

## Book reviews

*Religious Studies* 38 (2002) DOI: 10.1017/S0034412502216066  
© 2002 Cambridge University Press

David Ray Griffin *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion*. Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion. (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2001). Pp. x + 426. \$55.00 (Hbk), \$24.95 (Pbk). ISBN 0 8014 3778 4 (Hbk), 0 8014 8657 2 (Pbk).

On the basis of his interpretation, and occasional modifications, of the ideas advanced by Whitehead in his later works, Griffin presents an interesting, perceptive, and at times thought-provoking study of basic issues in philosophy of religion or what others, who reject the confessional identification of ‘theology’ may choose to call philosophical theology. While this exposition and assessment of the content and validity of basic religious beliefs is non-confessional in the religious sense, it is, as its subtitle indicates, ‘confessional’ in its fundamental commitment to ‘process’ thought. For those not familiar with the tenets of this attempt to integrate ‘moral, aesthetic, and religious intuitions with the most general doctrines of the sciences into a self-consistent worldview’, Griffin provides a useful introductory summary of his understanding of its core doctrines in the Introduction (5–7). He then develops these themes in later chapters. Readers, however, who are not conversant with process thought, or whose understanding of it has been contaminated by the many misrepresentations of it that are in circulation, may well find that they need further help, such as is provided by Thomas E. Hosinski’s *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), in order to become satisfyingly appraised of the character and import of Whitehead’s ideas and so be able to appreciate fully the significance of what Griffin is maintaining.

Griffin describes his thesis as one that presents ‘reenchantment without supernaturalism’. It is important to be clear about what he means by these terms. The former one, ‘reenchantment’, indicates that his position rejects the atheistic materialistic naturalism of a secularism that maintains a ‘sensationist theory of perception, which says that we can perceive things beyond our own bodies only by means of our physical sensory organs’ (38). In its place, following Whitehead’s

‘solution to the apparent conflict between scientific and religious ideas’ (21), Griffin ‘reenchants’ reality by putting forward a ‘nonsupernaturalist’ naturalism that he later describes as being ‘prehensive-panentheistic-panexperientialist’ (171). It is ‘prehensive’ in that it endorses Whitehead’s doctrine of prehension according to which the fundamental character of perception is a direct grasp of actualities, a sympathetic feeling of data that is initially preconscious but which may eventually arise into consciousness and conceptual forms; it is ‘panentheistic’ in that all actualities are held to be part of the divine experience so that ‘the world is internal to God’ as well as God being ‘internal to the world’ (141); it is ‘panexperientialist’ in that ‘all true individuals ... have at least some iota of experience and spontaneity (self-determination)’ (6). The last of these, panexperientialism, is a key notion that I will comment on later. By describing this ‘reenchantment’ as being ‘without supernaturalism’, Griffin is seeking to make it clear that while his position affirms the reality of God, it rejects ‘the idea of a divine being who could (and perhaps does) occasionally interrupt the world’s most fundamental causal processes’ (21). Whether helpfully or not, he thus understands and uses the term ‘supernatural’ to denote what may be considered to be (perhaps even caricatured as) a naïve and unwarrantable notion of an ‘interventionist’ God (22) who, as some *deus ex machina*, coercively causes alterations in the processes of reality when they are divinely willed. The term ‘supernatural’ is not being used to refer, for instance, to what John Oman expounded as its meaning, namely, that reality which interweaves the natural world and ‘which has values which stir the sense of the holy and demand to be esteemed as sacred’ since it ‘has for us absolute value directly and without further argument’ (John Oman *The Natural and the Supernatural* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931, 71f.).

On the basis of his Whiteheadian understanding, Griffin initially explores such fundamental questions in thought about God and religion as the relationship between scientific and religious understanding, the character of perception and of religious experience in particular, the nature of freedom and the mind–body relationship, the connection between God and the world, and the dipolar concept of the nature of God. He then considers natural theology and sets out a number of arguments for the existence of God. The first set are from fundamental aspects of the world in general – the metaphysical argument (which is based upon a Whiteheadian analysis of the fundamental structure of the principles of reality), versions of the cosmological and teleological arguments, and arguments from novelty and from ‘excessive beauty’. Griffin maintains that these arguments do not present a case for ‘a God of the gaps’. What they do show is that if process philosophy’s understanding of the constituent processes of reality be accepted, it follows that ‘divine influence’ plays ‘a constitutive role in all events, so that a description of any event, *to be adequate*, would have to refer to this influence’ (189, italics added; it is important to note that ‘a constitutive role’ does not mean a determining role). A further set of arguments takes up the theistic significance of various aspects of

human experience, namely, the experience of ideals, of truth, and of importance. Griffin also outlines an argument from religious experience. He concludes that while traditional forms of natural theology fail when they seek to establish the truth of 'supernaturalistic theism', the arguments that he has discussed show that it is possible to put forward 'a strong cumulative case for God as portrayed by the naturalistic theism of process philosophy' (202).

Having established the reality of God, the discussion then turns to exploring what is to be understood by speaking of God as 'creator' in view of the evolutionary nature of the cosmos, the problem of evil, and eschatology. Griffin responds to the second issue by arguing that human beings can only be capable 'of the kind of values that we can enjoy' by 'necessarily' having 'the kind of freedom we have, including the freedom to act contrary to the will of God' (227). He then claims that faced with a choice between 'a world with the risk of the kinds of evil that our world has or a world with no humanlike beings at all', few people would judge that God was wrong in 'encouraging the evolution of humanlike beings' (229). It may be wondered whether such a judgement reflects comfortable experience of life in the first world (California) rather than is plainly evident. If things had not evolved the way that they have, we would not be around to complain about our lack of freedom to inflict as well as to experience suffering. What would God then be aware of in an indubitably worse world? As for our final fate, Griffin not only asserts that each occasion of our experience enjoys immortality as an object remembered in the divine (the doctrine of 'objective immortality'); he differs from many process theologians in also asserting that there is convincing theoretical and empirical evidence for affirming life after death as continuing subjects (the doctrine of 'subjective immortality').

According to Griffin, process thought holds that there are two ultimates, namely God and creativity ('the in-formed ultimate' and 'the formless ultimate, the "ultimate behind all forms"', 261). On this basis, he essays a solution to the question of the relationship between the world religions, and in particular between those derived from experience of the reality of God conceived as personal and those responding to awareness of the impersonal infinite and ultimate reality of unconfined creativity (cf. 277). This solution holds that these 'two fundamentally different kinds of religious experience can be ... regarded as *equally veridical*' and so 'equally right' (281f.), for each responds to what is ultimate. At the same time, theists are not wrong since 'the impersonal ultimate reality is always instantiated in the everlasting, all-inclusive personal ultimate reality, whose creative and responsive love for the creatures can be experienced' (282).

The final three chapters discuss the relationship between religion, morality and civilization, religious language and truth, and religious knowledge and common sense. Morality is seen as an expressing 'the desire to be in harmony with ultimate reality' (293). This reality, furthermore, is a universal benevolence, not the selfish power found in the barbaric views of some traditional theisms (cf. 292–295).

