

Book reviews

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Richard Swinburne *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003). Pp. viii + 224. £45.00 (Hbk); £16.99 (Pbk). ISBN 0 19 9257450 (Hbk); 0 19 9257469 (Pbk).

Richard Swinburne, in his new book on the Resurrection, concludes that it is overwhelmingly probable that Jesus was God incarnate and was resurrected from the dead. Swinburne's argument for the Resurrection is based on confirmation theory – in particular Bayes' Theorem – and on what he considers to be rather modest background assumptions that he defended in his earlier work. Among these latter are the assumptions that God's existence is as probable as not and that, given His existence, God's Incarnation and Resurrection is as probable as not (211). Swinburne maintains that these assumptions, combined with the failure of alternative explanations, certain epistemological principles, and historical evidence, yield the near certain conclusion that Jesus is the resurrected incarnated God.

Swinburne's estimate is that if God exists, then it is as probable as not that God would be incarnated, die, and be resurrected. But this estimate is too high. Swinburne maintains that God's becoming incarnate, dying, and being resurrected would assist us in using our free will to make the right choices. In his view, there are three basic ways the Incarnation and Resurrection would help. It would help us atone for our sins, it would enable God to identify with our suffering, and it would show us and teach us how to live.

Swinburne adopts the 'satisfaction theory' of Anselm. To offer God His due, according to Anselm, is to follow His will. However, when God's creatures sin this is precisely what they do not do. The sins of God's creatures insult God and detract from His honour. There is, then, an obligation to restore God's honour and to undo the insult. This is satisfaction. According to Swinburne, we humans are not in a very good position to atone for sins properly. We need help. God provides this help by offering a perfect human life as reparation, a life led by God Himself. Only the sacrifice of God Himself, that is God incarnate, would be adequate reparation.

There are many serious problems with this theory. (See Michael Martin *Atheism, Morality, and Meaning* (Amherst NY: Prometheus Books, 2003), 258–260;

idem The Case Against Christianity (Philadelphia PA: Temple University Press, 199), 254–256.) Here, I will mention just two of them. First, it is not clear why the Incarnation and Resurrection would be a good thing for God to do as a means of atonement. Swinburne admits that one alternative is ‘for God to insist on our making considerable atonement ourselves and then forgiving us in the light of this’ (43), but he rejects this alternative because it would make obtaining divine forgiveness ‘very difficult for most of us’ (43). However, given Swinburne’s stress on the exercise of free will, it is hard to see why this would be a problem. Working out one’s own salvation, hard as it might be, surely would build more character than bringing it about through Jesus’ death and resurrection. (Cf. J. L. Schellenberg ‘Christianity saved? Comments on Swinburne’s apologetic strategies in the tetralogy’, *Religious Studies*, 38 (2002), 295–297.)

Second, it is not clear why the death of the God-man is the best means of providing satisfaction of a wrong against God’s honour. Why would not some other punishment be preferable? If God’s honour is infinitely wounded by human sin, why could it not be appeased more effectively by the eternal punishment of the God-man, Jesus? Why the death penalty? It would seem more commensurate with the sin committed against God to inflict suffering on Jesus for eternity than to kill him after only relatively little suffering. Even if one argues that death has a harshness that no pain can match, it is important to recall that Jesus was dead for only a short time. It would have been a punishment more commensurate with human sin if Jesus had remained unresurrected.

Swinburne also argues that the Incarnation enables God to share in the suffering of humanity. Again there are problems. First, why did this sharing come so late? For tens of thousands of years God did not share in this suffering. It is important to note that Swinburne argues that there is only one Incarnation – none before or since the Incarnation in first-century Palestine. Why did God decide to share only 2,000 years ago? Second, why did God have to die and be resurrected to experience human suffering? If Jesus had been tortured, but not killed, he would have shared in human suffering and no Resurrection would have been necessary.

Swinburne’s last reason for God’s Incarnation and Resurrection is that it shows human beings what a perfect life is like, providing paradigm examples of moral goodness. This, according to Swinburne, is necessary to supplement the propositional moral revelation given to human beings (48). But is it? First, the propositional moral revelation can be supplemented by the example of lives of excellent but less than perfect moral teachers such as Buddha, Confucius, and various saints. Why is perfection necessary? Second, it seems logically possible for moral teachers to lead perfect moral lives without being God incarnate. Third, it is possible for God incarnate not to be executed. I see no reason to accept Swinburne’s view that a perfect moral life ‘must end in death, plausibly the hard death of execution’ (49).

In the light of all of these problems it seems overly optimistic to suppose that, given the existence of God, God becoming incarnate and being resurrected is as probable as not. Relative to the assumption that there is or will be an incarnate God, how probable is the evidence used to support the thesis that Jesus is in fact the resurrected God incarnate? Not very probable. Indeed, Swinburne himself believes that the probability is only 10 per cent (212). But even this figure seems overly optimistic.

First, according to Swinburne, Jesus as the incarnate God, was supposed to lead a perfect life. Some of Jesus' teaching and behaviour could hardly be considered perfect, (see Martin *Atheism, Morality and Meaning*, ch. 9; *idem The Case Against Christianity*, ch. 6), but Swinburne dismisses these as either historically inaccurate or as, on reflection, perfect after all (91). Suggesting at times that we ought not to judge Jesus' action by ordinary human moral standards (89), he argues that Jesus can perform actions that, according to these standards, would be immoral and still lead a morally perfect life. Thus, for example, Swinburne considers whether Jesus can be said to have lived a morally perfect life despite the harsh punishment he inflicts on the wicked in the afterlife. Downplaying the traditional view that such punishment will be eternal, he defends Jesus' action as morally justified. However, he admits, 'anyone not sympathetic [with my argument] will have reason to believe that Jesus was not God Incarnate' (95). Interestingly, he completely ignores what seems to me to be the hardest case to explain away: Jesus' tacit approval of slavery (Martin, *Atheism, Morality and Meaning*, 165–166).

Second, Swinburne argues that Jesus taught the Atonement; that is, he taught that through his death and Resurrection human beings are saved. But at times Jesus argued that one is saved by following a strict moral code, and at other times he maintains that one is saved by making great sacrifices in following him; (see Martin *Atheism, Morality and Meaning*, ch. 16; *idem The Case Against Christianity*, ch. 7). These teachings are difficult to reconcile with the Atonement view. In any case, Swinburne makes no attempt to do so.

