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BOOK REVIEWS

Philosophical Perspectives 5: Philosophy of Religion, James Tomberlin, ed. Atascadero, Cal.: Ridgeview Publishing Co., 1991. Pp. vii and 646. \$22.00.

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This is a rich, varied, interesting volume, one of the best in a fine series. A quick survey of its contents page should whet the appetite of anyone interested in current philosophy of religion: Tooley and Rowe offer versions of the argument from evil, while Alston and Van Inwagen counter that humans are not in the right epistemic position to judge such arguments sound. Marilyn Adams explores the non-moral aspect of the concept of sin, and William Mann the problems moral dilemmas pose for theistic ethical theory (introducing *en route* the intriguing concept of a moral monolemma). Chisholm defends the soul's simplicity, Hoffman and Rosenkrantz its intelligibility. Audi, Gale and Quinn tackle religious epistemology. Plantinga discusses his views of warrant and the prospects for natural theology. Fischer treats Ockhamism, Robert M. Adams offers a new argument against middle knowledge, and Thomas Flint offers one for it. Stump, Kretzmann and Wierenga debate whether the doctrine of divine timelessness can on its own reconcile human freedom with the existence of divinely revealed prophecies and the past truth of claims about what God timelessly knows. Freddoso argues that God must not only conserve creatures' existence but actively "concur" with their actions, while McCann and Kvanvig urge that mere conservation is enough to entail occasionalism (i.e. that there are no causally efficacious creaturely actions with which to concur). Wolterstorff takes on divine simplicity. Menzel gives an account of divine ideas and God's pre-creative foreknowledge. Earl Conee discusses the claim that God is able to do literally anything, possible or not. And Edward Zalta and Paul Oppenheimer give a new broadly Meinongian analysis of the ontological argument.

The papers all are of high quality, and the paperback price of \$22.00 for more than 600 pages of such work fits the book for a philosophical Consumer Reports' Best Buy list. This book's sheer size precludes saying anything worthwhile about all or even most of the papers. So I will use my space to talk about a few that especially interested me.

1. Hoffman, Rosenkrantz and the soul

Hoffman and Rosenkrantz discuss problems in defining the soul, individuating souls and understanding souls' persistence over time. They also consider questions about the claim that souls can interact with bodies. Their claim (184) that souls have no spatial locations raises one such question: if

this is true, how can souls and bodies interact? Hoffman and Rosenkrantz suggest (198-9) that soul-body interaction seems problematic only if one thinks that

TM. for any x and y , if x produces motion in y , x transfers some of x 's motion to y .

If (TM) is true, an unlocated soul cannot produce motion in a body. For an item can transfer motion only if it is moving, and so only if it has a spatial location (198). Hoffman and Rosenkrantz try to undermine (TM)'s support, and suggest that even if souls cannot transfer motion to bodies, there may just be fundamental laws correlating soul-events with some physical motions (199). Such laws, they claim, would not violate but just supersede or overrule basic physical laws (200-1).

I am not sure this reply exhausts the problem. If body and soul interact, body affects soul. One need not endorse (TM) to think that bodies act only by sending physical signals or exerting physical energy. But a physical signal can only arrive at some place in space. Again, if physical energy reached an unlocated soul, it would disappear from physical space. This would violate the conservation laws unless for each such event, some non-physical cause simultaneously added an equal amount of energy to the universe. One would prefer a mind/body theory which did not require God or the soul constantly to scramble to keep the universe's books balanced. Again, if an unlocated soul produces motion in a body, it causes the body to have a certain amount of kinetic energy. As the soul causes this, the energy has no physical source: it is physically *ex nihilo*. If the soul does not transfer this energy to the body, the soul brings it into existence without transferring it from *any* source. This might preserve the letter of the conservation law (without its spirit), or might "supersede" it. But given Einstein's equivalence equation, it is equivalent to bringing a certain amount of mass into existence physically *ex nihilo*. Atheists might doubt that this is possible. Theists might justly protest that this is God's specialty, and He does not share it.

