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Kevin Schilbrack, THINKING THROUGH RITUALS: PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

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Frankfurt line". The types of arguments Robinson offers for free will, such as we have free will because the mind has *selective* powers of attention to particulars (98) and that determinism is self-refuting because it asks us to *choose* an intellectual position on the basis of argument (100), hardly seem compelling.

Robinson is undoubtedly on the side of the angels (as I count them) but his study lacks philosophical depth. A final illustration of this point may be given. Chapter 5 turns on p. 196 to the topic of forgiveness and moral responsibility. The discussion has little direct bearing on topics in the philosophy of religion; the implications of what is contended for thoughts about divine forgiveness are simply not spelled out (that is not a criticism). Philosophers of religion might nonetheless hope to find something substantive on the question of whether forgiveness of wrong done requires repentance and atonement. On p.199 we are told, with very little surrounding argument, that "Forgiveness requires atonement on the part of the offender". This looks like mere assertion, but it is an assertion which is deeply controversial given recent debates on the conceptual analysis of forgiveness. It appears to rule out at a stroke the notion of unconditional forgiveness. Yet we can find good arguments in the literature for the belief that wrongdoers can and should be forgiven in the absence of either repentance and atonement, and without forgiveness necessarily collapsing into condoning (see, for example, E. Garrard and D. McNaughton "In defence of unconditional forgiveness", *Proceedings of the Aristotlelian Society*, vol. 103, 2003, pp. 39-60).

Thinking Through Rituals: Philosophical Perspectives, edited by Kevin Schilbrack. New York and London: Routledge, 2004. Pp. x + 278. $90.00 (cloth), $25.95 (paper).

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The resurgence in philosophy of religion in the last forty years has been well documented. But this increasing willingness on the part of philosophers to take seriously religious concepts and practices has not raised all boats equally. The study of religious rituals as well as their nonreligious counterparts has been largely ignored by the philosophical community. This edited volume sets out to repair that deficiency.

In the introduction, the editor, Kevin Schilbrack, provides a relatively comprehensive review of the various philosophical resources available for the study of rituals. His central contention is that "there are rich and extensive philosophical resources with which one might build bridges between ritual and thought, between practice and belief, and between body and mind" (1). Schilbrack considers the following philosophical approaches or 'schools of thought': pragmatism, post-Wittgensteinian linguistic philosophy (including Searle's speech act theory), existentialism, hermeneutic philosophy (especially Ricoeur's), Foucault's genealogical method, phenomenology (especially Merleau-Ponty's), cognitive science, feminist philoso-

phy, and the (often implicit) philosophical analyses of ritual already present within the many world religions (especially non-Christian religions).

Despite the potential fecundity of philosophical analyses of ritual, Schilbrack notes that "philosophers (including philosophers of religion) almost never analyze ritual behavior; those who study ritual almost never refer to philosophy" (1). There are undoubtedly many causes of this phenomenon; Schilbrack mentions four: the common assumption that rituals are thoughtless, a general dualism between mind and body, the modern assumption that knowledge involves accurately representing the external world, and the assumption that language must be about empirical facts if it is even to be possibly true.

At first glance it is disturbing that Schilbrack does not provide even a working definition of "ritual." Perhaps this is because, as he notes in a footnote, "rituals are notoriously difficult to define" (24 n.1). The difficulties which attend the provision of a definition of ritual are due, at least partially, to the diversity of contexts in which rituals are employed and in the diversity of purposes for which they are used. This volume considers some of the possibilities, from traditional religious rituals to same sex commitment ceremonies, but this barely scratches the surface. Less traditional ritual behavior can be seen among those who label themselves 'superstitious' and in the pre-game antics of athletes.

There is another reason Schilbrack eschews the task of providing a working definition of rituals. In the same footnote referred to above, he says: "In sympathy with those who hold that the concept of ritual is a social construction, and in order to give the contributors to this book free rein, I did not constrain them to a single definition of ritual." Regardless of the viability of the first rationale, the second is sound, particularly because of the diversity of the philosophical perspectives represented in this volume.