What is the probability of evidence for the Resurrection relative to the background assumptions? Here, I will discuss just a few of the relevant factors adversely affecting the probability of this evidence; (see Martin *Atheism, Morality and Meaning*, ch. 18; *idem The Case Against Christianity*, ch. 3). First, there are numerous contradictions in the scriptural account of the Resurrection. Although Swinburne attempts to reconcile discrepancies in the post-Resurrection appearances stories, he makes no attempt with respect to the other factors, for example, the number of angels, the empty tomb, and what happened after the discovery of empty tomb.

Second, given all these uncertainties, we need independent confirmation of the Resurrection, yet this is lacking from both Jewish and pagan sources; (see Martin *Atheism, Morality and Meaning*, 311–312). Confirmation is also lacking from the other New Testament sources. The genuine Pauline epistles, not to mention the

earlier non-Pauline letters, provide no details about the burial and, despite Swinburne's insistence to the contrary (161), what is said there is compatible with Jesus not being buried in a tomb. For example, Jesus could have been directly resurrected without being buried.

Third, Swinburne says that testimony should be believed unless we have reason to doubt it (12–13). But we often do have such reason. In the light of well-known evidence from psychological experiments, we know that eyewitness testimony is often unreliable; see Robert Price *Beyond Born Again*, ch. 5, (http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/robert_price/beyond_born_again/). Why should we expect the situation to be different in the case of Christianity?

Swinburne believes that the probability of evidence, such as that of the empty tomb and post-Resurrection appearance, relative to the falsehood of the claims that the Incarnation and Resurrection occurred is very low. Indeed, he maintains that it would be about 0.1 per cent probable. If Swinburne's other estimates seem too optimistic, 0.1 per cent probable seems too pessimistic.

Swinburne accepts the theory that Jesus was buried according to the scriptural tradition and rejects alternative accounts (175). But what historical accuracy do these traditional stories have? (For a detailed evaluation of the evidence, see Jeffrey Jay Lowder 'Historical evidence and the empty tomb: a reply to William Lane Craig', *The Journal of Higher Criticism*, 8 (2001), 251–293.) Given Roman crucifixion customs, the prior probability that Jesus was buried is low. Even if Jewish customs were followed, his enemies probably buried Jesus ignominiously in a common grave. Still another plausible scenario is that Jesus was buried by Joseph of Arimathea in Joseph's own tomb and then, in order to conform to Jewish law, was reburied in a common grave. (For more details see Lowder 'Historical evidence and the empty tomb story'.) Many New Testament scholars agree. For example, over 70 per cent of the members of the Jesus Seminar, a group of non-fundamentalist New Testament scholars devoted to the historical study of Jesus, have maintained that the gravesite of Jesus was unknown and that the empty tomb stories are a creation of Mark. (See 'The Jesus seminar voting record', *Forum*, new series 1 (1998), 231–232.)

Swinburne rejects the theory that Jesus' post-Resurrection appearances could be based on hallucinations shared by a number of witnesses on the grounds that this phenomenon is hard to document (183). But, in fact, there have been several well-documented cases; (see Martin *Atheism, Morality and Meaning*, 307). Swinburne really does not seriously consider the view, that I have suggested elsewhere, that the Resurrection and post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus are based on legend; (*ibid.*, 304–306). Given the likelihood that Jesus was not buried in accordance with the traditional story, the legend view, when combined with an assumption of widespread hallucinations, would go some way toward making sense of the evidence. These theories and others are admittedly not very probable. See, for example, Richard Carrier's spirited defence of the thesis that Jesus'

body was stolen; (Richard Carrier ‘The guarded tomb of Jesus and Daniel in the lion’s den: an argument for the plausibility of theft’, *The Journal of Higher Criticism*, 8 (2001), 304–318). But there is no reason to suppose that the combined probability of all the alternatives is so low that the probability of Resurrection is more than 50 per cent.

I conclude that Swinburne’s defence of the Resurrection fails. All of his probability estimates are either too high or too low.

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Mark C. Murphy *An Essay on Divine Authority*. (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2002). Pp. x+198. £25.50 (Hbk). ISBN 0 8014 4030 0.

Experienced philosophers are known to suffer a shudder of scepticism when hearing a book described as ground-breaking. Often such praise seems utterly ill-founded. Sometimes the ground was left unbroken for a reason. And all too often the breaking proves fruitless. Prospective readers of Mark Murphy’s *An Essay on Divine Authority* might therefore be concerned to see that two of the three eminent philosophers quoted on the back of the dustjacket employ the dreaded ‘breaks new ground’ locution. Fortunately, though, this is one of the relatively rare cases where the metaphor is truly apt. For the topic of divine authority has not been addressed much at all in recent years, and no work of which I am aware comes even close to the depth and creativity that this excellent book exhibits.

Murphy’s concern is with the claim that God has practical authority over us. Loosely speaking, the thesis in question is that ‘if God gives one a command to perform some action, then that command is a reason to perform that action, even a decisive reason’ (2). Murphy wisely spends most of chapter 1 stating matters more precisely. Reasons, for Murphy, are states of affairs that obtain and that make certain actions worth performing (or ‘choiceworthy’) for an agent. Reason-candidates are possible states of affairs that would (if they were actual) give an agent a reason to perform a particular type of action. If an authority, by commanding an agent to act in a certain way, actualizes ‘a state of affairs that is the only non-actual element of a reason-candidate’, then the authority can be said to *constitutively actualize* a reason (12). This allows Murphy to state explicitly what practical authority amounts to: ‘A is practically authoritative over B with respect to ϕ -ing if and only if A’s telling B to ϕ constitutively actualizes a reason for A to ϕ such that if that reason is undefeated, then it will be decisive’ (15).

This might all sound rather complex, but an example should help get the point across. Students, we would usually agree, have an obligation to do the work their teachers assign. Indeed, students face infinitely many reason-candidates for doing infinitely many assignments. *Professor Murphy's being my teacher and Murphy's telling me to write a paper on Plato* would be (or would at least be the salient part of) a reason-candidate for one of Murphy's untutored underlings (call him Trenton) to write a paper on Plato. Similarly, *Professor Murphy's being my teacher and Murphy's telling me to write a paper on Aristotle* would be a reason-candidate for Trenton to write a paper on Aristotle. And so on. Fortunately for Trenton, few of these reason-candidates are actual, since in most cases the relevant command is never issued by Professor Murphy. But as soon as Professor Murphy tells Trenton to write a paper on Plato, the sole non-actual element of the first of the aforementioned reason-candidates becomes actual, and Trenton has a reason that (absent defeaters) obliges him to do as he has been directed. Professor Murphy, then, is practically authoritative over Trenton with respect to (among other things) writing papers on Plato.