2. Menzel on divine ideas

Menzel defends the claim that before creating any individuals, God had only purely general ideas of the creatures He was to make. There was no merely possible Menzel for Him to actualize (479). There was no individual essence (haecceity) of Menzel, such that God could act to create Menzel by acting to instance that property (488-93). There was just a purely general possibility of some individual qualitatively just like Menzel. Thus according to Menzel,

before God's creation, it was outside of God's control to bring it about that I exist... there was, by the generality of the possible, simply no action that could guarantee that I, rather than someone else just like me, would exist (500).

God acted to create some Menzelish man or other, and Menzel was who He

got. Menzel's exposition of his position is lapidary, and he makes an interesting case for its theological adequacy (498-502). But one can still raise a metaphysical worry.

If God could have intended to make someone just like Menzel and gotten someone other than Menzel, then there is something to Menzel which makes him Menzel and not someone else, such that there could have been someone else just like Menzel who lacked that something. Thus there is more to being Menzel than being an instance of the divine concept Menzel instances, a "more" such that a divine concept which does not contain this "more" fails to discriminate between Menzel and someone else. But what can this "more" be? Menzel rules out haecceities. Menzel thinks that God's idea of him contains each of his non-haecceity attributes (497).¹ If so, this "more" cannot be a non-haecceity attribute. If it cannot, it must be something which bears attributes. If this bearer had any intrinsic character, it would intrinsically bear an attribute. This attribute would then be part of God's idea of Menzel and make that an idea of Menzel, not someone else. So this bearer must (it seems) be bare of attributes. Menzel's view seems to imply, then, that each individual has two constituents, the nature a divine idea captures plus a bare particular bearing it. Commitment to bare particulars would be a good reason to reject Menzel's position.

3. Wolterstorff on divine simplicity

The doctrine of divine simplicity (DDS), in a nutshell, is that God is not composed of parts or other constituents.² Wolterstorff sets out the surprising importance this abstract thesis had in medieval philosophical theology (531), then notes a problem DDS raises. The medievals infer from DDS that God's nature and properties are not distinct from God (532). Thus for them, DDS entails a number of counter-intuitive identity-statements, e.g. (letting "deity" denote the divine nature) that

1. God = deity.³

(1) is puzzling because it seems to identify a concrete with an abstract entity.

Wolterstorff claims that a proper appreciation of the medievals' distinctive ontological "style" can dispel the puzzlement (1) generates. Wolterstorff suggests that (1) was not problematic for the medievals because they thought in terms of "constituent ontology."⁴ We now (says Wolterstorff) treat attributes as abstract entities their bearers exemplify. The medievals took a thing's nature and other attributes as constituents of a sort:

The nature of an entity, a medieval would have said, is what-it-is-as-such. An entity does not have a certain nature in the way it has a certain property. It is a certain nature. If an entity is something as such, then it is a certain nature... There is no mystery in how it can be... that God is a certain nature. Everything... is a certain something-as-such... The only mystery about God—if mystery it be—is that we do not have to add, "but that's not all God is"... For a medieval, I suggest, an essence or nature was just as concrete as that of which it is the nature. That is because everything, including every concrete thing, is a something-as-such (541-2).

So according to Wolterstorff, in its medieval context, (1) does not identify an abstract and concrete entity. Rather, (1) identifies "two" concreta.

Let me assess this argument by reference to Wolterstorff's sample constituent ontologist, Aquinas. Thomas parses the claim "a human is white" (*homo est album*) as "a human is a thing having whiteness" (*homo est... habens albedinem*), i.e. "a human = a thing having whiteness."⁵ Thus Thomas reads predications as "really" identity-statements.⁶ Thomas takes the statement "a human is an animal" as a predication. So he reads this too as an identity-statement, and infers that

everything present in a species is present in the genus in a non-determined way. For if the animal were not the whole which is a human, but just a part of a human, "animal" would not be predicated of a human. For no integral part is predicated of its whole.⁷

Taking predication as involving identity, we can paraphrase Thomas thus:

if the animal were not the whole which is a human, but just a part of a human, the animal would not be identical with a human. For no integral part is identical with its whole.