In fact, the defining characteristic of this volume is its diversity. This diversity is played out in a variety of ways. This volume is generally interdisciplinary in its focus, employing not only the resources of philosophy, but also religious studies and the social sciences, especially sociology. There is even a fascinating foray into the realm of social epidemiology. The essays in this book are also religiously diverse; rituals in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism are considered. In terms of philosophical methodology, the contributors also evince significant diversity, although taken as a whole there is a tilt toward continental and pragmatic approaches as opposed to analytic approaches. There is also significant diversity in the range of philosophers utilized to better understand rituals, including Kant, Feuerbach, Foucault, Merleau-Ponty, Peirce, and Wittgenstein, not to speak of philosophically-minded social scientists like Geertz, Durkheim, and Weber.

Despite the diversity of this volume, the essays can be organized around two broad motifs, one (roughly speaking) apologetic and the other (also roughly speaking) teleological. The first motif involves a defense of the notion that rituals involve reason and rationality. In other words, the essays in this category seek to deny the common notion that ritual is thoughtless behavior. The second motif involves an explanation of the purpose of rituals. Essays that fall into this category seek to consider what

rituals in fact accomplish or what those who perform rituals take themselves to be accomplishing.

With respect to the first motif, a number of the contributors connect their discussion of rituals with the concept of practical reason. The essays of Nick Crossley and Amy Hollywood seek to demonstrate that rationality is not exhausted by reflective thought and intellectual exercise, but that it should be broadened to include "body techniques" and ritualistic "ways of being in the world." As forms of practical reason, rituals involve practical knowledge — "not just knowledge of how to do the ritual, but also knowledge of how to relate to the natural and — especially — the social world" (14-15). Nick Crossley utilizes the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty to explore the connections between mind and body and move beyond the dualism that sees the body as a tool for the mind. Amy Hollywood approaches the study of ritual from the perspective of a feminist philosopher of religion. She draws on the work of Marcel Mauss and Talal Asad and develops the insight that for many religious people practice takes precedence over belief.

Michael L. Raposa, Kevin Schilbrack, and Steven Kepnes also develop the intellectual aspects of ritual. Raposa brings the thought of Charles Peirce to bear on the study of rituals, particularly his notion that beliefs are not inner representations of external reality, but rules for action that are expressed in patterns of behavior. Given this understanding, rituals are far from thoughtless behaviors, they are "thinking through and with the body" (115). Moreover, because rituals are habitual, they function to direct one's attention to one aspect of reality rather than another. Therefore, they can be thought of as forms of inquiry that facilitate discovery and insight. Schilbrack argues that "ritual practices often serve as a means for religious communities to pursue metaphysics. . . . [They constitute] investigations into the character of things in general" (18). The notion of metaphysics employed by Schilbrack, however, is heavily practical. Rituals are a source of metaphysical knowledge, but this knowledge concerns 'how to act.' This approach seeks to locate ritual knowledge between those who would reduce it to mere human projections and those who would assume it arises from a pre-cultural experience of the world 'as it is.' In other words, Schilbrack describes his approach as both 'anti-reductionist' and 'anti-Cartesian.' Kepnes develops an argument for the claim that rituals are intellectual activities by drawing attention to the work of three Jewish philosophers, Mendelssohn, Cohen, and Rosenzweig. Specifically, Kepnes suggests that "like texts, liturgies provide a concrete form of religious expression that stands between thought and practice" (225).

Brian R. Clack approaches the intellectual nature of rituals from a different angle. His essay is a consideration of the implications of Wittgenstein's discussion of 'scapegoat rituals,' which was used by Wittgenstein to defend his philosophical program against the charge of fideism. Clack argues that despite the fact that Wittgenstein has been widely regarded as "producing an expressivist defense of religious belief against intellectualist and skeptical censure," his dismissal of rituals as based on "linguistic confusions" show him to be "no great friend and defender of the faith." In fact, his dismissal of the possibility of the transference of evil and sin "shakes the very foundations of [traditional] Christian theism" (110).

A common theme with respect to the second motif — the question of what rituals in fact accomplish — is the broadly ethical or character-building component of rituals. Charles Taliaferro develops an explicitly Christian but nevertheless ecumenical account of rituals. He suggests that participation in rituals like Baptism or the Eucharist is a means to the development of excellences of character or virtues. The church, therefore, is best understood as a context for the coordination of human and divine action in the world. T. C. Kline III approaches the study of rituals from the perspective of the influential Confucian philosopher, Xunxi, who defends Confucian ritual practices as the preferred means to ethical development. Jordan Ganeri gives an account of the type of reason associated with ritual through his discussion of the Mīmāmsā, the Indian interpreters of Vedic ritual. He argues that the intellectual virtues that arise from rituals "are precisely those needed for ethical reasoning in general" (207).