Trenton's obligation to follow Professor Murphy's commands is relatively non-controversial. But do we have a similar obligation to abide by God's commands? Murphy considers three possible claims here. The *strong* authority thesis states that 'If A is a created rational being, then God has authority over A'; the *stronger* thesis says that 'If A is a created rational being, then, necessarily, God has authority over A'; and the *strongest* authority thesis contends that 'Necessarily, if A is a created rational being, then God has authority over A' (18).

As Murphy sees it, our inclination toward one or another of these authority theses may be the result of our conflating it with what he calls *the compliance thesis*, which he discusses in chapter 2. The compliance thesis (in its strongest form) states that 'Necessarily, if A is a created rational being, then if God commands A to ϕ , then there are decisive reasons for A to ϕ ' (20). Unlike the authority theses, the compliance thesis says only that the agent has a reason to do as God commands; it says nothing about God's command itself being part of that reason. Murphy presents an extended argument in chapter 2 for the truth of the compliance thesis. But since, he contends, this argument cannot be extended to support the authority theses, we are left wondering whether or not other arguments in their favour can be offered.

Chapters 3 through 6 attempt to address this wonder by considering various arguments (based on divine perfection, divine command ethics, moral principles concerning justice and gratitude, and specifically Christian premises) that might be constructed to support the authority theses. Murphy's verdict is that none of these arguments succeeds. Hence, he concludes, the authority theses should be rejected.

Does it follow that God lacks practical authority over us? Hardly. Murphy devotes his final chapter to arguing that divine authority, though real in the actual

world and universal in an ideal world, is not in fact universal. Though ‘we humans are not born under God’s authority’, says Murphy, ‘each of us is bound to submit to the divine rule and to make God authoritative over him or her’ (152). Murphy explicates submitting to the divine rule in terms of ‘consent in the acceptance sense’. Many practical principles (to take one of Murphy’s examples, ‘one ought not drink to excess’) are indeterminate (how much drinking is excessive?), and we often have good reason to specify (and to act in accordance with) a more precise version of the principle. It is fully appropriate at times to decide that ‘the manner in which one will act to satisfy that practical principle is to be specified by another party’s dictates’ (160). As Murphy suggests, I might decide to determine the indeterminate principle against excessive drinking by deciding that I will stop drinking when my wife tells me to stop (165). If so, I have adopted a practical stance of consent in the acceptance sense toward my wife’s alcohol-related directives. In effect, I have submitted myself to her authority in this dimension of my life, and thus have strong reason to act in accord with her dictates concerning alcohol.

But why think we should so submit to God’s authority? Because the set of *all* true practical principles is likely to be as indeterminate as are many of the individual principles themselves. Therefore, we are likely to be in need of some determination concerning how we are to act so as best to be in accord with those principles. And just as I can consent in the acceptance sense to my wife’s authority with respect to drinking, so can I ‘consent to God’s authority in the acceptance sense with respect to all practical principles’ (167). Indeed, as Murphy sees it, I not only *can* but in fact *should* so consent: ‘one who fails to submit to divine authority is unreasonable for failing to do so’ (168). Murphy bases this conclusion on three arguments: one based on good practical reasoning (i.e. on our weakness with respect to abiding by practical principles and God’s inerrancy); one on gratitude (submitting to God’s authority is a way of giving back to God the gift of practical freedom that He has given us and thereby showing our gratitude for the benefits He has bestowed upon us); and one on coordination (by submitting to His authority, we best allow God to promote the common good by coordinating the activities of His creatures). Taken together, Murphy concludes, these three arguments provide ‘decisive reasons for rational beings to subject themselves to divine authority’ (174).

As even my brief summary suggests, this is an ambitious project, one that Murphy conducts with admirable care and clarity. Does it succeed? Well, as I see it, Murphy offers a powerful case in favour of the compliance thesis. His four-chapter-long brief against the authority theses, though at times a bit of a tiresome slog, is solid and compelling. And he presents a persuasive case for concluding that we have strong (though his ‘decisive’ may be *too* strong) reasons to submit to divine authority. To my mind, then, the book succeeds remarkably well.

This is not, of course, to say that the work is without flaws. The discussion of reasons in chapter 1 is likely to confuse readers who were brought up with the dominant Davidsonian picture of reasons as beliefs, desires, and other such states *within* the agent. At the very least, some discussion of why we should *not* think of reasons in this way would have been in order. Similarly, some of the arguments in the text have evident imperfections. For example, the argument in favour of the compliance thesis employs as a premise the claim that: ‘Necessarily, one who performs an act of commanding A to ϕ necessarily implies that there are decisive reasons for A to ϕ ’ (21). But Murphy’s defence of this premise ignores the rather obvious fact that the one who commands A to ϕ might well be ignorant of all the reasons that A has, and thus need not, by commanding A to ϕ , be implying anything whatsoever about whether or not A’s reasons to ϕ are decisive.

So there are some genuine infelicities in the book. But virtually all that I discerned were of a similar inconsequential nature. Consider the two criticisms offered in the preceding paragraph. The reasons for adopting a somewhat unusual conception of reasons should have been addressed more explicitly by Murphy, but (with one or two minor exceptions) his arguments would have worked just as well had he toed the more standard Davidsonian line. The premise he uses to defend the compliance thesis is without merit, but a more restricted variant of that premise (one that specifies that the commanding agent is *omniscient*, say) would not, I think, be subject to refutation and would serve Murphy’s purposes just as well. And so on. Nowhere in the text did I discern the type of error that should lead a reader to question the viability of the project as a whole.

Murphy’s book, then, is one of those rare achievements – a breaking of genuinely new ground that lives up to its promise. It is a superb text that is likely to serve, and that ought to serve, as the seminal work on which discussions of divine authority will centre for years to come.

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James A. Arieti & Patrick A. Wilson *The Scientific and the Divine: Conflict and Reconciliation from Ancient Greece to the Present*. (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003). Pp. xvi + 334. £57.00 (Hbk); £19.95 (Pbk). ISBN 0 7425 1396 3 (Hbk); 0 7425 1397 1 (Pbk).

The published literature on science and religion has mushroomed during the past few years, due in part to the substantial impetus provided by the John Templeton Foundation. While it is still inappropriate to speak of ‘science and

religion' as an academic discipline, writers have illuminated this field with insights gleaned from a variety of academic backgrounds. Theologians and scientists have been among the most active, especially those scientists who have sought to integrate their religious commitments with their professional lives. Thus, at the inaugural meeting of the International Society for Science and Religion, held in 2002, substantial sub-groups focused on specific sciences – the physical sciences, the biological sciences, the human sciences, and mathematics and computing. Also in evidence, but numerically less strong, were historians and philosophers of science, who tended to address a cross-section of the sciences.

