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Book reviews

Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Pp. xiii + 428. £40·00 (US$59·95) Hbk; 14·95 (US$18·95) Pbk.

This is a fine, wide-ranging collection of essays, containing contributions by some of the world's best-known Kierkegaard scholars, as well as by some less well-known names. The publisher's claim, that 'advanced students and specialists will find a conspectus of recent developments in the interpretation of Kierkegaard' is perfectly fair, though there is good reason to be more sceptical about the accompanying assertion that 'new readers will find this the most convenient and accessible guide to Kierkegaard currently available'. The general pitch of the articles is reasonably high, and so the book will be of most use to those with at least some familiarity with Kierkegaard. That said, some of the articles serve as summaries of, or useful introductions to, fuller works on aspects of Kierkegaard for which their authors have become well-known (e.g. Bruce Kirmmse on the historical context of Kierkegaard's Denmark, M. Jamie Ferreira on the 'leap' of ethical and religious transition).

As well as the above, there are essays on a diverse range of Kierkegaardian themes and texts. Roger Poole offers a survey of twentieth-century Kierkegaard reception; George Pattison an illuminating piece on the multi-faceted notion of 'the aesthetic', especially in relation to an 'age of reflection'; Merold Westphal a clear overview of the Kierkegaard–Hegel relationship; and Andrew Cross a piece on Kierkegaard's views of irony. Central themes of some important texts get an essay to themselves: different layers of meaning in *Fear and Trembling* (Ronald M. Green); the concept of repetition in the book of that title (Edward F. Mooney); anxiety in *The Concept of Anxiety* (Gordon D. Marino); despair in *The Sickness Unto Death* (Alastair Hannay); and the meaning of love as a commandment in *Works of Love* (Philip Quinn). Other texts, such as *Either/Or* and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, crop up in several essays (though C. Stephen Evans's article looks specifically at 'realist' and 'anti-realist' resonances in the latter). Further articles explore Kierkegaard's debt to classical moral thought, especially Aristotle (Robert C. Roberts); the relationship between grace and freedom (Timothy P. Jackson); the general concept of 'religiousness' and Christology (Hermann Deuser); and the irreducibility of Kierkegaardian religiosity in the light of post-modern concerns (Klaus-M. Kodalle).

The standard of the essays is high; there are no real lame ducks. Kierke-

gaard has been appropriated by a wide diversity of interpretative traditions, and the collection gives something of the flavour of this. One of the key differences in approach is between those for whom the expressly religious content of Kierkegaardian texts is still very much a live issue and those, such as Hannay, who seem to hold that for Kierkegaard still to be 'relevant', he must be de-Christianized. At the end of his rich and thought-provoking piece, Hannay considers the possibility that the tricky concept of Kierkegaardian despair, once grasped, might be 'obsolete', or that its existential core 'must and can be rescued from the Christian framework within which [the pseudonym] Anti-Climacus writes' (348). It's clear that many of the other contributors would dispute such claims.

Mention of a pseudonym raises another important issue: the vexed question of the relation of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms to each other (and to that puzzling pseudo-pseudonym, 'S. Kierkegaard'). Poole, in his survey of Kierkegaard reception, complains about what he labels 'blunt reading': a failure to acknowledge that understanding Kierkegaard's polyphony is vital to understanding the nature of his various texts. At least, that is part of what 'blunt reading' seems to mean. Poole glosses it thus:

> ... that kind of reading that refuses, as a matter of principle, to accord a literary status to the text; that refuses the implications of the pseudonymous technique; that misses the irony; that is ignorant of the reigning Romantic ironic conditions obtaining when Kierkegaard wrote; and that will not acknowledge, on religious grounds, that an 'indirect communication' is at least partly bound in with the *pathos* of the lived life (60).

These are all important issues, but to place such a blizzard of substantially different ideas under a single heading itself seems inappropriately 'blunt' to me. For instance, agreeing that it is important to recognize what one pseudonym, Johannes Climacus, calls 'the incessant activity of irony' in many Kierkegaard texts hardly entails going the full Derridean mile with Poole. And as Cross's article brings out well, different views of irony are at work in different Kierkegaardian texts.

