that, having produced intelligible objects, God can then compare these to His essence as imitable by them, and by this comparison determine that the representations God has produced are true, which is to say in conformity with His essence as exemplar. Given Scotus' objection to views like Aquinas's, it is very hard to see how it is that God could do this, since the objection to Aquinas is that God's essence simply does not include the conceptual contents of other essences. Since the notion of truth-bearing representations is so important for Scotus, who on at least some interpretations believes that God's knowledge is propositional, this seems a curious omission. Overall, then, a solid introduction to a complex topic.

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Katerina Ierodiakonou (ed.) *Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Pp. 309. £35.00 (Hbk). ISBN 0 19 924613 0.

This volume contains eleven essays preceeded by an editorial and rounded off by an epilogue entitled 'Current research in Byzantine philosophy' by Linos Benakis. It is intended as an introduction to, and selective survey of, 'an almost unexplored field', the editor tells us. The collection is of the highest quality. Its contributions are generally interesting and provide thought for further study. Sten Ebbesen sets out with 'Greek–Latin philosophical interaction'; Paul Kalligas follows with 'Basil of Caesarea on the semantics of proper names'; Dominic O'Meara discusses 'The Justinianic dialogue *On Political Science* and its Neoplatonic sources'; Michael Frede follows with 'John of Damascus on human action, the will, and human freedom', and Jonathan Barnes with 'Syllogistic in the anon Heiberg'. John Duffy writes about 'Hellenic philosophy in Byzantium and the lonely mission of Michael Psellos'; Katerina Ierodiakonou has two essays, 'Psellos': paraphrasis on Aristotle's *De interpretatione*', and 'The anti-logical movement in the fourteenth century'. Börje Bydén writes on 'Theodore

Metochites' defence of scepticism', (adding a critical edition of chapter 61 of Theodore's *Semeioseis gnomikai*); Polymnia Athanassiadi on 'Byzantine commentators on the Chaldean Oracles', and George Karamanolis, in the last essay, on 'Plethon and Scholarios on Aristotle'.

Not all contributions can be discussed here. Katerina Ierodiakonou's editorial may be worth mentioning for its attempt at setting out parameters, a necessary task in any neglected field of study. Awkward questions lurk right at the beginning. Is there such a thing as 'Byzantine philosophy', and who are the Byzantine 'philosophers', i.e. those who would have recognized themselves as such? If, as Ierodiakonou claims, philosophy in Byzantium was not the handmaid of theology, as it was supposed to be in the medieval West (if it ever was that is yet another question), what was it? An independent discipline in a parallel (e.g. secular) sphere? An integral part of theology? A rival to theology? And what about those 'Church Fathers' whom she cites as having recommended philosophy to become *ancilla theologiae*, Clement of Alexandria and Origen? What about their relationship to Byzantine philosophy? Or do they belong to 'its ancient sources' mentioned in the subtitle of this book? For they do not feature in Ierodiakonou's account of (some) Byzantine philosophers. That begins with Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, indebted to Origen though they are to the brink of heresy, in fact perhaps beyond. Or is it because they are Alexandrian, like John Philoponos, another name conspicuously absent from Ierodiakonou's inventory?

To be fair, Ierodiakonou stresses that her list is incomplete, and her commentary raises many interesting issues. Nonetheless, fundamental questions of how Byzantine philosophy may relate to other intellectual traditions and various systematic issues in philosophy remain. The question of Byzantine philosophy's ancient sources (and its claim to them) is closely linked with the issue of the relationship between philosophy and theology in a culture which on the whole rejected rationalism and secularism, but was at the same time fiercely independent. On the one hand all 'true believers', but especially monks, were considered philosophers, 'seekers of wisdom'; on the other hand there existed since the eleventh century the title of 'supreme philosopher', *húpatos tôn philosóphon*. It was introduced for Michael Psellos, not for his religious but for his intellectual achievements. Yet even Michael was, at any time, in danger of becoming a heretic. Already his successor, John Italos, was condemned, because of 'his dealings with ancient', i.e. 'Hellenic' philosophy (139). Other *hupátoi* went on to become patriarchs. But in the fourteenth century, after John Pediasimos, the title was abolished again. Nonetheless there existed, alongside and often clashing with a more 'naïve', late antique, religious, pious, notion of philosophy, one that was dedicated to rational enquiry to such an degree, and in such a way, that it was unmistakably distinct and often in conflict with theology, or better, 'orthodoxy'. And it is important to note that this 'rationalism' was 'home-made' and not a result of 'indecent exposure' to Latin, Syriac, or Arabic thinking. The relationship