Religious language is robustly affirmed to be conveying cognitive truth-claims, where 'truth is understood straightforwardly as *correspondence* between a proposition and that to which it refers'. Hence 'religious knowledge is understood ... as *justified true belief*', requiring the same kind of justification as all other such beliefs (320). Griffin concludes his presentation of his philosophy of religion by arguing that only such an understanding as he provides can make sense of the world as we find it in terms of the 'hard-core commonsense beliefs that are basic to and provide the decisive criteria for all our rationally coherent understanding (cf. 29–35). These beliefs include 'an awareness, at some level, of the existence of *a Holy Reality*, ... a *principle of rightness*, through which we know that there are better and worse outcomes, [a]nd ... a sense of *ultimate importance*, that somehow or other what we do matters in the long run' (380). Prehensive-pan-entheistic-panexperientialist naturalism (i.e. the kind of understanding of reality and belief in God put forward by Griffin on the basis of his interpretation of process thought) is thus claimed to be 'overwhelmingly more probable than either some form of supernaturalistic dualism' (as endorsed by traditional theism) or 'some form of' the materialistic naturalism of secularist atheism (392).

While Griffin's treatment of a wide range of issues provides some interesting new insights into well canvassed themes that are fundamental to philosophy of religion, they are in many cases crucially dependent on the validity of the basic insights of process philosophy. Among the exceptions to this dependence is his assertion of the cognitive nature of religious language and his treatment of the truth-status of such claims. In this respect he makes robust criticisms of 'the program of Reformed epistemology' that has been articulated by, among others, Plantinga and Wolterstorff. He agrees with Penelhum that the generalization of the principle of this form of epistemology would result in 'a Balkanized world' in which 'each religious and ideological community' would 'decide upon its own criteria' for deciding which beliefs are to be taken to be 'properly basic' and thereby be authorized to ignore criticisms from any other community (385f.). The Tower of Babel would become a reality – as it already seems to have become among some current promoters of what they claim (on the basis of their own principles) to be critical understanding.

Some people respond to the mention of process philosophy in general and to process theology's doctrine of God in particular in a way that is reminiscent of Cato's response to Carthage – '*delenda est*'. One of the values of this work may be to persuade such people to consider the justification of their response. It may be worth noting in this respect that, as Griffin puts it, the view of God put forward in process theism is basically shared by 'such respected philosophers and theologians as Otto Pfleiderer, C. Lloyd-Morgan, Frederick Tennant, Hastings Rashdall, James Ward, William Temple, Charles Raven, William James, E. S. Brightman, and Reinhold Niebuhr' (165f.). Some, however, will not be impressed by the list. For them it will indicate that process theism belongs to a basket of dangerous, often

liberal, ideas. On the other hand, such convinced critics may not find it so easy to dismiss process theism when they consider that it affirms and is concerned to make coherent sense of the idea of God as 'a personal, purposive being' who is

... perfect in love, goodness, and beauty, ... in wisdom and knowledge, supreme, perhaps even perfect, in power, creator and sustainer of our universe, holy, omnipresent, necessarily and everlastingly existent, providentially active in nature and history, experienced by human beings, the ultimate source of moral norms, the ultimate guarantee of the meaning of life ... the ground of hope for the victory of good over evil. (166)

This is the panentheistic concept of God to be found in the process theology put forward, in various ways, by Griffin and others.

On the other hand, there are problems with the process philosophy of religion developed by Griffin. While some may be off put by his entertainment of notions of telepathy, of psycho-kinesis, and of the evidence about life after death, it may be argued that these are peripheral matters to his basic thesis and ought not be considered reasons against taking it seriously. The same cannot be said about the role of panexperientialism. This notion lies at the core of Griffin's understanding and development of the Whiteheadian process position. According to Griffin, a defensible 'naturalistic' (i.e. non-supernaturalistic) account of the

... evolutionary rise of human experience ... is impossible if it involves the idea of the emergence of experience out of wholly nonexperiencing things ... . The only kind of experiential emergence that is conceivable in a naturalistic universe is the emergence of higher forms of experience out of lower forms. Some mode of experience, accordingly, must go all the way down. (59)

Much experiencing is not conscious; far less experiencing is self-conscious. Furthermore, since 'not all beings have sensory organs', not all experiencing can be sensory (*ibid.*). Experiencing as such, however, albeit non-conscious and non-sensory, is the essential constituent of the actualization of every individual entity. Accordingly when, for example, Griffin discusses the creative activity of God in the earliest states of the present cosmic epoch, he considers that even 'very low-grade serially ordered societies (perhaps quarks)' had experiences and 'the power to exercise self-determination'. As creator God would have had to seek to influence them through their experience of the divine will by trying to persuade or to lure them to conform, more or less, to the divine intention (143). Granted Griffin's rejection of all notions of supernaturalistic (i.e. coercive) interventions by God into the processes of reality, both natural and historical, a rejection that can be strongly supported (not least because the more robust its alternative, the more insoluble appears to be the problem of evil), the argument that 'experience' goes all the way down may well be considered justifiable. If divine 'supernatural' intervention be ruled out, how could 'experiencing' ever emerge?

I have, however, a basic problem with this argument. My problem is not that I know that the conclusion is false. It is a prior one, namely, that it does not seem,

to me at least, at all clear what may be meant by saying that a quark – or a meson or an electron or a positron – has ‘experiences’ and ‘the power to exercise self-determination’. We have a good sense of what it means to say that we as subjects have experiences and make decisions; we may be able to imagine something of what might be meant by saying that other animals and perhaps even in an attenuated (a very attenuated) way that plants have experiences, but at the level of quarks I find myself profoundly baffled. If the application of the notions of ‘experiencing’ and of ‘self-determination’ have not been stretched to breaking point (and the former converted into some such notion as being ‘passively affected by’ – as the cricket ball is affected by the bat that hits it), they seem to have been extended so far that I can no longer envisage what they may connote. It seems that a useful model for understanding that finds its primary content in human experience at this point is either being pressed further than it is applicable or, what perhaps is more likely, that the nature of the heuristic model *as a model* is not properly appreciated and its descriptive significance is being treated too literally.

It is also interesting to note that when Griffin deals with questions about life after death, he is prepared to suggest that ‘the capacity to survive apart from the body ... could have ... been an emergent capacity like the capacity to use symbolic language and self-consciousness’ (245). Why, then, does he consider *panexperientialism* to be so indisputable? Why cannot experiencing similarly be held to have emerged from complex arrangements of individuals that do not experience? To reject panexperientialism, however, would be no minor matter. It would undermine the whole of Griffin’s thesis, especially the God–world relationship as he understands it.