How 'blunt' are the readings in this volume? Well, most of the contributors attribute quotes from the *Postscript* to Climacus, from *The Sickness Unto Death* to Anti-Climacus, and so on, but I suspect Poole would claim that sometimes no more than lip-service is paid to Kierkegaard's 'wish' and 'prayer' to 'keep the pseudonyms apart'. (In the case of some contributors, he would be right.) The separateness of the pseudonyms' different outlooks is an important issue, but Poole pushes an important point too far. He asserts that works such as those of C. Stephen Evans – who is ridiculed for subtitling his book *Passionate Reason* 'Making sense of Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*' – are 'the risible side of "blunt reading"' (61), because of Evans's effort to '"make sense" of something that is taken to be in a state of disarray, or confusion, from which it has to be rescued by the efforts of the academic

philosopher' (61). Whether or not one agrees with Evans's interpretation of the Climacus writings, this is an unfair dismissal of the careful textual work which he has done over the years. Exactly which of the sins of 'bluntness' is Evans supposed to have committed? And as Evans himself puts it in his contribution to this volume, Poole's claim (in his *Kierkegaard: the Indirect Communication*) that Kierkegaard's works consist of 'literary machines that … carry out no function at all' can be just the kind of a priori straightjacket that Poole argues characterizes what he calls '"theologically-driven" readings of Kierkegaard' (161).

Given the diversity of themes, there will be an element of arbitrariness in any selection as to which essays to comment upon in further detail. I will therefore restrict myself to brief comments upon a couple of problems that struck me in two pieces: those of Cross and Evans.

Cross's essay does an admirably clear job of introducing the roles of irony in *The Concept of Irony* (Kierkegaard's dissertation) and the *Postscript*, with the aim of comparing the two. He concludes that the figure of the ironist in the later text is an advance on that of the former, insofar as the *Postscript*'s figure is aware of a 'way out' of the purely negative freedom of irony. This 'way out' is the ethical life of self-choice. Cross puts it thus: the ironist 'does not take the step of choosing himself ethically, but he sees that and how it can be done' (149). Cross's account is interesting, but there are several problems with this claim. First, how genuine an advance would this be? That is to say, given the importance which Climacus attaches to *appropriation*, in what way, exactly, is simply knowing about, but not appropriating, an alternative life-possibility an advance? Relatedly, what of the possibility that the kind of subjective understanding which is so important to Climacus can only genuinely be viewed *as* understanding once it has been appropriated into one's life? And, finally, how much of a hold can we really get on the *Postscript*'s rather slippery conception of 'the ethical'? Cross acknowledges this point (153), but it's not clear that he sees the threat it poses to his argument.

Few can have spent longer with the *Postscript* than Evans. In his contribution here, he sets himself the task of investigating its apparently contradictory claims about the nature of God, in relation to the 'realism'/'anti-realism' debate. It is easy to find passages which appear to support theological 'realism' (several references to an ostensibly traditional view of God as creator); similarly easy to find apparently 'anti-realist' passages. Though himself a card-carrying 'realist', Evans admits, as a precursor to the above-mentioned dispute with Poole, that 'there are no neutral, non-controversial theories that will give us a method for objectively settling the question as to how Kierkegaard should be read' (160). But throughout, Evans takes it for granted that realism and anti-realism are intelligible alternatives: there is no engagement with the Wittgensteinian line, urged by D. Z. Phillips and others, that both are confusions. Relatedly, Evans makes

the prima facie reasonable claim that we cannot believe in or trust God without 'already believ[ing] in objective truth' (171) and in God's 'objective reality' (*ibid.*). But, Phillips and co. would surely complain, nothing has here been done to clarify what it means to talk of *God*, specifically, as being 'objectively real': what *kind* of 'reality' is divine reality? Thus a major bone of contention between 'realists' and neo-Wittgensteinians in the philosophy of religion is overlooked.