between Greek and Latin intellectual culture, and, as already mentioned, between Byzantium and Alexandria, Byzantium and Syria, Byzantium and the Arab world, is thus an additional, but quite distinct issue to be considered in this context. Ierodiakonou does not make that sufficiently clear, and one is left to follow it up in various individual contributions, e.g. in that of John Duffy on Michael Psellos (139–156), or in that of George Karamanolis on Plethon and Scholarios (253–282).

Sten Ebbesen, in his article, tackles one of these issues, 'Greek–Latin philosophical interaction'. But he, too, right at the beginning, seems to betray a fundamental misunderstanding of the Greek–Latin relationship. Was there ever a 'Roman conquest' that 'put a wafer-thin layer of Latin administration on top of the Greek', as he maintains? Or was there not (from earliest times!) a Greek dimension to Roman identity, not just in the East? Greece had been in Italy and Gaul long before Rome dominated them; the emperors followed in Alexander's footsteps (never catching up), and it was the Greek (Roman) empire (first Christian, then Islamic) that carried Rome forward into modern times (if we discount the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy). Epictetus, Cornutus, Dio, Plutarch, Galen, Marcus Aurelius, all writing in Greek, were 'Roman philosophers'. No-one, whether Greek or Latin, ever doubted that philosophy was a lady from Greece. It is therefore somewhat misleading to speak of 'interaction' between Greek and Latin philosophy, 'translation' would be a more appropriate term, literally and figuratively, of Greek philosophy into Latin, a process which lasted from the first century BC to the fifteenth century AD (or until today, if we include the emerging vernaculars). Ebbesen outlines this process and emphasizes its problematic nature. It was, with few exceptions, a one-way process in which the Greeks began more and more to lose out. While the other post-Hellenistic cultures (not only the Latins, but the Syrians and Arabs, too) were busy translating and adapting the Greek heritage, the Byzantines seem to have had difficulties renewing it and carrying it forward. It is significant that Greek philosophy (the literature, but also the very concept of higher education) came to the medieval West largely via Syria and the Arab world, not (directly) from Byzantium. However, the role which Byzantium played in this process (e.g. through its contacts with the school of Nisibis) has yet to be properly explored.

With his paper on 'Basil of Caesarea on the semantics of proper names', Paul Kalligas discusses a topic which has recently attracted other scholars as well, e.g. D. G. Robertson, 'A patristic theory of proper names', in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, **84** (2002), 1–19. Robertson has a philosophical interest in naming. He compares the modern analysis of the meaning of proper names and definite descriptions with the ancient enquiry into the origin of names (nature or convention?). Hence the role of etymology in antiquity. He concludes that Basil probably thought that when we use or hear a proper name like ' ''Paul'', we think of a cluster of properties which Paul has' (19). If that is correct, then Basil would have