But in fact, the same form which makes us animal makes us human: in a human, "humanity" and "animality" signify (as part) the same form.⁸ So what instances the one form *ipso facto* is identical with something instancing the other: a human is as such an animal.

Thomas continues that

The nature of the species is indeterminate with respect to the individual just as the nature of the genus with respect to the species. This is why just as that which is the genus, as it is predicated of the species, says implicitly in its signification, though indistinctly, all that which determinately is in the species, so that which is the species, as it is predicated of the individual, signifies all that essentially is in the individual (granted, indistinctly). The name "human" signifies in this way the essence of the species: whence "human" is predicated of Socrates.⁹

In other words, though "human" signifies any individual human indistinctly, in "Socrates is human," "human" names the very individual "Socrates" names. This is why we can say that Socrates is/is identical with a human.¹⁰

For Aquinas, then, "Socrates is human" does not assert or imply that Socrates is a nature. It asserts, as one would think, that Socrates is (identical with) a thing *bearing* a nature. The parallel to this would be not (1) but the claim "God = a divine being," which is not problematic. Asserting that Socrates is a nature would for Aquinas mean asserting that

2. Socrates is humanity.

(2) does parallel (1). But Thomas rejects (2) as identifying a whole with one of its constituents.¹¹ "Socrates = humanity" is false because Socrates also

includes other constituents.¹²

Still, let us consider a "constituent" approach to predication generally. On such an approach, presumably, "Socrates is human" is true because Socrates contains a particular sort of constituent. Socrates' being human is like a whole's including a part. Thus a constituent ontologist takes the "is" of predication as logically akin to "___has as a part___."¹³ Now when a thing has but one part, it contains that part and that part contains it: its relation to that part is identity. So on a constituent approach, if God contains no constituents distinct from deity, (1) is true. On a constituent approach, then, "God is divine" entails (1) if God is simple.

We now have an explanation of how it can be that "God is divine" uses the same copula "Socrates is human" uses, yet "God is divine" entails (1) but "Socrates is human" does not entail (2). But does this remove the scandal from (1)? Even for constituent ontologists, natures are *attributes*. So (1) still identifies God with an attribute. If so, Wolterstorff demystifies (1) only by claiming that one sort of attribute is a concrete, not an abstract entity. This claim is itself mysterious, given that Wolterstorff does not explain what a nature is. Thus (1) remains difficult.

4. Conee on absolute omnipotence

Conee argues that there could be a being which is absolutely omnipotent (AO), i.e. "has an ability with respect to each proposition to have it be true and to have it be false" (449).¹⁴ An AO being would be able to make it the case that $2+2=5$. But it is impossible that $2+2=5$. If it is impossible that $2+2=5$, it is impossible that any being make it the case that $2+2=5$. So something AO would be able to do what it is impossible for it to do. It would have an ability it cannot exercise (454-6).

One naturally supposes that an agent is able to bring it about that P only if that agent can use that ability, and so possibly brings it about that P. So Conee's claim that there could be something AO (448) denies

The Having-Exercising Principle (HEP). If it is in some way possible (e.g. physically possible, metaphysically possible) to have some ability, then it is in the same way possible to exercise the ability (460).

Conee therefore argues against HEP:

God is able to do things that are physically impossible. (So) God is supposed to have an ability that is not exercised in any physically possible situation. This seems at least to be possible. Yet HEP denies it. So much the worse for HEP. Without HEP, there is no good reason to deny the more extreme claim that it is possible to have an ability to do the impossible (461).