The book's introduction by its editors is clear and accessible, and the bibliography will prove especially useful to those relatively new to the subject. This collection should be on the shelves of every serious student of Kierkegaard.

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Peter Byrne *The Moral Interpretation of Religion*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998). Pp. 178. £14·95 Pbk.

Kant's philosophy will not go away. In ethics, the past few decades have witnessed a renaissance of Kantian approaches to ethics – most notably in the work of R. M. Hare and John Rawls. There has also been a modest rebirth of interest in Kant's philosophy of religion and his effort to ground religious belief in the operations of practical (moral) reason.

The Moral Interpretation of Religion is to some extent a restatement and defence of a Kantian approach to religion. Although Byrne has his differences with Kant and some of Kant's more recent defenders (including this reviewer), he tries to make a broadly Kantian argument for a moral grounding of religious belief and to defend this position against some leading alternatives. In the course of doing this, Byrne offers penetrating critical analyses of some leading contemporary philosophical, theological, and even anthropological discussions of the relationship between religion and morality. Beyond its Kantian position taking, therefore, Byrne's study is a useful introduction to the ways in which the relationship between religion and morality has recently been understood.

The Kantian philosophy of religion Byrne defends has several key features. At its centre is belief in an ultimate link between moral effort and the successful achievement of morality's purpose: the moral perfection of the individual, the advancement of good over evil in world history and the fulfillment of human wellbeing. Because this link cannot be established solely by reference to goods internal to morality (contentment with one's virtue), it requires belief in the real (though perhaps hidden) existence of an ultimate moral order. This order is thought to be sustained by a morally determined

and real causal agency (usually conceived in personal terms as God). Because a Kantian approach to the philosophy of religion is constrained by respect for the importance of empirical warrants for knowledge, it does not try to fill in the all details of the nature of this ultimate causality. In terms of metaphysics it is thus agnostic and minimalist, even as it refuses to relinquish confidence in the real existence of the objects of its belief.

Developing the outlines of this Kantian position, Byrne rejects both Gordon Michalson's appraisal of Kant's philosophy of religion as an incoherent amalgam of contradictory philosophical and religious positions as well as my own view that the metaphysical/religious beliefs deriving from Kantian ethics are not only coherent but required by reason. Against these positions, he defends a 'middle view'. Without insisting on its rational requiredness, this view relates religion to fundamental human moral needs and articulates a common moral thread in the diversity of religious traditions. A broadly Kantian position, this view provides both a philosophy of religion as well as a hermeneutic for comparative religious study.

Having taken a stance with respect to the Kantian interpretation of religion, Byrne spends most of the remaining chapters of the book closely examining alternative ways that religion and morality have been related to one another in contemporary discussions. He devotes a chapter to Iris Murdoch's 'Moral Platonism'. Although Byrne appreciates Murdoch's sense of the centrality of the belief in moral teleology for the essence of a religious outlook, he rejects her unwillingness to accept the independent existence and causal reality of a religious reality supportive of morality. A chapter devoted to the views of D. Z. Phillips and Stuart Sutherland finds these contemporary Wittgensteinian interpretations of religion and morality no more satisfactory. Sutherland, for example, maintains that religion offers us a view of human life *sub species aeternitatis*. He believes that religion provides a regulative moral ideal for human life. However, this transcendent reality is no more causally active in the world for Sutherland than it is for Murdoch. In approaching the problem of how our striving for virtue and wellbeing can be grounded, both Sutherland and Phillips retreat to the essentially Socratic view that the good person cannot be harmed. But this contention, as Byrne reminds us, and as the Kantian interpretation has always affirmed, has serious problems. Not least of all, it assumes a kind of moral individualism and self-sufficiency that entirely omits the virtuous person's concern for the fate of other people whose suffering must qualify one's sense of moral accomplishment. Precisely to overcome the limits of this stance, the Kantian position refuses, at acknowledged epistemological risk, to renounce its insistence on the ultimate *real* union of virtue with human wellbeing.