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shifted the debate away from 'ancient versions of descriptivism which supply descriptive material not from minds of users of language, but from certain aspects of the names themselves'. Unlike any modern descriptivist, however, Basil did not sufficiently try 'to explain *how* [my emphasis] Paul is referred to by our use of the name ''Paul'' '. In that respect he remained true to the ancient tradition, and thus chose the worst of both worlds, as Robertson thinks. Robertson identifies three fundamental weaknesses in Basil's account. He sees (a) 'a nest of difficulties involved in precisely what descriptions speakers or hearers might offer for the meaning of proper names'. Moreover, and put simply, (b) proper names function well even without descriptions, and (c) defining proper names by description is a circular undertaking (18–19). This is, in Robertson's view, why ancient theories of a 'Stoic' character took their 'descriptive material … from certain aspects of the names themselves', while theories of an 'Aristotelian' character assumed individual substances (13). In fact, in an earlier paper Robertson had argued that Basil himself may have held such an 'Aristotelian' notion of substance (in *Vigiliae Christianae*, **52** (1998), 393–417, 404–414). That Basil's thought sometimes strikes us as Stoic, Robertson puts down to the fact that his notion of 'character' as a basic, simple, form of description for proper names may be influenced by certain 'traditional ideas about the character of names in the grammarians' (19). In the 'names' paper, he discusses a fragment from the second-century grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus as an example close to Basil in time as well as in the manner of thinking (5–9). Thus Robertson relates the thought of Basil as far as possible to his own time as well as to the modern discussion. Kalligas is much vaguer. He does discuss the topic extensively, but without the example of Apollonius Dyscolus, and at the end of his paper he can only vaguely state that Basil 'must be drawing on some earlier source' (46). A tentative hint at Porphyry remains unconvincing. Kalligas is uncritical towards Basil's descriptivism, yet calling it at the end 'seductive' (47), and comparing it to Ockham's nominalism. Earlier on, in contrast, he had welcomed it as an alternative to Eunomius's 'extreme branch of Arianism' (40), which was allegedly the result of too much pagan learning. Aetius is mentioned and the alleged influence of Plato's *Cratylus*. Kalligas relies here ultimately on a study by Jean Danielou from 1956, which Robertson dismisses as 'adventurous' (10, n. 20). Robertson sees no need to label Eunomius's position in doctrinal terms, whether as 'Arian' or whatever. He keeps strictly to philosophical issues. Robertson dismisses the idea that Eunomius' thought results from studying too much (Hellenic) philosophy. For him, Basil's philosophical theory of proper names is at least as problematic in philosophical terms as that of Eunomius. It is useful to read Robertson's contribution as a corrective to Kalligas's paper, interesting and useful in itself though the latter may be.

Michael Frede's essay on John of Damascus's account on free will is as interesting as almost everything that Frede has written on free will, and in systematic terms is very similar: 'John of Damascus tries to integrate a notion of a will into

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Aristotle's moral psychology and theory of action', and thus 'to combine the results of a discussion which over the centuries had moved far beyond Aristotle, for instance in coming to presuppose the existence of a will, with substantial pieces of Aristotelian doctrine' (65). Again, and Frede rightly points this out (67), John's influence on Western philosophers, e.g. on Thomas Aquinas, must not be mistaken as due to some Western trait in his philosophy. It is merely a similarity resulting from a common Christian approach, in which a fundamental distinction is made not so much between the sensible and the intelligible world, but between God and creation. Frede here (74) contrasts John and 'most Platonists'. He should have written 'most non-Christian Platonists'. The consequences are simple and clear: for Christian thinkers like John a rational being's behaviour is ultimately not guided by reason, but by that being's own (rational or non-rational) desire. Christians do not indulge in acratic behaviour, they sin (93). This (Christian) 'use' of Aristotle is, of course, to some extent a misappropriation, but that is not here the decisive point. Frede's paper is about John, not Aristotle.

There are several more interesting pieces in this volume. Jonathan Barnes carefully examines a logical treatise with a theorem which its author calls 'deep and scientific', two words which Barnes in this case understands to mean 'contorted' (135). The two pieces on Michael Psellos are especially worth reading, as is that on Theodore Metochites' defence of scepticism. With Plethon's and Scholarios's discussion about the precedence of Plato, respectively Aristotle, Byzantine philosophy comes full circle; for that is how it had basically begun in the fourth century, with Aristotelian revivals, attempts to declare a harmony between Plato and Aristotle, and an ongoing discussion, as this proved impossible. Again, to say 'that Plethon follows Neoplatonism … , while Scholarios attaches himself to scholasticism' (278) misses the point, as George Karamanolis is right to point out. Both, Scholarios and Plethon, are influenced by a whole range of ancient and late antique sources rather than medieval Western ones. It would be wrong to assume that one of them is more Byzantine than the other. Rather, both represent two different approaches within Byzantine philosophy. Again, the paradox is striking. Plethon, Plato *redivivus*, the more conservative and authoritarian thinker, more 'nationalist' and 'patriotic', as is sometimes also suggested, is more influential in the West and had less impact in Byzantium. Scholarios, the Aristotelian and more rational and scholastic, or 'Western', as has also been suggested, became the first patriarch under Turkish rule. It was under him, according to Karamanolis, that Aristotelianism became part of the 'official ideology' of the orthodox church, with which the intellectuals of the Greek enlightenment later had to struggle, 'a rigid ideology which would treat with suspicion any attempt to revive Plato' (280), or, for that matter, any serious attempt at rapprochement to Western thought.