The book under review is particularly welcome because its authors tackle issues of science and religion from two unusual but informative disciplinary perspectives. Arieti is a classicist and Wilson a philosopher. Both are members of faculty at Hampden-Sydney College, a well-established liberal arts college in Virginia, where they have taught courses on science and religion that have attracted Templeton awards. The book, which is clearly intended for students, offers a close reading of a number of texts, principally in ancient and medieval philosophy. There are substantial discussions of the views of the pre-Socratics, of Aristotle, and of Plato on the nature of the physical universe, and on what we can know about God; some of these early authors also reflected on the relationship between these two problem areas. While this is familiar territory, Arieti and Wilson have been successful in presenting early philosophy in a lively and insightful manner. They often assist the student by explicating complex issues with the aid of familiar examples and analogies. There are also some pleasant surprises; for example, we encounter arguments for the existence of god(s) presented by Cicero, an author not usually discussed in introductory philosophy texts. Arieti and Wilson also clearly delight in Xenophanes' witty criticisms of those writers who tended to anthropomorphize the gods.

After introducing the main themes in ancient thought, the authors focus on the ways in which certain writers sought to reconcile a scientific understanding of the world with an active role for God. A paradigm text is the *Timaeus*, in which Plato argues, *contra* the pre-Socratics, that the world has been made by a rational creator. Yet, while clearly impressed by Plato's forthright arguments, Arieti and Wilson have little sympathy for Neo-Platonism, which they dismiss as being based on allegory; the use of allegory, they claim, 'is a sham approach to philosophical truth' (115). Clearly then, Arieti and Wilson are imposing strict criteria for the inclusion of authors in their canon. One who does make the grade is Philo of Alexandria, because he proved so effective in reconciling Moses and Plato. Philo's transcendent God was both the creator of the world, as recounted in Genesis, and Plato's craftsman using the pure ideas of geometry. Philo thus neatly fits the bill as a reconciler of science and religion.

The narrative subsequently branches, with three chapters devoted to medieval attempts to articulate the relation between science – principally

Aristotelianism – and religion. In contrast to many such introductory texts that focus solely on Christianity, Arieti and Wilson address the three Abrahamic faiths. In the case of Islam, we see the tension between Avicenna, who adopted a rationalist perspective, and the more conservative al Ghazali, who asserted the primacy of the Koran over the feeble efforts of the philosophers. One of the issues on which al Ghazali adopted a traditionalist stance concerned the age of the world, rejecting Aristotle's view that it had existed from eternity. By contrast, Maimonides, the main Jewish writer discussed, sought to reconcile Aristotelianism with the Torah. Not surprisingly, the chapter on Christianity is dominated by Aquinas, who is portrayed as the subtly philosophical reconciler.

Although they claim to be addressing issues of the relation between science and religion, Arieti and Wilson have, up to this point in their discussion, focused on writers, such as Aristotle, Plato, Averröes, Maimonides, and Aquinas, who feature in the histories of both philosophy and science. Although the inclusion of the above writers, and of many aspects of both metaphysics and epistemology within the history of science is uncontentious, it is surprising that Arieti and Wilson pay so little attention to early developments in science (narrowly defined) that clearly deserve attention in a work on science and religion. For example, Greek astronomy is barely mentioned. Such absences suggest that the book should have been entitled *The Philosophical and the Divine*. Not only would this be a better guide to the book's contents from the perspective of the modern reader, but it would have saved the authors from having to evoke science when they are principally concerned with what we would understand as philosophy. It is notable that, in places, they forget about science and lapse into talk about philosophy. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the concluding section to one of the chapters which begins 'God bothers philosophers' (118). God may also bother scientists, but Arieti and Wilson are primarily concerned with the ways in which rational thought – which should not be taken as co-extensive with science – has impacted on religion. This book is a contribution to an important narrative that examines the necessarily blurred but often troubled intersection between philosophy and religion in which science (however defined) has played a significant part.

Unfortunately, the book loses direction after the chapters dealing with the medieval period, and it should perhaps have terminated there. Only about one-quarter of the entire text is directed to the period beginning with the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. Moreover, more than half of this final quarter is devoted to contemporary issues, principally to analysing William Dembski's arguments for intelligent design, but with brief excursions into the views of Keith Ward, Arthur Peacocke, and John Polkinghorne. Although Arieti and Wilson are justified in demonstrating the vacuity of Dembski's arguments, their failure to take seriously the many attempts at reconciling science and religion over the past four centuries is disappointing. The nineteenth century,

which witnessed a spectacular growth in the sciences, is covered in a mere four pages. Not only did evolutionary theory, materialism, and many other demanding problems attract attention to the science–religion interface but there were also extraordinary attempts at resolving these issues. For many religious people in the nineteenth century the need for reconciliation was never greater. More generally, the authors’ discussion of such scientists as Newton and Darwin is too brief and rather uninformed. The reader is left with the impression that because these scientists were not philosophers they can make no worthwhile contribution to our understanding of the human condition. As in the earlier part of the book, the authors focus on several philosophers whose works appear in the standard canon – Descartes, Leibniz, Kant and, I was pleased to note, Hume, who saw no need to compromise.

Arieti and Wilson offer the reader a rather pessimistic historical perspective, according to which ancient philosophers made the most sophisticated attempts to resolve the problem of reconciling knowledge (including knowledge of the physical world) with the human need to live in a world that was endowed with religious meaning. With the elaboration of science over the centuries it became increasingly difficult to produce any philosophically respectable form of reconciliation, the intelligent design argument being but the latest in a long line of failed attempts. According to this narrative, the project of reconciliation has been a failure.

Yet Arieti and Wilson conclude their book with some thought-provoking suggestions about future strategies. Rather than trying to reconcile science and religion, they propose that we adopt a Socratic stance, acknowledging the limitations to our knowledge. Thus, we should not raise matters of faith to the status of unquestionable truths; indeed, Arieti and Wilson seem to dispense with revelation entirely. Instead they emphasize the need to implement Aristotle’s programme for ethical action. In so doing, on their view, we have to adopt a rigorous philosophical position and refuse to be seduced by the comfort that a religious outlook can provide. The philosopher then is necessarily at odds with religion. But perhaps their whole analysis is based on an unduly narrow conception of religion? Religion should not be equated with blind faith in revelation. As one Quaker source reflects:

We understand the Bible as a record arising from ... struggles to comprehend God’s ways with people. The same Spirit which inspired the writers of the Bible is the Spirit which gives us understanding of it: it is this which is important to us rather than the literal words of scripture. Hence, while quotations from the Bible may illuminate a truth for us, we would not use them to prove a truth.

