

Book notes

EDITED BY MARTIN STONE

Religious Studies 39 (2003) DOI: 10.1017/S0034412503216486
© 2003 Cambridge University Press

O. Boulnois, J. Schmutz and J.-L. Solère (eds) *Le Contemplateur et les Ideés. Modèles de la Science Divine, du Néoplatonisme au XVIII Siècle.* (Histoire de la Philosophie). (Paris: Vrin, 2002). Pp. 337. € 32 (Pbk). ISBN 2 7116 1566 9.

This innovative volume concerns itself with the history of philosophical theology in late antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the early modern period. Consisting of twelve previously unpublished essays, prefaced by an editorial introduction, the book aims to convey the continuing importance of Neoplatonism and Aristotelian metaphysics to the Western philosophical and theological traditions. Beginning with Proclus, the volume works through chronologically to the writings of Pierre Bayle. A pleasing feature of *Le Contemplateur et les Ideés* is its enthusiasm for previously unstudied aspects of the tradition, namely late medieval thought and early modern scholasticism. Despite the inevitable differences of opinion among the contributors, every effort is made to construct a continuing conversation across the ages, so that the reader is left with the distinct impression that an author such as Malebranche, writing in the seventeenth century, was responding to themes and questions passed down to him by the ancient and medieval thinkers. Of particular interest in the volume is an engaging essay by one of the editors, Jacob Schmutz, of the Casa Velázquez in Madrid. Focusing on the attempts made by early modern scholastic writers such as Gabriel Vasquez, Rodrigo de Arriaga, and Diego Ruiz de Montoya to make sense of their intellectual heritage, he shows how the differences of opinion within early modern scholasticism conspired to undermine the tradition that each author sought to uphold. Schmutz's intelligent essay is a genuine contribution to early modern philosophy. Other strong essays in the collection include a characteristically erudite piece by Thomas Hoffman on François de Meyronnes, and a thoughtful analysis of Ockham's *Tractatus* by Cyrille Michon. It is a great shame that writers in the English-speaking world, especially practitioners of contemporary philosophy of religion, are not more interested in the history of philosophical theology. Should they ever rouse themselves to write on this important subject, then *Le Contemplateur et les Ideés* provides a helpful and timely blueprint as to how it can be done.

[M.W.F.S.]

Religious Studies 39 (2003) DOI: 10.1017/S0034412503226482
© 2003 Cambridge University Press

Daniel Garber *Descartes Embodied: Reading Cartesian Philosophy Through Cartesian Science*. (New York/Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Pp. xi + 337. £16.95 (Pbk). ISBN 0 521 78353 4.

Few would deny that Professor Daniel Garber, now of Princeton University, is one of the foremost English-speaking Cartesian scholars of his generation. Further to that, Garber is an eminent authority on the history of early modern science, expertise that he has brought to bear with great profit on the assorted subjects of seventeenth-century philosophy. The present collection of brings together many of his widely known articles on Descartes. A central theme in the volume is the interconnection between Descartes' philosophical and scientific interests, and the extent to which these two sides of the Cartesian enterprise illuminate and reinforce each other. Among the topics discussed in the essays are Descartes' celebrated 'method', his demand for certainty in the sciences, his account of the relation of the mind and body, his austere conception of God, and God's activity in the physical world. Always a pleasure to read, Garber addresses these topics with wit, style, and considerable erudition. His knowledge of the primary texts is exemplary, and he is always minded to avoid anachronism. Readers of this journal will find much of interest in the third section of volume, 'Mind, body and the laws of nature', where Garber considers the relationship between the immaterial mind and the physical body, Cartesian theology, and the vexed subject of occasionalism. Due to our familiarity with the texts of Descartes, a familiarity which is a by-produce of facile manner in which Cartesianism is introduced to philosophy undergraduates, one can always feel somewhat deflated in one's search for fresh and novel readings of well-thumbed philosophical classics. Garber's interpretations are always refreshing and to the point; the effect of his volume is to revive interest in topics of pressing importance. *Descartes Embodied* is highly recommended.

[M.W.F.S.]