This volume can be recommended to anyone interested in Byzantine philosophy. It is obligatory reading not only for those engaged in Byzantine studies, but

also for students in adjacent areas: Patristics and late antiquity, the Middle Ages, the early modern period, and theology. Linos Benakis's epilogue on current research in Byzantine philosophy will be a welcome starting-point for all who want to embark on, or continue, their own research in the field. Especially potential Ph.D. students in search of exciting topics might find that it contains many rare treasures yet to be lifted from the dark recesses of forgotten libraries and areas of philosophical inquiry.

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Jamie Mayerfeld Suffering and Moral Responsibility. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Pp. xiii + 237. £16.99 (Pbk). ISBN 0 19 515495 9.

This is a book about the content and scope of our duty to relieve suffering, suffering being understood in hedonistic terms as an affliction of feeling that should be distinguished from both frustration of desire and physical pain. It is argued that interpersonal comparisons of the quantity of suffering thus understood are possible, even though several psychological processes hinder our awareness of people's suffering (including our own); and that the prevention of suffering should often be pursued indirectly: Hare's 'two-level' approach is endorsed – see R. M. Hare, *Moral Thinking* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981). Finally, it is concluded that most of us greatly underestimate the scope of our duty to relieve suffering. The book encourages us to draw the demanding conclusion that seeing our duty to relieve suffering aright and acting on it means devoting far more of our resources to the relief of suffering than most of us do at the moment. In fact it

> … means that you should not devote your free time to pursuits other than the elimination of suffering. It also means that you cannot spend money on luxuries for yourself, or those dear to you, since the same money could be used to prevent other people's suffering. Indeed you should devote all your money to the relief of other people's suffering until the deprivation you impose on yourself and those dear to you becomes worse, from an impersonal standpoint, than the suffering you prevent. (207)

The style and structure of the book leading to this demanding conclusion is commendably straightforward. Chapter 1 is an introduction; chapter 2 discusses what suffering means; chapter 3 examines how it ought to be measured; chapter 4 looks at the moral significance of suffering in its own right and in comparison to other values; chapter 5 discusses some basic features of the duty to relieve suffering; chapter 6 argues that relieving suffering is more important than promoting happiness; chapter 7 examines 'trade-offs' internal to the duty to relieve

suffering (e.g. what to do when we could eliminate the twenty-unit suffering of one person or the one-unit-per-person suffering of forty, but not both); chapter 8 considers the limits to our duty to relieve suffering and suggests, in effect, that there are no limits (other than the pseudo-limits imposed by the two-level theory). Thus drops out the demanding conclusion: 'you must devote all your time, resources, and energies to the prevention of the worst cumulative suffering' (207), unless, of course (remember the two-level theory), indirectly pursuing the elimination of suffering is likely to be more effective.