(*Quaker Faith & Practice* (London: The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quaker) in Britain 1995), sect. 27.34)

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David Cheetham *John Hick: A Critical Introduction and Reflection*.
 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003). Pp. 196. £39.95 (Hbk). ISBN 0 7546 1599 5.

David Cheetham's book aims to provide a comprehensive account of the work of John Hick. It is clear that the author is appreciative of Hick's contribution to the philosophy of religion and he draws attention to the way that Hick's career has been marked by an impressive ability to discern and tackle important questions of the day. This book is useful both for exploring Hick's work and the academic context in which it takes place. Indeed, Cheetham shows how Hick's work fits into the wider debate and how the discussions he enters, or begins, take shape.

Cheetham begins his book with a chapter entitled 'Faith and knowledge', also the title of Hick's first book. It is notable that Cheetham focuses more on Hick's earliest contributions than many other commentators, who are often primarily concerned with Hick's more controversial religious pluralism. Cheetham discusses Hick's 'experiencing-as' and the way that the world can be interpreted at the religious level in any way humans prefer, and as Cheetham comments 'It is this fundamental building block in Hick's thought that has profoundly affected his subsequent philosophical and theological work' (36). This religiously ambiguous world is sustained by what Hick has named 'epistemic distance', another of his building blocks. Cheetham goes on to discuss the realism and non-realism and verification and falsification debates, where he places Hick in conversation with the contributors to the logical positivism discussion, A. J. Ayer, Antony Flew, R. B. Braithwaite, and R. M. Hare. Cheetham describes Hick's contribution that claims could be verified, or indeed falsified, eschatologically. This suggests the need for a discussion about the coherence of the afterlife which follows in the third chapter.

The second chapter 'Evil and soul-making', examines Hick's work on suffering and theodicy, most significantly presented in *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Macmillan, 1966). Cheetham discusses Hick's theodicy and his claim that evil is necessary in a world in which we are free and have the opportunity for 'soul-making'. He then considers the objections to Hick's free-will defence made by Antony Flew and J. L. Mackie. This leads on to a discussion of Hick's suggestion of ultimate universal salvation, which Cheetham discusses in light of Linda Zagzebski's response to Hick. Ultimately, the discussion centres on the question of whether a universalist outcome and a genuine account of freedom are

compatible. The absence of any contribution from Hick to this particular element of the debate is demonstrative of the fact that he does not explore this question sufficiently to provide an adequate account of human freedom with which to support his universalism. Cheetham concludes that the outcome of such a debate will depend on individual preference as to whether freedom or salvation is most highly valued, and notes that according to Hick, God's love will find a way.

'Death and eternal life', the third chapter, directly reflects the title of Hick's third major book. However, by the time of its publication (1977) Hick had already presented his 'Copernican revolution' in his collected volume *God and the Universe of Faiths* (London: Macmillan, 1973). Although mention is made of Hick's interest in religious pluralism, it is not looked at in any detail until the final chapter of the book. This is, no doubt, a necessity of Cheetham's thematic approach, but does mean that there is some loss of the sense of chronology, which is so important in understanding Hick.

In chapter 4, which Cheetham has entitled 'The universe of faiths', despite it still being concerned with issues covered in Hick's *Death and Eternal Life* and not in his book *God and the Universe of Faiths*, there is a section in which the author examines Hick's consistency with himself. Whilst in many ways this may be an important exercise, it suggests that Cheetham is trying to find a greater cohesiveness in Hick's works than they warrant, or than Hick himself suggests that they have. Indeed in the postscript, Cheetham writes: 'from the point of view of [Hick's] *The Fifth Dimension* (1999), there is a sense that all that has gone before is not really very important' (176). Hick has elsewhere criticized this very approach of critics, pointing out that he does not write with the primary concern of remaining consistent with earlier work. So, although Cheetham is aware of the sense of development and 'journeying' within Hick's work, he nevertheless assumes that it can be considered as one consistent body of thought rather than work which, whilst building on some aspects of previous writings, leaves some earlier conclusions and concerns behind.

Aside from this, some confusion creeps into Cheetham's discussion in this chapter. He challenges Hick's doctrine of epistemic distance, in light of Hick's claims about our experiences after death. Cheetham's contention is that the very existence of an afterlife would remove epistemic distance. Indeed he comments, 'The inescapable conclusion still seems to be that the afterlife experience would shatter epistemic distance' (121), presumably because he believes such an experience would show unambiguously that there is a God. However, I would suggest that this is not obviously the case. The very fact of a further life would not prove the existence of God, just as for Hick the fact of this life does not. Even if we were to accept that experiencing further life after death would demonstrate that there is a God, this does not mean that it would also demonstrate what *kind* of God exists. This argument would only really be valid if Hick's proposal was that the next stage after this existence is one where there is an unambiguous

revelation of God and Hick does not make this claim. Indeed, Hick suggests that further lives will also be ambiguous with regard to God's existence, so that they, like this world, allow us the opportunity for soul-making. Consequently, we do not know whether further lives will be as open to interpretation about God as this one is, or whether we will have more or less experience of God in them. Hick does not express a view on this question and so it seems to be far from an 'inescapable conclusion' that further existence after this life would destroy epistemic distance.

Cheetham usefully clarifies Hick's position concerning the status of world religions and their different truth-claims in the final chapter 'Religious pluralism'. He claims that 'Hick actually *affirms* difference in religion rather than seeking to bulldoze religions into the image of a "first-order" pluralistic religion' (132–133). Many have argued that, in fact, this is exactly what Hick does, and so although Cheetham effectively dismisses the criticisms of some of Hick's less careful commentators, there are further problems with this position. Cheetham notes: 'Hick has evaded the problem of incompatibility between the numerous religious truth-claims by emphasizing their soteriological function. Or else, it might be said that Hick has characterized "truth" *ethically* rather than metaphysically' (138). This observation draws attention to one of the difficulties with Hick's position. Although he suggests a resolution to the conflict between religious truth-claims, by focusing on the fruits of religion, this approach clearly sidesteps rather than resolves the problem. In effect Hick redefines 'religion' in order to show that the world religions are indeed as homogenous as he claims.