A closing chapter positions the Kantian moral interpretation between theistic ethics, which reject the emphasis on unaided human reason, and the atheistic critiques offered by Feuerbach and Freud. Here, Byrne deftly

deploys the Euthyphro argument against any theistic criticisms of moral rationality. Sympathetic to the atheists' criticism that the Kantian position he defends amounts merely to a sophisticated form of wishful thinking, he nevertheless suggests that these criticisms miss the complex nature of morality. Drawing on William James, he observes that it is the nature of moral commitment both to create and participate in the metaphysical reality invoked to rescue it.

Byrne's impressive and comprehensive discussion is not without its flaws. As one object of his criticism, I would ask whether his rejection of the view that morality rationally *requires* religious beliefs is not premature. Byrne is right to affirm that we cannot draw a clear line between virtue and happiness, since the wellbeing of virtuous persons is often tied up (morally) with the flourishing of others. On this basis he moderates the urgency of the requirement for a religious solution to this problem, something on which I have insisted. However, what Kant's perceptive analysis of the radical purity of moral willing shows is that morality really can be an either/or. It even sometimes demands the sacrifice of everything we hold dear, including the respect and affection of those we love. Does not the Christian narrative – unlike the Socratic – tell us that the virtuous man is sometime denied the support of his closest friends and forced, by his commitments, to end life humiliated on a cross? In this demanding moral context, ultimate hopes are neither trivial nor discretionary.

Minor criticisms aside, *The Moral Interpretation of Religion* is a fascinating, useful volume. It not only makes an independent contribution to contemporary philosophy of religion; it can serve as an introduction for students at many levels to one of the most important areas of religious enquiry today.

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Peter Ochs *Peirce, Pragmatism and the Logic of Scripture*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Pp. x+361. £40 Hbk.

A complex, many-layered work, Peter Ochs's new book can be described in a number of ways. First it is a scholarly and interesting study of the philosophy of the American pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce. Since the publication of Murray Murphey's classic study *The Development of Peirce's Philosophy* in 1961, a central issue for scholarship has been the degree to which Peirce repudiated his earlier ideas and adopted a succession of distinct philosophical systems. Ochs's central interest lies in understanding the development of Peirce's thought, and much of the book is devoted to identifying the tensions, contradictions and unclarities that he was wrestling with as he

produced his most important works. But secondly Ochs's approach to the study of Peirce's thought is supposed to illustrate a distinctive strategy for reading and interpreting texts. He derives this style of reading from mediaeval rabbinical practice. But as well as employing it in reading of Peirce's texts himself, Ochs makes two more substantial claims. First, that the development of Peirce's thought involves the philosopher practising just this style of interpretation and analysis upon his earlier work. And second, the importance of this style of reading – which he generally calls 'pragmatist reading' – is itself the main lesson to be learned from Peirce's philosophical achievements.

So what is the 'pragmatic method of reading'? In Peirce's own work, 'pragmatism' is used to refer to a rule for clarifying the meanings of ideas, concepts and propositions. We explain the meaning of a proposition, for example, by listing the difference its truth would make to the experiential consequences of the various actions and interferences we can carry out in the world. I suspect that, like many others, Ochs uses the term more broadly to refer to a model of enquiry whereby we advance toward the truth, steadily correcting and revising currently accepted views under the stimulus of unwelcome inconsistencies and failed predictions. Thus pragmatic 'definition', 'reasoning' and 'reading' is a '*performance of correcting other inadequate definitions of imprecise things*'. Ochs's interpretation of Peirce is thus 'a corrective reading of his pragmatist writings for some community of readers' (5).