A final point concerns the adequacy of what Griffin maintains about God’s activity. As has been noted, he rejects what he calls the ‘supernaturalistic’ view of God as one who can and does intervene, occasionally and coercively, in nature, history, and individual lives. This rejection may leave some theists wondering whether what is left can satisfy what is meant by affirmations of the personal nature of God. It is important, therefore, to appreciate that while Griffin denies ‘supernatural intervention into the world’s normal causal processes’, he holds that ‘these normal processes include variable divine influence’ by a divine reality whose actuality is ‘distinct from the universe ... understood as the totality of finite things, processes, and relationships’ (136). God, that is, is understood as one who, moment by moment, influences the course of events by providing each individual occasion of reality with its range of initial aims and by seeking to persuade it, as an agent who has, in the final analysis, to some extent its own power of self-determination, to conform to the divine will (cf. 147). There is, then, ‘divine intervention’ in the world. It is not found in spasmodic (and sometimes spectacular) interventions that coercively ‘interrupt the normal causal pattern of the world’: it occurs ‘all the time, in every actual entity in the universe’ as ‘a regular, necessary part of the normal causal pattern of the universe’ (185). While Griffin’s philosophi-

cal theology has no place for an occasionally intervening and coercive deity, it affirms a panentheistic vision of God as one who is intimately aware of each event as it occurs and responds with a loving persuasion that in no way can infringe the proper freedom of each individual. For all its problems, it is a vision that deserves to be carefully considered by those interested in determining a credible understanding of God in the world as we find it to be.

DAVID A. PAILIN  
*University of Manchester*

*Religious Studies* 38 (2002) DOI: 10.1017/S0034412502226062  
 © 2002 Cambridge University Press

D. Z. Phillips and Timothy Tessin (eds) *Kant and Kierkegaard on Religion* (London and New York: Macmillan and St Martin's Press, 2000). Pp. xxi + 303. £45.00 (Hbk). ISBN 0 333 79023 5.

Published in the well-established 'Claremont Studies in the Philosophy of Religion', this volume is based on the 1998 conference on Kant and Kierkegaard on religion. The book consists of thirteen papers, divided into six sections, the first five each consisting of a paper and a reply. These five sections address the following topics: Kant, Kierkegaard and metaphysics (C. Stephen Evans and Michael Weston); how to understand the sense in which each of our duo 'left room for faith' (Jerry H. Gill and M. Jamie Ferreira); the role of 'the individual' in the thought of each (R. Z. Friedman and Hilary Bok); the relations between religion and morality (Ronald M. Green and Jack Verheyden); and the understanding of eternal life (John H. Whittaker and Mario von der Ruhr) in each thinker. The sixth section consists of three shorter papers addressing the somewhat ambiguous theme of philosophy of religion after Kant and Kierkegaard (Stephen Palmquist, John E. Hare and Anselm Kyongsuk Min).

The papers in each individual section are followed by an intriguing 'Voices in discussion' section, each written by D. Z. Phillips. These have become an integral part of recent Claremont volumes. But this volume heralds an organizational difference from its predecessors: instead of the 'Voices' section being placed at the end of the whole volume, here there are six such sections, each discussing the themes arising from each symposium. This is, I think, an improvement – though as Phillips acknowledges, the method is not flawless. The 'Voices' sections aim to give 'some indication of the discussions that took place', while not purporting to be exact accounts of what was said (xx). Nevertheless, as each speaker is identified by a letter rather than by their name, it is hard to resist the temptation to try and work out who is whom. Moreover, one cannot help but wonder whether the speakers would always want to be represented in exactly the way in which Phillips presents them. This is particularly true of questions asked and brief remarks made

in discussion. I found myself wondering whether some conference participants might be inclined to stay silent rather than risk venturing a less than fully formed view that might be forever associated with their name – albeit indirectly – in print. (For it is clear in the vast majority of cases who each letter represents.) Second, though, in the midst of an interesting discussion, a voice occasionally ‘trails off’ and fails to respond. In some such cases, I found myself starting to construct a possible response on their behalf. Presumably, such engagement on the part of the reader is a mark of the success of Phillips’s method. Most important, though, is the fact that placing the ‘Voices’ at the end of each symposium generally helps to focus and therefore clarify the points of agreement and disagreement between the participants.

Phillips begins his introduction by reporting that the very theme of the conference raised eyebrows. Why bring Kant and Kierkegaard together? By the end of the volume, any reader in the grip of the simplistic opposition that Kant is ‘the advocate of a rational moral theology’, Kierkegaard ‘the irrationalist *par excellence*’ (xi) should have been disabused of this notion. But that is not to say that the volume has nothing to offer to those who are *not* in such a grip. The contributors’ disagreements about how to read Kant and Kierkegaard on the volume’s themes are both substantial, and of substantial interest.

The *akedah*, discussed in Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*, offers perhaps the most clear-cut apparent difference between the book’s two protagonists. Kant’s famous reaction to Abraham’s apparent willingness to sacrifice Isaac is unequivocal: ‘Abraham should have responded to this supposedly divine voice: “That I ought not to kill my son is quite certain. But that you, this apparition, are God – of that I am not certain, and never can be ...”’ (*The Conflict of the Faculties*). Yet in *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard’s pseudonym appears to valorize Abraham as a ‘knight of faith’, ostensibly admiring this ultimate ‘exception’ to the moral universal. The disagreement between contributors as to the relative distance between Kant and Kierkegaard sometimes hinges, either explicitly or implicitly, on different attitudes to *Fear and Trembling*. I have no wish to side with the simplistic opposition between the two thinkers alluded to above. But it is worth noting that those who wish to narrow the gap between the two sometimes do so in a way that makes this text, and its status in relation to Kierkegaard’s own views, an unresolved mystery.

*Fear and Trembling* is one of the texts considered by Jerry Gill in tackling the question of just how Kant and Kierkegaard ‘make room’ for faith. Relying in particular on *Philosophical Fragments*, Gill opposes his view to what he claims is the ‘standard interpretation’ (60) of Kierkegaard’s view of faith, which is Kantian in inspiration. In a nutshell, knowledge and reason have limits; reason plays a crucial role in pointing out its own limitations; and faith is to be contrasted with knowledge as a mode of existence. Religious faith, the sphere of ‘subjectivity’, is associated with ‘ethical values and personal decision-making’ (60). Against this,

Gill argues that both thinkers actually offer a version of faith not as an alternative to reason, but of 'faith not without reason'. For Gill, the *content* of Kierkegaard's writings, such as the broadly Kantian line in *Fragments*, show that religious belief cannot be based on objective reason alone, while their *style* aims to undercut irrationalist, fideist approaches to faith. For Gill's Kierkegaard, religious belief and faith is essentially about '*faithfulness* as a way of life' (64): as the title of one of his former articles puts it, 'faith is as faith does'.