Chapter 5 includes a short discussion on Hick's Christology in the context of 'Christology and pluralism'. Here Cheetham writes, 'it is slightly misleading to make reference to his Christological thinking in sole connection with his pluralistic hypothesis because much of his writing in this area reflects other concerns'. However, he then continues, 'Nevertheless, the driving force behind his revision of traditional formulations is the existence of other religions' (148). This statement perhaps oversimplifies the more complex motivations accurately suggested in the first sentence. Certainly, it seems that the existence of other religions has more and more become a driving force for Hick; however, it is, as Cheetham shows, only one of three major concerns for Hick in thinking about Jesus Christ. He is also interested in the historical and logical issues in orthodox Christological teaching. Interestingly, Cheetham notes that 'whereas Hick seems to dismiss as nonsensical (as a metaphysical assertion) the idea of Jesus being simultaneously fully human and fully divine, he is nonetheless able to conceive of "the Real" which transcends such polarities as "personal or impersonal", "good or evil", "purposive or non-purposive"' (151).

Throughout the book, Cheetham's primary interest in Hick is in his philosophy of religion rather than the theological side of his work. The claim might be made that one of the most notable developments in Hick is his gradual move from

Christianity, to a general theism, to being able to assert only a 'transcategorical' ultimate Reality. Although this progression is clear in Cheetham's account, he does not engage with the consequences of this as much as one might expect. Indeed, the point has been well made by critics that, given his rejection of the particularity of the Christian revelation, Hick no longer has any grounding to assert a God of Love, and thus his theodicy and theory of universalism, for example, become untenable. Cheetham does acknowledge that if Hick's Real cannot ultimately be verified or falsified, then 'Hick has ceased to be a realist and has joined the non-realist camp' (143). However, he defends Hick from this outcome by discussing different types of verification and suggests that 'to verify the existence of God is not a simple or direct exercise; rather it is an indirect and experiential affair' (143). Thus, the truth of God's existence is verified in a similar way to Hick's suggestion for discerning the salvific value of world religions: by some experiential criteria. However, Cheetham also points out that Hick's theory is falsifiable and, for example, all non-Christians ending up in hell would show Hick's explanation of religious pluralism to be false.

In defence of criticisms of Hick, Cheetham asserts that 'Hick's pluralism is not meant to be a new religion in its own right' (144). He is right to emphasize that this is Hick's understanding of his work. Indeed, Hick does not suggest any way in which there could be access to the Real except through the existing religious systems. Thus, Hick's theory is perhaps better described as a 'meta-theory', and so 'stands beyond' (132) rather than competes against the established religions. However, it may be argued that more accurately what it does is override the world religions. Hick does create a new religious system which he claims is more satisfactory than the alternatives, even though he incorporates a version of those alternatives into his scheme.

Cheetham covers a great deal in this book and recreates the debates in an interesting and accessible way. Thus, this volume would be of interest to those looking for an introductory volume to Hick, as well as being useful to those who have a more specific interest in understanding and critiquing Hick. The aim of the book is to cover the breadth of Hick's contribution to the philosophy of religion, rather than focusing on a particular aspect of his work as many volumes on Hick do. Cheetham's purpose, as is clearly stated in the title, is to provide a critical introduction to, and reflection on, John Hick's work in the philosophy of religion. There is no doubt that he not only does this, but also provides a valuable introduction to the five main areas of debate which he covers.

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Michael J. Harris *Divine Command Ethics: Jewish and Christian Perspectives*. (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003). Pp. xiii + 207. £55.00 (Hbk). ISBN 0 145 29769 9.

This book, based upon a doctoral thesis and written by an Orthodox rabbi, attempts to determine how the Jewish tradition answers Plato's famous 'Euthyphro question', restated as (3):

Is it the case that:

- (1) an act is right because God commanded (or wanted, or willed or approved) it,

or, alternatively, is it the case that:

- (2) God commanded (or wanted or willed or approved) this act because it is right?

In order properly to assess the doctrinal tendencies of different authoritative Jewish texts, it is necessary to pin down precisely what kinds of ideas belong to (1) (referred to by Harris as DCT – divine command theory), and which ideas are versions of (2) (referred to by Harris as SMU – the shared moral universe of God and humanity). One of the book's major points is that each horn of Plato's dilemma refers to whole families of theses regarding the relationship between divine commands and morality. In his opening chapter, Harris arms the reader with a list of no fewer than seven different versions of DCT, four versions of SMU, and two versions of M, a mixed compromise thesis. Some of these make claims regarding the Torah's moral authority; others refer to the role of God's 'unrevealed will' in ethics. Some are concerned with the source of our moral knowledge, while others talk about what endows human actions with moral qualities. This conceptual taxonomy allows for some confusing possibilities. A theory might easily be counted as an instance of SMU because it views morality as ontologically independent of God, while simultaneously instantiating DCT, inasmuch as it views God as the only reliable source of true moral knowledge.

Readers acquainted with Judaism's relative lack of concern for doctrinal (as opposed to practical) orthodoxy might well wonder why anyone would expect the tradition to side wholly with either party to the *Euthyphro* debate. Indeed, Harris himself ultimately concludes that the Jewish canon is largely ambiguous regarding these issues. The second chapter, 'DCT and SMU in philosophy and Jewish thought', tacitly explains the book's real motivation. After a perfunctory nod to Christian philosophers, Harris proceeds to catalogue quotations from the works of various prominent contemporary Jewish thinkers who appear to claim that Judaism firmly embraces one option or the other: Immanuel Jakobowitz, Marvin Fox, and Len Goodman identify Judaism with DCT, while Aharon Lichtenstein,

David Hartman, and Shubert Spero support SMU. Yeshayahu Leibowitz proposes a 'conflict solution', claiming that the body of divine commands known as Jewish law is radically God-oriented and completely unconcerned with the anthropocentric goals of the moral realm. If so many authors insist on taking sides on the Jewish DCT/SMU question, perhaps even a demonstration of the tradition's ambiguity might constitute a move towards the light. Most importantly, two respected Israeli philosophers, Avi Sagi and Daniel Statman, have published detailed defences of the notion that Judaism is, in the main, committed to SMU. Much of Harris's book is devoted to explicit criticism of their work.

Chapter 3 considers the bearing of several biblical texts on the issue at hand. The first encounter with biblical evidence foreshadows much of what follows. Harris considers an argument suggested by Shubert Spero and Ze'ev Falk: the divine commands of the Torah are presented by scripture as the stipulations of a covenantal agreement between God and Israel. However, covenantal obligations can only be binding upon people who *already* recognize the prerequisite moral obligation to observe covenantal agreements. The Torah must assume that at least one moral obligation (the obligation to fulfil covenants) preceded God's commands, implying SMU. Harris counters this argument by bringing in one of the many subtle versions of DCT formulated in his first chapter (DCTNW). That version remains true whenever 'God's unrevealed will is a necessary condition of the moral rightness of an act' (7). The biblical account does not rule out the possibility that the obligation to fulfil covenantal agreements gains its force from its agreement with God's *unrevealed* will, leaving scripture safe for DCTNW.