Ladelle McWhorter approaches the matter of the purpose of rituals from the perspective of power. She utilizes the insights of Asad and Foucault (primarily his later works) to help explain homosexual commitment ceremonies. Rather than seeing such rituals as standard patterns of managing human interactions and therefore as implicated in the dynamics of power management, she argues that rituals can be "ways of living, exercises, *askeses* that unsettle us, move us, change us in ways that keep us perpetually open to some degree of unsettlement, movement, and change" (83). Thus understood, rituals do not create or maintain systems of power, but are practices of freedom.

In stark contrast to the other essays that address the matter of the purpose of rituals, Fritz Staal directs the reader's attention to the actual practice of Vedic rituals and on the basis of his analysis suggests that these rituals at least are not symbolic or communicative actions. Their goal is not to represent reality or express truths about it. More generally, such rituals are not performed for any particular end or goal, but instead are actions that are performed because they are intrinsically pleasurable.

Finally, the essays that address this second motif do not come just from religious perspectives. Peter van Ness brings the discipline of social epidemiology to bear on the philosophical study of rituals. He also provides one of the more straightforward definitions of ritual in the whole volume. Rituals are, according to Van Ness, "nested, periodic behaviors that foster habitual dispositions associated with healthy lifestyles, hopeful attitudes, supportive communities, and meaningful worldviews" (262). Robert McCauley also approaches the study of religious ritual from a unique perspective, that of philosophical naturalism. He brings the scientific disciplines of psychology and cognitive science to bear on the question "What do people — often large groups of people — take themselves to be doing, not only when they carry out such rituals but repeat them over and over again?" (149). His analysis focuses on the social aspects of rituals and how rituals create and maintain social interactions.

Schilbrack has put together a thought-provoking volume. Collectively, these essays thoroughly deconstruct the notion that there is little to be gained from a philosophical treatment of rituals. These essays also clearly demonstrate the broad range of directions a philosophical analysis of ritual

might take. In sum, the value of this book is twofold: it would be an excellent text for a graduate level philosophy of religion course, but it is also a salient reminder of an important aspect of religious life that has until now largely eluded the attention of philosophers.

Science & Faith: Friends or Foes?, by C. John Collins. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003. Pp. 448. $25 (paper).

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Christians should not fear the sciences, even if chemistry frightens us or if Carl Sagan intimidates us. Instead, science should complement our Christian faith as a parallel revelation to be understood through sound critical thinking. C. John Collins is professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary and an MIT graduate who insightfully explores the ins and outs of faith and science issues. The book targets those who have no specialized training in theology, philosophy, or the sciences without "dumbing down" the material. In fact, any reader quickly realizes the erudition and interdisciplinary insights of the author.

Science and faith confront one another on these pages as Collins reconciles them through exegesis and common sense, while marshalling and foiling material from philosophy, theology, cosmology, geology, biology, literature, physics, and even popular science fiction. His goal is to construct a "proper hold on Christian belief" (12) in four different sections. Part I proceeds with philosophy and method of science, insisting that good science and good faith both need sound critical thinking. Part II focuses on theology, where the author considers how the biblical data impacts our view of science in the cosmos, origins, created man, effect of sin, providence, miracles, revelation, and dominion. Part III weds faith and science in the areas of cosmology and biology that climaxes in an apologetic for intelligent design, and expands even into the social sciences. Part IV applies all this to education, the public square, and a Christian world and life view. An appendix critiques Thomas Kuhn's theory of paradigm construction and its role in scientific methodology.

Collins first establishes ground rules for approaching the biblical record, always with a goal to find an interpretation that accounts for all the features of the text. He devotes two chapters to demonstrating fundamental principles of critical thinking and the drawing of sound conclusions. Sound thinking (any argument) involves data, premises, terms, logic, scope, and a gradation of confidence. The author does not advance his own agenda here, but frames his forthcoming study with sound scientific method. He defines and illustrates fallacies, truth claims, and the role of reason in doing good science of any sort. Science and faith each have a relationship to knowledge, the author says, and the supernatural and natural can overlap and need not be at odds. Defining science only through naturalistic explanation finds no warrant in the history of science or from the rules of reason (54); a scientific system with God behind it is a more