But it is not clear that there is any 'standard reading' of Kierkegaard on these matters. And while I entirely agree with Gill about the importance of taking seriously such important methodological features of Kierkegaard's writings as pseudonymity, the readings of particular texts on which Gill relies to support his argument are much too fast, and the details contentious. For example, in the case of *Fear and Trembling*, we are supposed to smell a rat because its pseudonymous author, Johannes de Silentio, is not silent. This aspect – that an author called 'of silence' does *not* remain silent but writes a whole book – allegedly embodies 'Kierkegaard's favourite conceptual device ... irony' (64). It is hard to know what to make of such a claim. This is a very vague use of a term – irony – that Kierkegaard discusses at great length and in great conceptual detail. Moreover, the claim is clearly a non sequitur. Certainly *something* must be said about the significance of Johannes' name. But need he remain mute? Gill overlooks the simple possibility that Johannes has such a name because the book is in large part *about* silence. The third and longest of its problemata explores aesthetic and religious forms of silence and concealment, in response to the question of whether Abraham was ethically justified in concealing his apparent willingness to sacrifice Isaac from Isaac, Sarah, and Eleazar. (A similar problem about alleged 'irony' attends Gill's paragraph long treatment of the labyrinthine *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.) In her reply, Jamie Ferriera, though sympathetic to some of Gill's paper, points out clearly and effectively something of what such excessively speedy readings miss: the sheer multiplicity of levels of indirection in Kierkegaard's texts.

Continuing the theme of aiming to undermine some perceived opposition between Kant and Kierkegaard, R. Z. Friedman addresses the relation of the individual to the moral universal. As one would expect, *Fear and Trembling* is centre stage. On what Friedman takes to be the common view, the opposition is as follows. Kant's insistence that the individual must be subsumed under the moral universal – and his consequent failure to allow Abraham as an exception – strikes Kierkegaard as paganism. Whereas Kierkegaard's view (at least if we identify him with Silentio's ostensible message in *Fear and Trembling*) that an individual such as Abraham can have 'an absolute relation to the absolute' would strike Kant as dangerous fanaticism. Friedman argues that we do better to see Kant and Kierkegaard not as opposites, but as part of a tradition that makes the individual (rather than nature, God or the *polis*) the central feature of philosophical reflection

(96). The individual that emerges is metaphysically blind (because of the inaccessibility of noumena), yet necessarily morally active. Conscience, Friedman argues, is ‘Kant’s great discovery’ (97), yet for Kierkegaard, conscience only makes sense against the background of original sin: if the individual has ‘some prior and yet more fundamental experience of himself as being in the wrong’ (102). Friedman uses this difference to contrast Kant’s ‘horizontal’ religion – one consisting of a self-perfection in which God’s role is simply to enable the individual to understand how this process can be possible – with Kierkegaard’s ‘vertical’ religion – where there is a direct, unmediated obligation to God. Yet ultimately, he claims, Kierkegaard offers no advance on Kant, since this ‘vertical’ ascent to God is unrealized: there is no progress, just a ‘lifelong renewal of the desire to ascend’ (103). This reading of Kierkegaard is not really adequately supported – and it is also worth noting that Friedman’s portrait of Kierkegaard relies perhaps *too* heavily on *Fear and Trembling*. Yet in her reply, Hilary Bok paints a picture of Kierkegaard that leaves one wondering where this text fits at all. Bok continues Friedman’s project of narrowing the gap between Kant and Kierkegaard by a discussion of Kierkegaardian ‘inwardness’ that includes an intriguing parallel with Kant’s remarks on ‘character’ in the *Anthropology*. She observes that Kant’s ethics are ‘safer’ than Kierkegaard’s, since some actions – such as killing one’s children – will be clearly ruled out by the categorical imperative. Yet Kierkegaard’s question as to how we can know, in any given case, what ‘doing God’s will’ amounts to, is highlighted by the Abraham case in such a way that leaves Kant’s brusque dismissal of him in *Conflict* seem inadequate. Bok suggests that Kant’s moral theory would help Kierkegaard’s argument as to why, when one chooses with infinite passion, one must choose correctly. Bok takes this to mean that there are only certain things that can be willed with infinite passion – and that these are precisely the things that we *should* will. Why? The better of Kierkegaard’s two answers to this question, Bok suggests, is that inwardness requires a coherent will: when we will in earnest, we must will wholeheartedly, rather than simultaneously willing the opposite with some part of us – this latter being what Kierkegaard calls ‘double-mindedness’. Bok suggests that this idea is basically Kant’s view that we should will only those maxims that we can will without contradiction. On this picture, making oneself an exception would be inconsistent with the central Kierkegaardian category, inwardness. Bok insists that Kierkegaard’s ethics ‘badly needs’ (118) to be supplemented with such an account. But I wonder whether this is not an over-Kantianizing of Kierkegaard. Interesting though her paper is, Bok seems not to know what to do with *Fear and Trembling*. In the ‘Voices in Discussion’, the voice that appears to be hers says ‘I simply do not like that work’ (123). Can we really rest content with expunging *Fear and Trembling* from the Kierkegaardian corpus? Thus the problem with Bok’s paper is in one sense the opposite of that with Friedman’s.

The charge of over-Kantianizing Kierkegaard appears explicitly in the next part,

as Jack Verheyden accuses Ronald M. Green of this crime. Green imagines a dialogue between Kant and Kierkegaard set in 2027. (Both figures have become more adventurous travellers: the discussion takes place at a snow-bound Denver airport. It is to be hoped that Kant has arranged for a lookalike to go for his afternoon walk in his absence, lest the watch-setters of Königsberg be disoriented.) Green's paper is a continuation of his project in *Kierkegaard and Kant: The Hidden Debt* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1992) namely showing just how much of an influence Kant was on Kierkegaard's thought. In reply, Verheyden does an impressive job of showing other likely influences on Kierkegaard through which he could have inherited ideas similar to Kant's. Overall, Verheyden aims to show that the differences between the two on ethics and religion are more pronounced than Green would have us believe. His discussion of the influence on Kierkegaard of Lutheranism (especially its distinction between the law and the gospel) is particularly interesting. Why appeal, for instance, to Kant's idea of radical evil as an explanation of human fallenness, when that view 'is screamed aloud in the Lutheran Confessions' (169)?

The remaining sections all contain worthwhile papers. Against the charge that Kierkegaard is an 'anti-realist' enemy of metaphysics, C. Stephen Evans argues that Kierkegaard has plenty of time for a 'modest' form of metaphysics, understood as 'an attempt to understand the implications of one's life commitments' (5). Michael Weston opposes Evans's paper, offering an argument inspired by Wittgenstein and Phillips to the effect that when metaphysical 'realism' (and consequently its opposite 'anti-realism') are applied to the sphere of religious belief, we see language going 'on holiday'. The second part of Weston's paper depends for its plausibility on an acceptance of James Conant's reading of the *Postscript*, a reading that I have criticized in this journal before. There is also a substantial and interesting disagreement between John Whittaker and Mario von der Ruhr on the nature of eternal life. Whittaker draws on Kierkegaard to argue that a 'deep' understanding of eternal life does not require us to posit as a necessary condition the survival of a metaphysical soul-substance. He draws out the significance of grace against this background, suggesting that on such a view, moral striving is the result of gratitude on the part of those who accept the gift of divine grace, rather than being something we need to do in order to *earn* such a gift. (For how *could* we earn it?) Von der Ruhr argues that for Kant, immortality, conceived of as endless progression, functions as a regulative idea – though he also discusses the role of grace in Kant's thought.