Harris has equipped himself with so many weak and variegated formulations of DCT that it is hardly surprising that the prophets and rabbis failed to produce a text that was strictly inconsistent with all of them. In fact, it would be quite difficult to produce such a text unless the author had a copy of Harris's book to hand, in order to know exactly what to avoid! Similarly, weak versions of SMU guarantee that practically no text will unambiguously rule out either horn of Plato's dilemma. And so chapter 3 continues, offering informed and intelligent readings of the sin of Adam and Eve, Abraham's dialogue with God regarding the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, and so on. In each instance, Harris considers which of the various versions of DCT and SMU are refuted, supported, or left untouched by the text in question.

Chapter 4 investigates rabbinic texts and concepts that might be thought to support SMU. Here, we get to see Harris take advantage of his classical Talmudic education. He presents these materials very clearly, supplying the uninitiated reader with background explanations as needed. The passages cited invite a variety of arguments for SMU. For instance, the Talmudic claim that there are ethical commandments, 'which, if they had not been written [in the Torah], by right should have been written' (73), clearly supports the notion of moral obligations whose force does not derive from revelation. However, as Harris once again

points out, it is still possible that those obligations are ultimately grounded in God's unrevealed will. Talmudic sages sometimes challenge the morality of divine commands, and such challenges would appear to be grounded in an independent SMU ethic. Harris points out that these challenges might also be understood as stemming from a moral sensibility informed by the Torah itself. In that case, apparent challenges to the morality of particular divine commands would be better understood as demands that those commands be interpreted in a manner consistent with the body of divine law as a whole. And so Harris continues, examining additional Talmudic texts and concepts, along with the writings of individual thinkers, including Saadia Gaon, Nissim Gaon, Maimonides, Judah Halevi, Nachmanides, Meir Halevi Abulafia, Abraham Isaac Kook, and Meir Simkha of Dvinsk. In each case, he offers interpretations that leave at least the weaker forms of DCT unscathed. It becomes clear, however, that there is some kind of general consensus in the tradition that the revealed Torah does not constitute the only means of access to ethical knowledge.

Chapter 5 interrogates rabbinic texts that would appear to support DCT. Harris contends that many of them are indeed most naturally read as implying various forms of DCT. Most strikingly, one Talmudic statement condemns a certain liturgical formulation because it '[indicates that] the commandments of the Holy One [are an expression of] mercy, whereas [in fact] they are simply divine decrees' (107). He also finds support for DCT in quotations from various famous rabbis, including Ovadiah of Bertinoro, Abraham Isaiah Karelitz, Abraham Isaac Kook, and Samson Raphael Hirsch. In spite of this evidence, Harris does not claim to have demonstrated that the tradition as a whole should be understood as supporting DCT. Rather, he uses these quotations to counter Sagi and Statman's claims for SMU, while explicitly criticizing their own interpretations of the particular texts in question.

Chapter 6 treats the story of the binding of Isaac (in Hebrew: the Akedah), the biblical episode most closely associated with the *Euthyphro* question. Harris is anxious to demonstrate that the Akedah does not necessarily imply DCT. First he considers the 'conflict thesis', which he identifies with Kierkegaard's 'teleological suspension of the ethical', as well as with Leibowitz's views mentioned above: divine commands do not underwrite moral obligations, but they do trump moral obligations. Harris is somewhat uncomfortable with a doctrine that strips morality of its categorical authority. He prefers to develop a reading of the Akedah that is indifferent to the SMU/DCT controversy. Citing the Hebrew text of Genesis, Harris argues that God did not *command* Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, but rather *requested* it of him. The Akedah becomes a personal test of Abraham's willingness to give up freely to God that which is most precious to him. A person of faith simply cannot ignore a direct divine request. The ethical weight of Isaac's apparently impending murder is neutralized by Abraham's certainty that God will somehow arrange for everything to work out for the best. The story's

'happy ending' bears out Abraham's faith. The remainder of the chapter describes how traditional Jewish exegesis also tries to neutralize the ethical conundrum posed by the Akedah.

The final chapter considers the biblical commandment to wipe out the nation called Amalek. Harris believes that the unadorned Deuteronomic text obviously clashes with conventional ethics, so that it must imply either the 'conflict thesis' or some form of DCT. In order to leave room for SMU, he entertains the rather surprising suggestion (especially from the pen of an Orthodox rabbi!) that the biblical verses involved may have been interpolated into the text of Deuteronomy by Satan.

Moving on to rabbinic interpretations of the commandment, Harris again contests the views of Avi Sagi, who has made the rabbinic treatment of the Amalek issue a main pillar of his argument for the pervasiveness of SMU in the Jewish tradition. Sagi tried to demonstrate that the rabbis were always uncomfortable with the Amalek commandment: either they emphasized Amalek's depravity in order to justify its annihilation, or they removed the command's moral sting by treating it as merely allegorical. In their legal discussions, the rabbis piled up legal technicalities, reducing the irksome biblical command to a dead letter. Sagi claims that the rabbis' consternation points to their tacit assent to SMU. If the rabbis had favoured DCT, they would have assumed that, like any other divine command, the Amalek commandment must be moral by definition, and they would never have been troubled by it to begin with.

Harris offers a number of responses to Sagi. First, he mentions that some classical exegetes remained silent on the Amalek issue, implying their indifference to its alleged ethical difficulties. Furthermore, the rabbis' consternation may be interpreted as stemming from the apparent contradiction between the Amalek command and certain general principles of revealed Torah morality, rather than from respect for the dictates of purely human morality. Harris also tries to demonstrate that the legal discussions regarding Amalek were rarely motivated by moral unease or intended to neutralize the commandment's practical significance.

Unfortunately, this book leaves several crucial methodological issues almost untouched. (1) What precautions must be taken when assigning opinions to ancient writers regarding an issue which, apparently, did not directly interest many of them? (An extremely exaggerated analogy: some biblical texts describe arithmetic calculations; does it make sense to ask whether their authors believed that mathematical equations are analytic truths?) (2) Jewish law self-consciously combines elements of divine revelation with creative human interpretation. How does one ask the *Euthyphro* question in connection with the obligations formulated by this joint divine/human project? (3) When we look for conflicts between divine commands and morality in ancient texts, exactly *whose* moral ideas should we take into account? For instance, Harris's discussion of Amalek

assumes that genocidal warfare is immoral. Would the original readers of Deuteronomy have agreed?