Consider some of implications of Mayerfeld's demanding conclusion. At one point Mayerfeld tells us that resources

> … that could be used to prevent hunger, disease, and torture are instead used to promote literature, the fine arts, academic research lacking practical application, public beautification, historical restoration, and so forth. … Even if art sometimes prevents or reduces suffering, it is doubtful that it is the most *efficient* means of eliminating suffering. So long as it is not, there remains a conflict between the promotion of culture and the prevention of suffering. (195)

Mayerfeld sees where this thought, which is surely right, must carry someone convinced of the overwhelming importance of relieving suffering and he allows himself to be carried there: he claims that Jane Austen and Beethoven (whom, as he points out, were contemporaries of William Wilberforce) should have abandoned their artistic careers and become propagandists for the abolition of slavery, for by doing so they would have been more efficient in eliminating suffering (196). Given this claim of his, one cannot help but wonder how Mayerfeld justified to himself the project of writing *Suffering and Moral Responsibility*. At the very end of the book, we find a note to the effect that the royalties from its sales will be divided equally amongst three charities the remits of which are, roughly, the reduction of hunger, disease, and torture. Thus, one might suppose that Mayerfeld's writing this book, others' reading and acting on it, and the royalties generated by its being purchased will reduce the amount of suffering in the world to some extent.

However, it is surely obvious that this process is not the most *efficient* means of reducing suffering that Mayerfeld could have chosen to initiate, and that participating in it is not the most *efficient* means of reducing suffering for the readers of this journal. This makes Mayerfeld's intentions something of an enigma to me (he seems to be committed to a version of Moore's paradox: 'I'm passionately arguing that *p*, but by doing so behaving as if I did not really believe that *p*'), and it makes my task as a reviewer potentially rather awkward. To the extent that I am convinced by Mayerfeld's demanding conclusion, I shall feel that I should not recommend that you read his book; rather, I will feel I should convince you to do something more efficient in the cause of the relief of suffering, for example, send the £16.99 that the book would cost you directly to the charities Mayerfeld lists, rather than filtering these monies (with resultant losses) through Oxford University Press. It strikes me as an inescapable implication of the truth of Mayerfeld's

demanding conclusion that he ought not to have written a book arguing for it and that people ought not to read his book. If we think that Mayerfeld has not done anything bad in writing his book, that I am not doing anything bad in spending my time reviewing it, that you are not doing anything bad in reading my review, and that you would not be doing anything bad if you spent your money on buying a copy of his book and your time on reading it, then we cannot believe Mayerfeld's demanding conclusion.

Before we leave this point entirely, consider the following claim that Mayerfeld makes of his position on his last page: 'Such a perspective would require me to sacrifice the interests of individuals specially related to me whenever doing so was necessary to prevent worse cumulative suffering … . This is a hard position to accept' (224). Indeed it is hard to accept. Common sense rebels against the thought that the ideal moral agent would shoot her only child through the head in a moment, and without feeling at all bad about it, as soon as she became convinced that shooting her child through the head was the only way to prevent two unrelated children from being so shot by another. No two-level double-think can avoid the implication that, on the truth of Mayerfeld's demanding conclusion, this is how the ideal moral agent would act; thinking at the critical level is effortless to the *ideal* moral agent, as is avoiding feeling bad about doing the right thing.

Or consider one feature of the consequentialist character of our duty to relieve suffering: it makes 'no distinction between the ''active'' prevention of suffering and the abstention from inflicting it' (118). Thus, I am no less morally responsible for the suffering of those children who are tortured in South America because I do not devote all my spare time to collecting for Amnesty International than I am for the suffering of any children I might myself torture in Great Britain. A two-level theory might dictate that I should forget about the fact of my equal responsibility for both (for it could be that I will be most efficient if I do so), but it cannot make it any less of a fact. If we think that it is not a fact that I am equally responsible for the suffering I allow and for the suffering I inflict (not just that – for efficiency reasons – we should not believe that it is a fact), then we cannot accept Mayerfeld's demanding conclusion. We will have to think that something has gone wrong in the argument leading to it.

Of course, an argument that goes wrong may make many valuable points as it is doing so, and Mayerfeld's argument certainly does this. Unfortunately, there is not time to do more than sketch a couple of them. I will briefly outline his account of the meaning and measurement of suffering and – even more briefly – his argument to the effect that relieving suffering is more important than promoting happiness.