But this argument seems questionable. Perhaps Conee thinks theists believe that

3. God is able to do things that are physically impossible. Because they

allow that God can do miracles. But one can parse (3) as

4. God is able to bring about states of affairs incompatible with physical laws, or
5. God is able to bring about states of affairs no purely physical agent can naturally bring about.¹⁵

It is not clear that theists who allow the possibility of miracles commit themselves to (4). In possible-worlds terms, (4) asserts that

4*. God is able to bring about states of affairs which obtain in no possible world with the physical laws of our world.

If God does a miracle, He brings about states of affairs in a possible world with the physical laws of our world- namely our world. So it is conceivable that God do miracles even if (4*) is false; belief in miracles would not commit a theist to (4*), or to a belief that God has an ability He does not exercise in any physically possible situation. If God brings about a state of affairs S in a world with laws L, either S and L are compatible or they are not. If they are not, God brings about a contradiction by bringing about S. Theists who affirm miracles do not mean to affirm that God brings about contradictions. They affirm rather that the physical laws of our world are not quite what we thought they were, since the laws allow these unusual events.

(5) better explicates what theists think about miracles. Physical agents have certain natures and natural powers. This is what accounts for ordinary physical regularities. But God can nonetheless miraculously achieve what no physical agent can naturally achieve by acting without physical intermediary or by granting physical agents temporary trans-natural powers. Either is compatible with physical agents' not being able to do *naturally* what miraculously occurs. But again, if God does either, God acts in a physically possible world. For physically possible worlds are those in which physical beings have just the natures and natural powers they do have. Physical beings have these even if God does miracles. So (5) does not license the claim that God has an ability He uses in no physically possible situation.

Still, (4*) can seem true. For it can seem true that

6. in our possible world, God is able to actualize worlds with other physical laws than ours.

If God has this ability, He exercises it in no physically possible world. But is (6) true? Before actualizing our world, God certainly *could have* actualized a world with different laws.¹⁶ Again, God can *alter* the laws of our universe, bringing it about that there is a universe whose laws differ from those we now have, e.g. by creating a new kind of creature with natural powers beyond those now extant. But God can exercise this ability in a physically possible world. If it is not now physically possible (compatible with the natures of existing physical things) that purely natural powers effect it that P, this does not entail that it is not now physically possible that this be physically possible. A change of natural law may itself be physically possible.

Again, God can now annihilate our universe and then replace it with one whose laws are different. But this may not entail that (6) is true. To annihilate a universe is not to "de-actualize" a possible world. Suppose that in (6) "is able" means "is fully able," i.e. "can now do as His next action, needing

to do nothing else to enable Himself." If our world and its laws L are actual, God is now fully able to make a $\neg L$ world only if He is fully able to make L and $\neg L$ at once the laws of an actual world. That is, if (6) states something God is now fully able to do, God is able to make a contradiction true. Theists who incline to (6) do not mean to say this.¹⁷ They mean rather that God is fully able to annihilate our universe, that once He has done so, He will be fully able to replace it with a $\neg L$ universe, and that whether He has the latter full ability is entirely up to Him. They mean, in short, that

7. in our possible world, God is fully able to be fully able to create a universe with other physical laws than ours.

Iterations of "fully able" (and of "able") do not collapse into single uses; "fully able to be fully able" does not entail "fully able." Whoever cannot play the piano is not fully able to play a piano concerto. But if one who cannot play the piano is fully able to learn to play the piano, that person is fully able to be fully able to play the piano, and once fully able to play the piano is fully able to learn to play the concerto, and thereafter to be fully able to play the concerto.

Thus theism does not provide a counter-example to HEP. But even if it did, theists could rightly assert a related claim,

The Metaphysical Having-Exercising Principle (MHEP). If it is in some way possible to have some ability, then it is metaphysically possible to exercise that ability.