One of this volume's strengths is that by bringing together scholars clearly more at home in either Kant or Kierkegaard – few seem equally at home in both – it fosters dialogue between them. But this is a double-edged sword. Because of their differing expertise vis à vis each thinker, the contributors sometimes seem to be writing for different audiences, which is occasionally a problem. Relatedly, though its papers themselves are of interest, the sixth and final section lacks any real

thematic unity. To begin with, Stephen Palmquist points out the extremely ambiguous nature of the title 'Philosophy of religion after Kant and Kierkegaard' and organizes his paper around this. (For instance, does 'after' mean simply 'subsequent to' or 'along the lines of'? And 'after' *either* Kant or Kierkegaard, or both?) John Hare's paper does not really seem to belong in this section, insofar as it doesn't really deal with Kierkegaard at all. (Indeed, a few papers more or less omit reference to one or other of the book's two thinkers.) However, Hare's paper is interesting in its own right. Arguing that Kant is not refuting a divine command theory, he claims that if Kant's moral philosophy is to be properly understood, then his background in Lutheran Pietism needs to be more widely recognized and his mature writings on religion far more widely read. This latter is a theme that emerges in several of the papers. (Under this aspect, Von der Ruhr makes an interesting case for the importance of a relatively obscure Kant text, 'The end of all things'.) Finally, Min's paper – in large part a manifesto insisting on the need to go beyond Kant's and Kierkegaard's allegedly excessive focus on 'individual will' to 'political praxis' – both opens and closes with the claim that it is 'difficult to imagine two thinkers more unlike and more antithetical' (279) than Kant and Kierkegaard. 'Kant is the epitome of modern rationalism, Kierkegaard that of modern fideism ... . Kant reduces religion to the acceptance of moral duties as divine commands, Kierkegaard "suspends" the ethical teleologically for Christian faith' (292–293). It jars somewhat to have this paper placed at the end of the collection, given how much work many of the other contributors have done both to show what is problematic in such assertions as these, and, in many cases, to show that the gulf between our two thinkers is nowhere near as great as the popular image suggests.

Overall, this is a worthwhile collection that more than justifies the controversial theme of the conference. It will hopefully contribute to the worthwhile aim of persuading those at home in Kant to take more interest in Kierkegaard, and vice versa.

JOHN LIPPITT  
*University of Hertfordshire*

*Religious Studies* 38 (2002) DOI: 10.1017/S0034412502236069  
 © 2002 Cambridge University Press

John Lippitt *Humour and Irony in Kierkegaard's Thought* (London: Macmillan, 2000). Pp. xii + 210. £42.50 (Hbk). ISBN 0333776674.

Strindberg once remarked that when he read Kierkegaard he always felt ill at ease, as if he were sitting at the bed of a sick person. It is a sentiment shared by many for whom there is, indeed, something – not, I think, gloomy, as John Lippitt would have it – but *suffocating* in Kierkegaard's work. Still, whether one describes

the quality in question as gloom or as an absence of fresh air, it is, I take it, part of the aim of Lippitt's clearly written book on the humour and irony in Kierkegaard to dispel this sense of Kierkegaard's work, most especially in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, which forms the main focus of Lippitt's monograph.

Lippitt's strategy – and it is nice one – is to explore those *confinia* or border territories between what Kierkegaard takes to be the spheres of existence proper – the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. For the *confinium* between the aesthetic and the ethical is irony, and that between the ethical and the religious is humour, irony and humour together making up the comic. Lippitt wants to understand why it is that Kierkegaard – or, rather, Climacus, the pseudonymous author of the *Postscript* – is especially interested in the comic. Part of his answer lies in suggesting that the concepts of humour and irony are needed to explain Kierkegaard's notion of 'becoming subjective' or a 'subjective thinker'. The basic idea is that the so-called 'speculative philosopher' – Hegel is Kierkegaard's *bête noire*, of course – reflects upon life in such a way that his reflections either fail to grow from, or, worse, actually suppress his humanity. (The point is not limited to philosophers, of course, but what is said about them applies *mutatis mutandis* to others.) And here 'suppression of one's humanity' means writing as if one were not an individual human being, living one's own life with its own forms of insight, blindness, needs, hopes, longings and the like; a form of writing which, in favour of some purified conception of rationality, seeks to exclude, and to resist comprehension in terms of, a whole range of critical concepts, including depth, shallowness, wisdom, tact, breadth of vision – and humour and irony. Lippitt follows Climacus in arguing that to launch a *direct* attack upon such a way of thinking would be useless, since it would simply drive the kind of thinker in question into a defensive position. But an *indirect* attack – Kierkegaard's famous indirect communication – might possibly work some good, and the comic can help here, for it promises the possibility of breaking up established and ossified approaches to reflection on life. Kierkegaard wanted laughter to be a possible legitimate response within philosophy, just as it is in extra-philosophical discussions of important matters in life, and Lippitt makes the good point that at the very least it is only if the philosopher can laugh at his own philosophy that he also has the right to laugh at that of others when he judges it appropriate.

It must be said, nonetheless, that, however hard Kierkegaard tried to find a place for humour and irony in philosophy, he seems pretty decisively to have failed. The mainstream goes on just as it always has – indeed, the increasing professionalization and bureaucratization of the subject have made philosophy even more resistant to accepting the comic into its way of going about things. Moreover, one can see the failure in question at work in Lippitt's book itself. For Lippitt has a strong tendency to speak as if what is required is that the standard forms of argument employed in philosophy should be supplemented by the comic at various points. But this presupposes something that Kierkegaard wanted to challenge,

namely, that we know well enough what counts as argument so that we can separate it in principle from comedy, which latter can then be applied when argument has, as Lippitt puts it, 'reached "bedrock"' (22). It is only if we are in the grip of some such view as is offered by the philosophical mainstream of what counts as an argument that we shall be tempted to make the distinction in question. And, indeed, Lippitt seems not to have sufficiently released himself from such a view. For the tone and spirit in which his book is written differ in no important way from that of the mainstream. Thus, he presents his views in the standard manner of interpretative works in philosophy, that is, as if he could at last tell us the final truth about what Kierkegaard (Climacus) really thought about some issue, without any reference to the idea that this is what *he*, an individual human being, has made of Kierkegaard's work. For example, a large part of chapter 4 is taken up with a dispute concerning Climacus's revocation at the end of the *Postscript* where he announces (amongst other things) that the book is merely about himself, has no authority, and is superfluous. Lippitt disagrees with James Conant's claim that Climacus is just offering nonsense and that the book as a whole is nonsense: he thinks, rather, that we should understand Climacus as saying that he is simply offering some thoughts which might be helpful to the reader. I myself have more sympathy with Lippitt than with Conant here, but it seems to me that if Lippitt is to be true to his reading of the text then he cannot present his views as if he has simply established the truth about what Kierkegaard is trying to do. This would be to miss the point that, if one is to be a subjective thinker instead of a speculative philosopher, then this subjectivity cannot be put in abeyance when reading the work of other philosophers (or of anyone else, come to that). If Lippitt accepts, as he does, some such idea as that truth is subjectivity, then this subjectivity must be acknowledged to intrude not simply into ethics and religion but into the reading of philosophy in ethics and religion. This being so, Lippitt needs to offer a reading of the *Postscript* which seeks to reveal his own individual humanity, but, as I have said, I do not think that he really does respond to this Kierkegaardian challenge.