Chapter Two describes such reading as going through a number of stages, which are designed to discover 'the implicit text within the explicit text' (24). He explains this in two ways: first through a complex system of stages, which we shall look at below; and second as an application of some Gricean ideas. Pragmatist readings are attempts to hunt out what he calls 'textual implicatures'. The full story goes through seven stages. Four of these comprise the 'method of reading' and the others involve stages of 'interpretation'. First we collect explicit texts dealing with similar explicit arguments, and then we identify the themes, problems and 'leading tendencies' which characterize the work and which can be seen at work in the defence of particular theses. We then find, at stage three, that these 'leading tendencies are of two kinds'. Suppose we are trying to understand some text within the Cartesian philosophical tradition. Then some of these methods and tendencies will be introduced explicitly within that philosophical tradition; but others will have their home in the established practices with which the philosophical work is trying to deal. It is unsurprising that these different methods and 'leading tendencies' turn out to be in tension. We then advance to try to repair these tensions through identifying the issues, problems and methods that are distorted or misrepresented by the explicit text we are dealing with. The final stages build on this: once we understand the problems in established practice that prompted the explicit philosophical argument,

we can begin to work out how to reform both practices and philosophical views in order to arrive at an improved, 'corrected' version of what is going on. Crudely, as I understand it, we interpret the text by identifying and responding to the problems that it was dealing with, and by identifying and responding to the flaws in its presentation of a response to these difficulties. We interpret the text by identifying its errors and advancing the debate.

The chapters that deal with Peirce's own work illustrate such reading in practice. A chapter is devoted to his important early papers critical of the Cartesian tradition in philosophy, published in the late 1860s. This is followed by a discussion of his best-known papers, published ten years later, in which his pragmatism was first explicitly introduced. Next comes a discussion of Peirce's attempt to integrate his pragmatism with an adequate theory of norms, which occupied his attention from 1878 until 1903. And the first section concludes with a discussion of the important and puzzling lectures on pragmatism that were delivered at Harvard in 1903. After 1903 Peirce's work took a turn that Ochs finds so significant that he distinguishes the pragmatic writings from these later 'pragmaticistic writings'. The major difference he finds, which influences the ways in which the texts must be understood, is that where the earlier writings reveal tensions and contradictions which must be resolved and overcome, the pragmaticistic writings both display, and celebrate, vagueness and unclarity. With the earlier writing, a corrective reading must overcome contradictions, in the later writings it must remedy vagueness and indeterminacy.

So how effective is Ochs's strategy? The diagnoses and analyses he offers are bold and interesting, often appealing to factors from Peirce's biography to identify the disparate pressures to which he was subject. I am sympathetic to the idea that we understand the motive force behind the development of his thought by trying to locate the problems that he struggled with, the difficulties that led him to try new directions and engage with new issues. It may just be a reflection of my own scholarly prejudices that I prefer to locate these problems by close study of the texts and manuscripts rather than by looking for broad abstract tensions which are manifested in the themes and tendencies that Ochs looks to. What sorts of tensions and problems are identified? I occasionally worried that the ambitious programme dictated the form taken by the interpretations of different stages of Peirce's thought and that close examination of the texts would not always support them. Ochs finds a deep unresolved tensions between 'conceptualism and consequentialism' rather than, as I would prefer, relatively concrete problems and difficulties. But if I was not always persuaded by his claims, I would endorse the project of studying Peirce's work with a view to identifying his emerging problems and the tensions that drove him onward. And enough of Ochs's suggestions and discussions are suggestive and intriguing for the book to reward careful reading.

The final chapter turns away from detailed exegesis and addresses itself to a wider audience. Or rather, to a variety of wider audiences, providing each with a corrected reading of pragmatism that answers to their own distinctive needs and perspectives. After addressing 'pragmatist readers' in general, he turns to 'common-sense pragmatists' and 'pragmatist logicians', before trying to meet the needs of 'theo-semioticists' and 'scriptural pragmatists'. The last of these leads to expositions of 'rabbinical pragmatism' and 'Christian pragmatism'. Each turns its back on Cartesian ideas of modernist inquiry, finding the basis for doing this in performative interpretations of scripture which grows out of a reformist or corrective reading of the scriptural texts. I am sure that Ochs is correct to emphasize that Peirce's pragmatist philosophy of religion should not be divorced from his more familiar philosophy of science. It can indeed be argued that he saw scientific experiment as a form of religious experience.

This is an unusual book, one which combines a scholarly treatment of Peirce's philosophy with bold claims for its importance and theses about reading and interpretation which go well beyond the range of most secondary literature on Peirce.