We grant that God can create worlds with different physical laws only because we grant that there *are* metaphysically possible worlds with other physical laws- because genuine worlds lie beyond the bounds of physical possibility. We do not in the same way grant that genuine worlds lie beyond the bounds of *metaphysical* possibility. So even if we called God's ability to create worlds with different physical laws a counterexample to HEP, it would seem legitimate to dig our heels in and insist on MHEP, i.e. deny Conee's claim that without HEP, we have no reason to deny that some being could be AO.

Conee seems to lean toward belief in impossible worlds (463-8). So he might call insisting on MHEP mere prejudice. I think it is not, but a more salient point is that even if something could be AO, it need not follow that there *are* impossible worlds. It could be that there are only possible worlds, but among an AO being's repertoire of impossible feats would be both adding impossible worlds to the existing stock of (possible) worlds *and* actualizing such worlds. If not even an AO being possibly actualizes a world satisfying a description D , why posit the world? The phrase "to actualize a world satisfying D " lets us say what the not-possibly-exercised ability is, and commits us only to D itself. We need not say in addition that there is a world such that it is what the AO being does not possibly actualize.

NOTES

1. Save for relations to individuals which do not already exist when God makes Menzel. But these relations cannot distinguish Menzel from someone else.

For if the individuals do not exist, then on Menzel's actualist (479) position, the relations do not yet exist either.

2. Constituents not usually classed as parts might include form and matter, nature and material supposit, subject and accident. See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (ST) Ia, 3, aa. 2, 3, 6.

3. So e.g. Aquinas, ST Ia, 3, 3; Ia 40, 1 ad 1; In VII Meta., lect. 5, #1380.

4. Wolterstorff calls our differing present-day ontological style "relation ontology." This term is not helpful: constituency is itself a relation.

5. ST Ia 85, 5 ad 3.

6. Again, at *QD de Potentia Dei* (DP) 8, 3, Aquinas writes that "Socrates and Plato are called hypostases because they are predicated of one only," thus indicating that he takes the identity-statement "Socrates is Socrates" as a predication. At ST Ia 13, 12, Thomas calls such $A=A$ identities "predications" and expressly avers that they are just like other predications in having both subject and predicate refer to the same entity. See also In V Meta., lect. 9, #891, and DP 2, 1 ad 2. In effect, Thomas construes predication in accord with what is now called Wang's Law, taking sentences of the form "Fa" as "really" of the form " $(\exists x)(Fx \bullet x=a)$."

Thomas' analysis of predication refutes the canard that Thomas or medieval Aristotelians in general naïvely take the structure of reality to mirror the structure of discourse. The relation between Socrates and whiteness is inherence, not identity. Yet in Thomas' analysis of "Socrates is white," the logical relation involved is identity, not inherence.

7. Thomas Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia* (Turin: Marietti, 1926), p. 14. This and all translations are mine.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

10. "Human," the species term, "signifies indistinctly all that is essentially in Socrates" because it refers to Socrates as that which bears the particular, individual form which gives Socrates his essential properties.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

12. See e.g. ST Ia 3, 3.

13. If this is correct and my reading of Aquinas' view of predication is correct, is Aquinas really a "constituent" ontologist?

14. Conee includes in this abilities to have a proposition be true without doing anything to have them true (449). So apparently Conee believes in abilities one can exercise without in any way doing anything. I am not sure how to take this.

15. Compare Hoffman and Rosenkrantz' distinction between violating and superseding a physical law (200-1).

16. "Before" and its cognate terms can be read temporally or logically.

17. At least, theists not antecedently convinced that something could be AO.

Christian Philosophy, by Etienne Gilson (translated by Armand Maurer). Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1993. Pp. xxv and 139. \$19.95 (paper).

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The publication of this translation of Gilson's *Introduction à la philosophie chrétienne* is a welcome event for serious students of medieval philosophy and theology in the more than obvious way that it makes the French work available for the first time in English. The translation should help give this slender