But what would it be to respond to that challenge? Certainly it would not be enough simply to add a footnote or any number of footnotes to the effect that 'this is how things seem to me in reading Kierkegaard'. What would be required would be the struggle to write in that kind of *style* which reveals the fact that one's own reflections are rooted in one's own humanity and life. Philosophers are sometimes scared of such a style because they think that it would be hideously self-referential and vain. There is certainly a danger of this, but it is a danger which cuts across the different styles of writing: much ostensibly 'impersonal' philosophy is vain in the way in question (which is why it merits a Kierkegaardian laugh), whilst much of the best autobiography is not. And a style of writing which is properly rooted in one's own life is, I think, helpfully understood as being written from a position of what one might call 'common understanding', a kind of understanding which R. K. Elliott once sought to explicate by saying that it was the kind of thing pos-

sessed in large measure by Shakespeare and, more generally, by the writers of the best literature and poetry. It is, after all, Shakespeare's deep humanity which is, amongst other things, what makes him so endlessly valuable. This is not to say, absurdly, that if one cannot write like Shakespeare one should not write. But it is to say that a Kierkegaardian philosopher who writes on ethics and religion will want to take Shakespeare as a guide rather than, say, Kant.

Lippitt is also interested in guides, but from a somewhat different perspective. He connects the idea of becoming subjective to the notion of moral perfectionism as we find this in the work of Stanley Cavell on Thoreau and Emerson. The basic idea here is that the 'attainment of genuine selfhood is connected with maintaining a relationship with an exemplary other. The primary role of the exemplar ... is to disclose to one one's "next", "higher", self' (29). Lippitt is clear that if one has an exemplar then the issue here, whilst it involves imitation, is not straightforwardly one of imitation. He draws on Collingwood's account of artistic expression to refine the position: according to Collingwood, in artistic expression finding the right style in which to say something – whether it be in words, music, paint etc. – is finding out what it is that one wants to say. The exemplar, then, can help one find one's own style.

These are interesting ideas, but I think that Lippitt does not give quite the right understanding of the relation that one might have to an exemplar. He writes: 'The only test of whether an exemplar has functioned as such for you is whether you allow yourself to be changed as a result of your encounter with the exemplar' (39). But this seems exaggerated. For one thing, Lippitt seems to be operating with quite an optimistic view about how malleable a person's character is: in my view, a human being's character is usually stubbornly resistant to change. For another, Lippitt overlooks the fact that it is possible for one person to think of a number of different individuals as exemplars even though it would be quite impossible to take all of them as models for even partial imitation or allow all of them to change him. For example, one could reasonably think that, say, Christ, La Rochefoucauld, Napoleon, Dostoyevsky, and Albert Schweitzer all lived exemplary lives, but to try to take them all as models for one's own life would lead, at the best, to moral and spiritual paralysis. Lippitt might say that if this is so then they are not really exemplars of the kind he means for the individual in question; which is fine, but then we need an account of what the relation is between these two different kinds of exemplars.

Lippitt's further explorations of humour and irony see them as necessary to what he calls, following M. Jamie Ferreira, 'transforming vision'. The thought is that if a subjective thinker – say, Socrates – uses irony then this constitutes a challenge to us to try to work out what the irony really is, and what the thinker is really saying. If we do so, then this exercises our imagination in such a way that we might thereby be led to the kind of deeper insight and wisdom of which the subjective thinker in question is possessed – and perhaps from one existence-sphere to the

next higher one. The kind of irony Lippitt favours as being able to do this work is what he calls, following Kierkegaard, and drawing on Wayne C. Booth's discussion of Swift's 'A Modest Proposal', 'controlled' irony, that is, an irony which depends upon the speaker's or writer's really meaning something or other – on his having a *position*, as Lippitt says (153) – which the hearer or reader has to work out through the irony. 'Uncontrolled' irony, he argues, where the speaker or writer does not mean anything determinate, would lead to nihilism. Thus he takes issue with Alexander Nehamas's account of the irony of Socrates, according to which it is radically undecidable what Socrates did in fact mean. If such were the case, Lippitt says, then Socrates could not do what he intended to do, namely, serve the self-improvement of his interlocutors. In such a case, Socrates could not be an exemplary subjective thinker.

There is something in what Lippitt says on this score, but I do not think he has put his finger on all those cases where irony can help in the process of moral or spiritual education. For there are cases of irony which do just that but which lie between 'controlled' and 'uncontrolled' irony, that is, between the case of a thinker's having a position or having none at all. Music is one example: much of Shostakovich's music is ironic, for example, yet it is far from clear that Shostakovich had a 'position' which we are supposed to work out. Yet there is a sense, however difficult to articulate, in which in the right kind of listener his music can contribute to a moral education: it would be right, for example, to say that we are in touch with a man's soul – or even man's soul – in this music. Lippitt might say that music is irrelevant to his reflections. Perhaps so. But then what are we to say of the (morally educative) ironies to be found in a lot of literature (e.g. in many of the stories and plays of Chekov), or film (e.g. many of those of Kieslowski's *Dekalog* series)? In these cases no *position* is taken – not least because there is no clearly identifiable *single* speaker – but the alternative is not radical undecidability.

As to humour, Lippitt is surely right that it is possible to see having a sense of humour as a virtue, especially when it allows us to laugh at ourselves; for in this case humour enables us to get a distance on ourselves and, perhaps, if we are lucky, to grow in an ethical sense. And he is right to see this idea in Kierkegaard, I think. But Climacus insists on saying that the religious person will have a sense of total guilt and of the continual suffering of life and that these will underlie such a person's humour. Lippitt's discussion of this point is not all it could be, because it fails to give a real sense of what it means to talk of the 'continual suffering' of life. This is one of those places in philosophy where a great deal of *tact* is needed, and what is required if talk of continual suffering is not to become a *stance* is a decent understanding of how it is supposed to relate to the suffering of everyday existence – not just to boredom and melancholy and the like, but also to common or garden failure in career or marriage, to insomnia and physical illness, to enmity and strife with others. Perhaps such a discussion would have made Kierkegaard

seem less suffocating, but as it is Lippitt's book did not leave me feeling that the *Postscript* is any less airless than I thought it was anyway, however valuable and important I, like Lippitt, take the work to be.

CHRISTOPHER HAMILTON  
*King's College School, London*

*Religious Studies* 38 (2002) DOI: 10.1017/S0034412502246065  
 © 2002 Cambridge University Press

John Hare *God's Call: Moral Realism, God's Commands, and Human Autonomy*. (Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2001). Pp. x+122. \$14.00 (Hbk). ISBN 0 8028 3903 7. \$11.00 (Pbk). ISBN 0 8028 4997 0.