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Jan A. Aersten and Andreas Speer (eds.) *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter?* Miscellanea Mediaevalia, Volume 26. (Berlin–New York:Walter de Gruyter, 1999). Pp. xxvi + 1066. DM 598 Hbk.

The volume under review is the Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress for Medieval Philosophy organized by the *Société International pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale*, which was held in Erfurt, Germany in August 1997. As a historical record of that remarkable conference, it is accurate, reflecting not only the diversity and expertise of the participants, but the strength and confidence of the subject of medieval philosophy as it is currently studied in Europe, East and West, and North and South America. All areas of the subject are covered and the reader is invited to consider a host of interesting and important topics that pertain not only to the study of philosophy in the Middle Ages, but are pertinent to the concerns of contemporary philosophers. The volume has a genuinely international flavour with papers in German, French, English, Italian and Spanish.

The volume that Aersten and Speer have produced, however, is much more than a record of the proceedings of a conference. As such, it is probably one of the more significant works to appear in the field of medieval philosophy for some time. This last, and admittedly rather bold claim, can be

justified as follows. For some years now, specialists in medieval philosophy, particularly those in Germany and in the Low Countries, as well as in certain areas of the French-speaking world, have become preoccupied with the attempt to determine the scope and point of their area of study. Questions which are often posed but rarely answered to universal satisfaction are: what is medieval philosophy?; is it a form of philosophy historically continuous with the traditions of antiquity?: is it distinct from theology?; is it wholly identifiable with Christianity?

One reason why scholars on the European mainland, as opposed to their colleagues in English-speaking countries, have become preoccupied with these methodological questions derives in part from their dissatisfaction with the different models of medieval philosophy they inherited from an older generation of scholars. The traditions of scholarship and interpretation that gave rise to the reaction were those passed down by different versions of neo-Scholasticism. By no means a fully homogeneous intellectual movement, neo-Scholasticism influenced the practice of medieval philosophy on the European mainland for many decades of this century. In the persons of such greats of the subject as Martin Grabmann, Maurice De Wulf, and Etienne Gilson, successive generations of European medieval philosophers were led to believe that the above questions invited quite distinct answers, and that these answers would condition their study of medieval philosophy.

For an illustration of this we need look no further than the work of Gilson. He is justly famous for his view that medieval philosophy is essentially the study of 'Christian philosophy'. In *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1940), he elaborated this thesis with respect to metaphysics, anthropology, epistemology and ethics. The most crucial transformation for Gilson is what he calls the 'metaphysics of Exodus', that is, a metaphysics inspired by God's self-revelation to Moses in Exodus 3.14 as *Ego sum qui sum* (I am who am). This for Gilson was the cornerstone of all philosophical activity in the Middle Ages.

While Gilson's approach to the study of medieval philosophy never commanded universal assent, its influence was considerable. Its legacy survived in its pithy definition of what medieval philosophy was, and the manner in which such a definition conditioned the study, use and assessment of medieval philosophical texts. Those who followed Gilson and took issue with his thesis, (here one thinks of Fernand Van Steenberghen), reacted against the strict association of the medievals with a tradition specific conception of philosophy, by arguing that the medievals were part of a continuous philosophical tradition. So, while Van Steenberghen acknowledged the influence that Christianity obviously exerted upon the philosophy of the period, he categorically denied that could ever have been a strongly demarcated Christian philosophy in the Middle Ages for the reason that 'a philosophy would cease to be a philosophy to the very extent it became

Christian' (*Introduction à l'Etude de la Philosophie Médiévale*, Louvain: Peeters, 1974). For Van Steenberghen the medievals knew this, and addressed themselves to philosophical issues inherited from antiquity.