In any event, this book should certainly be required reading for anyone interested in Jewish attitudes towards the *Euthyphro* question. It makes a large collection of relevant traditional texts available and understandable, even to an audience unacquainted with rabbinic literature, and it offers careful and informed discussions of their philosophical significance. The book's many endnotes and copious bibliography may also serve as a guide to the relevant contemporary Jewish literature.

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Neil A. Manson (ed.) *God and Design: The Teleological Argument and Modern Science*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2003). Pp. xvi + 376.
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Towards the end of *A Discourse concerning A New Planet* (1640), John Wilkins, later to be a founding Fellow of the Royal Society and Bishop of Chester, affirms not only that consideration of the beings found on Earth gives proper cause for 'Admiration of the Deitie' but also that the 'great order and constancy' to be perceived in the 'Cœlestiall Bodies' shows that they 'could not at first be made but by a wise Providence, nor since preserved without a powerfull Inhabitant, nor so perpetually governed without a skilfull guide'. Knowledge of the natural order is thus seen to 'conduce to the proving of a God, and making Men religious', as well as confirming 'the Truth of the Holy Scriptures' (239f). As later works, such as by Ray, Derham, Paley, and the authors of the Bridgewater Treatises illustrate, for over two centuries developments in scientific knowledge were widely interpreted as supporting Wilkins's general conclusion.

This collection of nineteen papers that Neil Manson has edited, and to which he has written a helpful introduction, provides a useful presentation of current thought about the so-called 'design argument'. Five of the papers have been previously (but very recently) published. The collection as whole not only indicates how far we are today from the scientific understanding available to Wilkins, and how subtle and complex some aspects of the debates have become. It also shows that, in spite of a post-Darwinian decline in esteem, the so-called argument from design still receives attention from some distinguished philosophers, scientists, and theologians.

Since the collection covers a wide range of topics, points of view and modes of argument, its contents provide a useful survey of the contemporary debates, sometimes highly contentious debates, about the reasoning and evidence used in current teleological arguments. As, however, the papers deal with issues that extend from the technical to the straightforward, they differ considerably in their accessibility. Some of the papers include modes of argument using formal logic or assume scientific knowledge that will not be easily grasped, let alone evaluated, by readers unfamiliar with such methods and material. Others are more unsophisticated in style: Jan Narveson, for example, reaches the conclusion that theology should not 'be regarded as a respectable entry on the ledger books of science, via versions of the argument from design' (104), at the end of a lively piece whose presentation evokes echoes of popular knockabout anti-religious tracts – although this is not to say that he is not justified when he points out radical deficiencies in arguments supposedly supporting theistic belief.

The conclusions defended in the papers encompass the spectrum of the religion and science debate. Simon Conway Morris, for instance, concludes that 'science has for too long been regarded as the enemy of religion, but strangely astronomy and evolutionary biology now suggest that we are something very special – so long as we remember who we are and how we came to be here' (344). Morris is professor of evolutionary paleobiology at Cambridge. In contrast, D. H. Mellor, Emeritus Professor of philosophy at the same university, suggests that those who put forward 'anthropic intuitions about the alleged improbability of the features of our universe that enable it to support life' do not need 'a theory' to explain why their intuitions are right 'but some kind of therapy to remove' them (227).

Richard Swinburne concludes that 'if there is a God' it is 'significantly probable that there would be a universe fine-tuned for the occurrence of human bodies' (120) with the kinds of capacities that we enjoy (or, at least, those of us who benefit from first-world resources, education and opportunities). In reaching this conclusion Swinburne appears confident that we can perceive what would follow from being 'a perfectly good creator' (114). Elliott Sober, in contrast, points to the problematic nature of claims about what God '*would* have wanted to do'. Are we in a position to suppose that we can presume to predict what an 'omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly benevolent' God would produce? For Sober, '[t]he assumption that God can do anything is part of the problem, not the solution. An engineer who is more limited would be more predictable' (41).

It is tempting for a reviewer to enter into the fray depicted by these papers. To do so would be to add another, uninvited paper and another point of view to this stimulating and diverse collection. Perhaps, however, those who study these papers may usefully bear three questions in mind. They are not questions that are ignored in the debates examined by these papers but raise issues that are pertinent to all the arguments being canvassed.

The first asks if it is credible to attempt, from our perspective and with the information available to us, to make sense of a cosmos of an order of magnitude that suggests that it has lasted some 10 billion years and contains 100 billion galaxies, each with 100 billion stars. Faced with the enormity of it, is not Sextus Empiricus's *epoche* – suspension of judgement – a properly rational response to troublesome questions of the meaning and worth of all that we find to be? The second asks whether the debate about the design argument arises from a human unwillingness to accept that accidents occur. Is the attempt to find a purpose, a point, a meaning, an intelligible structure in things as they are, inspired by a deep unwillingness to entertain the possibility of the radical, the absolutely radical, contingency of what is? When, therefore, signs of design are inferred (or, as Del Ratzsch's paper interestingly argues from Thomas Reid, are directly perceived as such), are they read into what would be disturbingly horrific if they were not present?

The third question asks how the creative activity of God is to be understood. The problem here is a combination of the hoary ones of the actual mode of divine activity and the problem of natural evil. If the creativity of God, presuming that by this is meant some form of intentional activity that effects (or at least significantly influences) states of affairs, is confined to the fundamental determination of the cosmic characteristics highlighted by the so-called anthropic principle, the resulting concept of God seems very remote. Is it too remote to have any religious significance? Is God appropriate for faith if the divine activity is confined to tinkering with what emerges in the initial jiffy or two of the hot Big Bang? On the other hand, if ways can be found, compatible with current forms of cosmological and biological understanding, to hold that what is now recognized to be the case has come about because of the will and superintendence of divine agency, is the resulting creator a proper object of worship in view of what has emerged and is currently the case? Observation of the results suggests to some the comment 'Should do better'.

As this collection shows, the debates about God and design are far from dead and can be intellectually fascinating. Those who engage in them, however, must ask of any allegedly theistic conclusions that emerge whether the 'God' that is found in those conclusions is either so remote as to have no significant link with the God that people actually worship, or so responsible for bringing about what is actually experienced that the divine becomes an object of deep complaint rather than a source of comfort and meaning. The debate will doubtless continue. Manson's collection will help clarify the current state of some of its aspects.

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