Ten years ago, one commentator observed, 'There has been a blaze of activity in Anglo-American philosophy of religion in the last fifteen years', but went on to note that 'there is not a lot of new work in religious ethics written by philosophers' (L. Zagzebski, *Philosophical Books*, January 1990, 1–6). Since then, things have not changed much, but perhaps there are signs that they are beginning to change. One such sign is John Hare's distinctive and engaging little book, *God's Call: Moral Realism, God's Commands, and Human Autonomy*. And Hare's book is distinctive: whereas most Christian philosophers stay clear of meta-ethics, Hare sizes up contemporary analytic meta-ethics and stakes out an interesting position of his own. Whereas many Christian moral philosophers have jumped on the virtue ethics bandwagon, Hare undertakes to rehabilitate a divine command theory. Whereas Christians in general are suspicious of Kant and his Enlightenment preoccupation with autonomy, Hare works to rehabilitate Kant as a Christian philosopher and to show that Kantian autonomy is consistent with a divine command theory. The book has three parts, corresponding to these three tasks, but begins with a little story that connect all three:

Peter has been married to Sue for many years, and he loves her very much. But she has a bad temper, and she has just let fly at him. This has happened before, and he has explained to her that because of an abusive environment while he was growing up, this kind of anger has a powerful destructive force over him. Now she has done it again, and he does not feel within himself the resources to get over it and be reconciled with her. He finds himself all used up. But he feels none the less from outside himself the pull of the relationship towards reconciliation, and within that pull he hears the call of God. He judges that the relationship is still worth saving and that this is what God wants. (vii–viii)

Three questions about this story set the agenda for Hare's book. The first is, 'When Peter hears this call, what is the relationship between the inside and the outside? Is there really something outside him calling him, or is this a colorful way of saying just that he is coming to realize what he himself most wants in this

situation?’ (viii). Hare answers this question in chapter 1 by developing an original meta-ethical position he calls ‘prescriptive realism’, that is meant to combine the strengths of contemporary expressivist and realist meta-ethics, without their respective weaknesses. This is no mean feat, as these views are commonly held to be antithetical, but by tracing the refinement of these views through a series of apparently converging concessions, Hare makes a plausible case that they can be so combined. With the realist, Hare agrees that Peter’s moral judgment is true in virtue of facts that obtain independently of Peter’s opinions or preferences; but with the expressivist, Hare agrees that the function of moral language is not just to state facts, but also to endorse, commend, or command. Purely realistic views emphasize the facts *outside* the moral agent to the extent that they make a mystery of how those facts create the moral ‘pull’ that Peter feels so strongly on the *inside*. Purely expressivist theories, on the other hand, explain this pull well enough in terms of Peter’s own prescriptions or projections, but fail to explain how these prescriptions can be responsible to any moral reality outside themselves. Hare suggests that we can hold the inside and the outside together by seeing moral judgement as involving three parts or aspects: an apprehension of morally relevant facts, an affective response to those facts, and an endorsement (or refusal to endorse) that affective response. What are the morally relevant facts in question? What is it that creates the pull that Peter feels towards reconciliation, even when he has little stomach for it? According to Hare, it is God’s commands: ‘What makes something obligatory for us is that God commands it’ (49)

Given this answer, a second question about the story of Peter and Sue is ‘Why bring God into it?’ The short answer, according to Hare, is that, as a basis for morality, only God’s will will do. He surveys the main alternative bases, reason, community, self-evidence – even human nature and human flourishing – and finds them all wanting, chiefly because (in terms he borrows from Iris Murdoch) they make it too easy for us to confuse ‘the fire and the sun’. That is, these approaches make it easy for us fallen humans to confuse the limited or self-serving goods that we naturally pursue with the ultimate source of good that stands beyond them. Hare then sketches a divine command theory inspired by Scotus, according to which the ‘the moral goodness of an act consists in its having all that the agent’s right reason declares must pertain to the act or the agent in acting’ (59). On Scotus’s view, this implies that ‘only free or willed acts can be morally good, and only if they are carried out for the sake of the willed end or purpose’ (61), an end which is given by the agent’s *affectio justitiae* (or inclination towards intrinsic goods for their own sake). Union with God is necessarily our final end, but an omnipotent God is not limited in the ways in which he can order us to that end. God ordains the second table of the Decalogue, e.g. as an effective route to that end, but only contingently – other routes may have been possible. And if we ask why God chose *that* particular route, this is for Scotus a sign of our own lack of maturity or pride (73–74, fn. 44). Could God have commanded bestiality as the

expression of sexuality? Hare suggests that we emulate Scotus's humility and admit that 'we simply do not know what he could have commanded and what he could not' (73–74, fn. 44). Here we have the materials for Hare's distinctively Scotistic answers to the problems of arbitrariness and contingency that bedevil so many other divine command theories of morality.

The third question that one might ask about Hare's story (and his answers so far) is, 'What about Peter's autonomy?' Doesn't a divine command theory turn Peter into a child trying to please his father? According to a well-known argument attributed to Kant, it does, so in chapter 3 Hare argues that Kant was not attacking Hare's sort of divine command theory, and that recognizing our moral obligations as commanded by God does not prevent us from being autonomous agents. To make his case, Hare argues against the standard interpretation of Kant as a creative anti-realist about ethics, emphasizing instead Kant's neglected claim that God is the head of the moral kingdom of which we are all members. As members of this moral kingdom, we must see our role as 'recapitulating in our own wills the declaration in God's will of our duties' (96). We cannot make the moral law, but we can appropriate it, and it is only in this sense that we can be law-givers. Hare argues further that the real target of Kant's criticism was Crusius's implausible postulation, in addition to the *affectio justitiae*, of a 'human capacity for receiving divine commands as such'. Finally, Hare argues that, on Kant's view, submission to God's moral authority is compatible with individual moral autonomy, just as submission to a government's political authority is compatible with individual political autonomy. In morality as well as politics, 'there is nothing heteronomous about willing to obey a superior's prescription because the superior has prescribed it, as long as the final end is shared between us, and we have trust also about the route' (115).

This is a lot to pack into little more than a hundred pages, but the book is well-written, and its overall effect is of a coherent, even tightly-knit, moral theory. This theory could be of interest to anyone interested in moral philosophy, but it should be of particular interest to Christians and other theists. Many Christian philosophers simply have not come to terms with contemporary analytic meta-ethics; to them, Hare's map of that unfamiliar terrain will be helpful. Some moral philosophers may worry about combining a Christian moral outlook with the Aristotelian eudaemonism that is all the rage; for them, Hare's Scotistic divine command theory will open up fresh possibilities. Most Christian intellectuals share the received opinion that Kant was an enemy of Christianity; for them, Hare's efforts to reclaim this great thinker will shed new light on powerful philosophical resources.