The more immediate background to the volume under review is to be seen in more recent attempts to answer the question: what is medieval philosophy? Thus in English-speaking countries, so-called analytic philosophers in Great Britain and North America were attracted to the study of medieval philosophy, by virtue of what they perceived to be the medievals' sophistication in formal and philosophical logic and the philosophy of language. Thus, philosophers like Arthur Prior, Peter Geach, Anthony Kenny, and Norman Kretzmann all sought to make accessible those areas of medieval philosophy amenable to the student of twentieth-century philosophy. This approach reached its apotheosis in the publication of *The Cambridge History of Late Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). The direct result of this method of practising medieval philosophy was to make the subject synonymous with histories of logic and the philosophy of language. Until very recently, the study of medieval theories of mind, ethics, politics, science, and theology did not receive the attention they deserved from self-styled 'Anglo-American medieval philosophers'.

On mainland Europe the attempt to find new and effective answers to the question, what is medieval philosophy?, has continued apace. A new generation of scholars, such as Alan De Libera in France and Switzerland, Jan Aersten in Holland, Carlos Steel in Belgium, Andreas Speer in Germany, and Luca Bianchi in Italy have all provided very different answers to the question which, since Gilson, has preoccupied students of medieval philosophy. It is their work, and the discussion generated by it, which makes the present volume timely and most helpful. While Aertsen and Speer's volume does not settle the debate once and for all, it certainly provides its reader with very detailed access, at some one thousand pages, to how the very best minds in contemporary medieval philosophy are addressing a question which for so long has dominated their subject.

The volume is divided into thirteen sections. After a magisterial introduction by Albert Zimmerman, a distinguished predecessor of Aersten and Speer at the Thomas-Institute in Cologne, the volume considers, among others: the medieval contribution to philosophy; the significance of the 1277 condemnations; medieval philosophy and the Middle Ages; medieval philosophy and transcendental thought; philosophy of Arabic and Jewish cultures in the Middle Ages; Byzantine philosophy; practical philosophy; logic; natural philosophy; and philosophy and theology. The papers are written by acknowledged specialists in the field – it is very difficult to think of an eminent scholar who does not figure in the volume – and by younger scholars beginning to make their reputations. For the most part, the essays are well written and follow the general theme of the book.

Other than the tome of Aesten and Speer, it is very difficult to think of another recent volume in the field of medieval philosophy that accurately reflects the present nature of the discipline. What emerges from this commodious work of reference is a picture of contemporary medieval philosophy which is truly inclusive, international, scholarly and interesting. If the events at Erfurt in August 1997 are anything to go by, the subject is in good health and can look forward with confidence to the twenty-first century.

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Frank A. James III *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination*. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998). Pp. x + 290. £40.00 Hbk.

The divine predestination of some to salvation would appear to entail the divine reprobation of the rest. But few theologians have been prepared to draw the inference. Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562), Abbot of Spoleto (1533) and later a prominent Protestant reformer, was one of the few. The author of this scholarly monograph plausibly shows that Vermigli was convinced of the importance of double predestination not from Reformers such as Calvin (10 years his junior), Zwingli and Bucer but from what he learned from the writings of Gregory of Rimini while at Padua. Vermigli in turn influenced the humanist Juan de Valdés to hold similar views before he himself, adhering to this strong Augustinian conception of grace, and under the threat from the newly reinstated Roman Inquisition, in 1543 switched allegiance to the Reformed churches. He became a prominent if somewhat peripatetic Reformed theologian, holding posts in Strassbourg, Oxford and Zurich. This monograph is most illuminating on the Italian background to the Reformation.

The main narrative is plausible, but there is a tendency to exaggerate theological differences in the understanding and expression of predestination and so harden what, on the face of the evidence presented, seems a fairly fluid theological situation. The author's case stands on the evidence provided by theological incidentals; among the various parties, no theological differences of any consequence are indicated. This tendency to over-theologize shows itself in a number of ways.