Mayerfeld starts his book with the claim that 'suffering refers to a state of feeling bad overall' (14). 'We know what it means to ''feel bad'' without breaking it down into simpler elements, and we know that ''feeling bad overall'' means the

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same as ''suffering''. That may be as far as the search for a definition can take us' (19). Fortunately, Mayerfeld's search actually takes him (and us) a little further than this. He points out that his approach does not make suffering subjective. If 'a spoiled child throws a temper tantrum because her latest wish has been denied, the frustration she feels [and presumably her sincerely believed first personal reports, if any, as to the level of suffering she undergoes] may be disproportionate to the suffering she experiences' (44). People who are suffering are often not the best judges of how badly they are suffering. After all, they 'may be stunned out of thought' (50). Further, as Mayerfeld points out, suffering cannot be identified with pain, for after certain frontal lobotomies patients report that they still feel pain but are no longer bothered by it; it no longer feels bad to them. (See also Roger Trigg *Pain and Emotion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), ch. 7 on this.) Rough cardinal measurements of suffering are nevertheless possible: 'we can measure the intensity of happiness and suffering … in cardinal terms' (60). Mayerfeld confesses however that these measurements may be 'vague'. (He does not address the issue of whether or not this vagueness is merely an epistemic matter.) What makes these measurements possible is intuition: torture is – intuition informs us – likely to produce more intense suffering than listening to Terry Wogan (my example). From intuitive judgements of intensity, we get relatively easily to judgements of quantity. Quantity of happiness or suffering is 'number of people experiencing happiness (suffering), multiplied by the duration of their happiness (suffering), multiplied by the intensity of their happiness (suffering)' (130). Mayerfeld thus proposes

> … that all conscious experience can be classified as belonging to happiness, or suffering, or something in between. We may think of a one-dimensional scale with increasing happiness pointing in one direction and increasing suffering pointing in another direction, separated by an intermediate zone that includes feeling neither good nor bad overall and the kind of slightly disagreeable feeling that falls short of suffering. At any moment of a person's conscious life, the quality of his or her overall feeling can be located, in principle [and in practice], somewhere on the scale [although perhaps only vaguely]. (29)

So, Mayerfeld offers us a simple – yet not, it seems, overly simple – and plausible account of what suffering is and how it can be measured.

Why think – as Mayerfeld does – that 'the relief of suffering is more important than the promotion of happiness' (133)?

> We give surgery patients anesthesia to avert the agony they would feel if they remained conscious. Suppose some drug became available that gave people joy as intense as the pain averted by anesthesia, and suppose that there were no drawbacks to the consumption of this drug. It seems quite clear to me that the provision of this drug would be less important than the administration of anesthesia. … when I place the example in the contest of one person's life, so that the question is whether it is more important to provide the same person with anesthesia at one time or the euphoria pill at another, it seems obvious that providing the anesthesia is more important. (133)

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This seems right and thus we might follow Mayerfeld in saying that 'as suffering increases in intensity its moral weight increases at a faster rate' (135). If so, we will be parting company with the classical Utilitarian understanding and we will be committing ourselves to something which, as the example used demonstrates, will have practical implications.

Mayerfeld's account of the nature of suffering and its measurement and his argument for why relieving suffering matters more than promoting happiness are just two examples of the many valuable and interesting points which may be found in the argument of *Suffering and Moral Responsibility*, even by someone convinced of the falsity of the demanding conclusion that its author would have us draw from it. Towards the end of the book, Mayerfeld tells us that 'contemplation of suffering yields the thought that suffering is bad from no particular point of view and that its impersonal badness powerfully obligates us to prevent it. But if suffering is an impersonal bad, there may be other impersonal goods and bads capable of outweighing it' (194). *Suffering and Moral Responsibility* offers a nuanced and plausible account of what contemplation of suffering ought to reveal. And for those convinced of the falsity of Mayerfeld's demanding conclusion (which he reaches, to this reviewer's mind, only by having swept under the carpet the thought that comes after the 'But' in the last passage quoted), then – in addition to the valuable points that he makes along his journey – the value of *Suffering and Moral Responsibility* will be perceived to lie in prompting thought about what these 'other impersonal goods and bads' might be, how they can be measured, and how they can be weighed against suffering. Mayerfeld's demanding conclusion's being wrong entails that prompting these thoughts is more of an achievement than he would acknowledge.

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