This is not to say that I am completely convinced by every aspect of Hare's account. In a book this short, he can not explain satisfactorily, e.g. how the property of *being commanded by God* can play the sort of causal role that he implies it does. Nor am I persuaded that prescriptivism is better equipped than its

competitors for the moral self-criticism that Hare rightly prizes. Nor has Hare said the last word about reconciling Kantian autonomy and submission to authority; given what Kant says about individual autonomy in some places, his easy acceptance in his political writings of majority rule can appear deeply puzzling. Still, readers will judge these matters for themselves, and one can hope that Hare's book will stimulate other theistic moral philosophers to produce replies on these and related matters of equally high standard.

MARK T. NELSON  
*University of Leeds*

*Religious Studies* 38 (2002) DOI: 10.1017/S0034412502256061  
© 2002 Cambridge University Press

Robert L. Arrington and Mark Addis (eds) *Wittgenstein and Philosophy of Religion*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2001). Pp. xvi + 187.  
£50.00 (Hbk). ISBN 0 415 21780 6.

This is an interesting and valuable collection of essays about the relevance of Wittgenstein's philosophy to religious questions, and about his own views on religion. I am not sure, however, that it has the importance that its editors claim for it: some of the essays are limited in their scope, but on the whole very successful in doing what they attempt, while others try to be more ambitious, but with varying degrees of success.

In the first category comes John Hyman's introductory essay, a slightly expanded version of his article in the Blackwell *Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, ending with a brief critique in which he argues that just because religious belief involves a passionate commitment it does not follow that that is all it is, or that it may not be backed up by reasons. Then Brian Clack's 'Wittgenstein and magic', based on his book *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Magic* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), questions the widely accepted 'expressivist' interpretation of Wittgenstein's remarks on *The Golden Bough*: some of the things he says may suggest this interpretation, but others indicate rather that Wittgenstein construed rituals as primitive reactions or 'instinct-actions'. Iakovos Vasiliou points out how Wittgenstein's views on religion are illuminated by more general lines of thought in *On Certainty*, e.g. about the way in which certain propositions hold fast for us, because they are part of our 'world picture' and frame of reference. He ends by raising the question of whether Wittgenstein is a conceptual relativist, but does not attempt to answer it. Mark Addis attacks D. Z. Phillips both for distorting Wittgenstein's thought, e.g. by 'compartmentalizing' language games, and for being an 'internalist', despite his own disclaimers. We are on familiar ground here. More rewarding is Paul Helm's essay, a model of insight and clarity, which compares and contrasts Wittgensteinian religion and Reformed Epistemology:

although they have points in common, Helm finds important differences between them, especially in their views on God's reality. He too criticizes D. Z. Phillips, and accuses him of misunderstanding Alvin Plantinga in his *Faith after Foundationalism*. But Phillips might accuse Helm of misunderstanding him, in turn, in claiming that Phillips's God cannot take action independently of ourselves.

The question of God's agency comes up also in some of the other essays. William H. Brenner contributes an elusive meditation on Wittgenstein's remarks on creation, causality, and freedom of the will, but, strangely, ignores what he said on wondering at the existence of the world in his *Lecture on Ethics*. More straightforwardly, Alan Bailey takes Wittgenstein, in his remarks on Frazer and in his *Lectures and Conversations*, as construing religious beliefs as expressive (*pace* Brian Clack) and thereby failing to do justice to the belief that God is a 'causally efficacious being', a belief which Bailey himself believes to be irrational and, on Wittgenstein's account, superstitious. But Bailey is ignoring the variety of types of causes and the richness of our usage about agency. One billiard ball hitting another is 'causally efficacious', but so also are gardeners, poets, intentions, successful ideas, and musical performances. St Augustine's *Confessions* hymns God's effectiveness, but not perhaps in the way Bailey envisages.

Something of Bailey's approach is seen also in Kai Nielsen's 'Wittgenstein and Wittgensteinians on religion'. Nielsen sparked off much of the current debate about Wittgenstein and his followers in his article 'Wittgensteinian fideism' in *Philosophy*, **42** (1967), 191–209. He repeats some of its themes here, e.g. about the danger of treating distinct language games as 'autonomous'; and he accuses many Wittgensteinians of failing to do justice to the role of creeds and doctrines in religion, and thereby missing its inescapably metaphysical nature.

Both Bailey and Nielsen get rapped over the knuckles by one of the editors, Robert Arrington, in the final essay in the book, in which he argues that the later Wittgenstein opposed metaphysics not so much because its claims are unverifiable as because it tends to confuse factual and conceptual issues. Arrington argues that theological statements are grammatical ones, defining the correct usage of religious concepts, and not, as Nielsen takes them, putative factual claims about the world. Similarly, he criticizes Bailey for treating religious beliefs as failed quasi-empirical explanations: he traces Bailey's error back to his assumption of a naturalistic, debunking epistemology, and to a failure to understand fundamental religious responses.

Arrington's response is hard-hitting and, on the whole, cogent. I wonder, however, how far his appeal to grammar should be pressed. He sees 'God exists and is creator of the world' as a grammatical claim (177), and on the same page he says that, for the believer, the Resurrection is not a disputable historical event that might possibly be in error and in need of more historical defence. True; but what if the believer is preaching to unbelievers? What of St Peter's claim, 'you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses' (Acts

3.15)? It is often difficult to see how a Wittgensteinian religious believer could proselytize; and part of the difficulty is that the dependence of Christianity and some other religions on particular historical facts is not much discussed (Bailey rightly notes that Wittgenstein provides us with little in the way of detailed accounts of the actual usage of religious statements).

This dependence is, however, the starting-point of the remaining, and perhaps most interesting, essay, by Michael P. Hodges. He discusses Wittgenstein's views on the historical evidence for Christianity and on faith as passionate commitment, and compares them with Kierkegaard's discussion of Abraham and Isaac in *Fear and Trembling*. He then argues that their positions do not lead to the conclusion that the religious life is beyond criticism, for it is open to a Nietzschean 'genealogical' critique, and to an ethical one – *we* can ask whether God should have tempted Abraham, even if he couldn't ask. Moreover, thirdly, we may recognize the contingency, and possible non-existence, of all structures of meaning, including the ethical, so that claims to absolute validity make no sense. Here, says, Hodges, we are considering the supposed 'death' of all meaning. All we can do, he concludes, is to ask what place certain speakings have in life and what values they embody, and remind ourselves, with Wittgenstein, that what must in the end be accepted are forms of life. But here the essay, after raising issues of enormous import, ends with a whimper.

The tantalizing and frustrating closure of Hodges's essay suggests a general question about the whole collection. Does it break new ground, in philosophy of religion or in Wittgensteinian interpretation, or are we still buzzing round the same old jam pot? The editors express the hope in their introduction that they will succeed in conveying the excitement of Wittgenstein's later thought on religion, and in showing how his stimulating and suggestive remarks may lead to a totally new perspective on religious belief. Up to a point, Lord Copper. The reader of these essays will indeed get a very good idea of the state of play in current discussions on Wittgenstein and religion, but may feel sometimes that fundamental issues are left hanging, or not pressed as far as they should be.

PATRICK SHERRY  
*Lancaster University*