A great deal is made of whether predestination is to be understood as part of divine providence, or as part of salvation. It is for Aquinas, and for early Calvin; it isn't for Gregory of Rimini nor for Vermigli himself. This providence–predestination relation is a significant test of continuity and influence but not of much else. For wherever it is placed, predestination is a soteric notion. Where predestination comes in the order of exposition does not

determine whether or not it is soteriological in character. It is; (see 58 cf. 68). And even some who, like the later Calvin, place predestination separately from providence in their exposition, use the story of Jacob and Esau, the *locus classicus* for understanding predestination and election for the Reformers, as an illustration of providence. (Only in the case of Zwingli, on the evidence presented here, is it remotely plausible to suppose that predestination may be derived from providence, and even this is doubtful. Zwingli was more generous than the other Reformers on whom he took the beneficiaries of predestination to be, but it remains for him a soteric notion.) And if one is a supralapsarian as Vermigli allegedly was (88 but see also 57) providence is to be subsumed under predestination, and could naturally be expounded subordinately, though there is no evidence that Vermigli did so. Moreover, though Vermigli may have treated predestination apart from providence he clearly saw it as part of providence, as is witnessed by the general account that he gives of God's relation to evil; God governs all that comes to pass, including the actions of sinful human beings. So the tale that Professor James tells about providence and predestination, while it affords clues about the influence of one person on another, has to do more with presentation than with substantive theological divergence.

Secondly, as part of this hardening of differences, the author unwarrantably plays down Augustine's own attachment to causal language in his account of God's relation to evil, claiming that Augustine thinks of God's relation to good as causal, to evil as permissive and privative. He seeks on this ground to draw a distinction between Vermigli on the one hand and Calvin and Zwingli on the other. But in the *Enchiridion* (for example) Augustine takes precisely the position that James attributes to Vermigli (80–81, 84), namely that the divine permission, the permission of one who governs all that comes to pass, is a willing permission, and so has a causal element to it for it ensures the occurrence of what is permitted.

The attempt to reconcile alleged supralapsarian and infralapsarian tendencies in Vermigli also fails to convince (88–89). James thinks that when Vermigli views predestination from an eternal perspective he is supralapsarian, when from a temporal perspective he is infralapsarian, despite evidence to the contrary cited on 57 and 255. But it is impossible to effect a reconciliation in this way even if one were required. The distinction between supra and infralapsarianism is a logical one, concerned with the logical ordering of the elements in the one eternal divine decree. But when considering the outworking of the decree in time each viewpoint sees the lapse of Adam as being prior, historically prior, and as essential to an understanding of what predestination means. The decree to permit the Fall having been executed in time, all people are fallen and the elect must be redeemed from their fallenness. Whether fallen Peter is divinely predestined to life, and what is required to bring this eternal will of God to pass in his case, is independent

of the question whether he was thus predestined, considered as fallen or simply considered as a creature.

There is considerable wobbling, as well, on the central question of whether or not Vermigli does think of predestination as a genus of which predestination to life and predestination to death are a species, or whether he identifies predestination only with the former. Vermigli's views took the very distinctive form of double predestination (5–6) but the evidence does not unambiguously point in this direction. Thus at one point predestination is said to be 'an exclusively positive soteric expression of the *propositum dei*' (73). Nor is it clear how Vermigli can both imply predestination in a broad sense so as to include reprobation (58), while at the same time identify predestination with election (253, n. 8).

On the other hand, James is appropriately nuanced in the important distinction made in the course of his exposition of reprobation between the will of God to bypass the non-elect, which is solely the result of his good pleasure, and the ground of their condemnation, their own sinfulness (58–59, 79, 81).

So while the narrative is too sharply and sometimes too carelessly drawn to carry full conviction at the theological level, Professor James nevertheless succeeds admirably in showing something that is of considerable importance to students of the history of Reformed theology, namely the continuity of influence between late medieval theology and the mainstream Reformation. Vermigli is also one important and very visible strand between the late medieval world and the development of Reformed scholasticism in the seventeenth century. Such a development, the responsibility for which is frequently placed at the feet of Beza, is not a departure from the teaching and methods of the Reformers but is a natural extension of what at least some of them preached and practised.

Vermigli is increasingly being regarded as one of the most salient of the influences of late mediaeval scholasticism on Reformed theology. So far six volumes of his writings have been translated into English. The five hundredth anniversary of his birth occurs this year. Clearly, his star is set to rise.

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