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superiority of “enlightened liberal states” are laughable given that the most frequently cited candidates have been among the leading aggressors and supporters of unjust regimes around the globe ever since WWII.

The essays by Robert Holmes and Duane Cady, articulating and defending varieties of pacifism, are the most philosophically proficient in the book, though both are at their strongest in criticizing those who support the possession and deployment of WMD. There is little question that a pacific settlement of disputes is a moral ideal worth espousing and pursuing, and also, that it is morally correct to advocate a complete abolition of WMD—precisely because their destructive force is so powerful and difficult to contain. But short of an effective coordinated effort on the part of all nations to disarm, neither Holmes nor Cady provide a convincing response to the simple query that confronts the WMD pacifist; what about a situation of self-defense? Are we ever justified in taking up arms against an aggressor? If so, are we not also justified in preparing ourselves for defense against would-be aggressors, or at least, those who have demonstrated aggressive intent against us? If so, are we not justified in preparing ourselves with weapons that either would actually deter them or would be powerful enough to defeat them, e.g., WMD? I see an affirmative answer to each of these questions, however disturbing it might be.

The problem with the call for disarmament is this: because WMD are seen as vital to self-defense given that some states already possess them, then it is impractical to expect any nation to unilaterally disarm in the absence of international mechanisms that would ensure *universal* disarmament. Few nations will voluntarily abandon their defenses if it means submitting to the hegemony of others, yet, at present, the dominant nations have not allowed any international agency to engineer an effective program of universal disarmament. This is a further reason to distrust non-proliferation arguments, especially when it comes to one of the main regions where political tensions and the likelihood of proliferation are the greatest, namely, the Middle East. Israel, with its nuclear weapons, its record of aggression against neighboring states, its atrocities against Palestinians under occupation, and its virtually unqualified support from the U.S., provides Arab and Islamic peoples a legitimate concern for their own safety, and a real incentive to follow the lead of Pakistan by acquiring WMD of their own in order to better their defenses and political leverage. I fault Hashmi for not highlighting this concern, and no one should be surprised or indignant if his advice for Islamic countries to unilaterally abandon efforts to acquire WMD falls upon deaf ears.

The Christian Platonism of Simone Weil, edited by E. Jane Doering and Eric O. Springsted. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004. Pp. xii + 252. \$45.00 (hardback); \$27.50 (paperback).

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The work of Simone Weil (1909–1943) is still too little known among theologians and analytic philosophers. I hope that this volume will do something to remedy this situation, both because of the quality of the twelve essays

in it and because it keys her work into the philosophy of Plato, and shows how she propounded a distinctive version of Christian Platonism. I learnt a lot from it about Plato, Weil, and the role of philosophy as wisdom.

All the essays are by writers from France or the U.S.A., but they vary in scope, readability, and the extent to which they bring in the work of Plato himself. There are a few disagreements among the contributors and many variations in emphasis. The essays fall roughly into three groups: there are two that are wide in scope, three by contrast that are very specialized, while the remaining seven grapple in a more general way with her Christian Platonism, albeit attending to particular aspects of it, e.g., her materialism or her stress on the role of *metaxus* (i.e., intermediaries like beauty).

After a short but helpful introduction by the editors, Louis Dupre kicks off by discussing Plato as the source of Weil's negative theology, and then by bringing out aspects of the latter, e.g., her treatment of the 'non-being' of God, our decreation or affliction, and our need to submit to the law of necessity as an expression of our love of God. He ends by mentioning Susan Taubes' view that Weil's theology of affliction is one of death without resurrection, a view which Dupre thinks may need qualifying in the light of the later essays in the volume.

All the issues raised in this first essay are discussed by later contributors, but the point about resurrection is taken up in the concluding essay by David Tracy, which forms a pendant to Dupre's. He sees Weil's Christian Platonism as distinguished by a tragic sensibility (whereas the early Christian Platonists reflected too little on tragedy). Tracy sees her general importance as lying in her reuniting the mystical and prophetic strands in Christianity, and comments rightly that it is strange that she was blind to the political message of Exodus and the Hebrew prophets.

The three more specialized essays cover a variety of topics. Vance G. Morgan discusses how Weil found a religious significance in Greek mathematics and geometry, for the notions of mediation, harmony, and proportion are sacramental in being analogous to human harmony, love of neighbour, and so on, and also in anticipating Christ as *Logos* and Mediator. Florence de Lussy concentrates on Weil's cryptic comments in some of her last notebooks on *to on* (the real), ending in the position that necessity is the basis of reality, and touching on what Plato says in his *Republic* about the *arche anupothetos* (underived beginning). Martin Andic explores the similarities between Weil's views on freedom, Providence, and necessity, and those of Boethius in *The Consolation of Philosophy*, and ends by questioning whether that work is really a Christian one and by raising two issues on which Weil might well disagree with its author.

The remaining seven essays form more of a unity in that they all draw out aspects of Weil's distinctive Christian Platonism. Michael Narcy sees her as having been deeply influenced to some extent in her Platonism by her teacher Alain, e.g., in his antidualism and in the importance he ascribed to Plato's myths, but in other ways distancing herself from him. In any case, she claimed to have acquired her devotion to Plato by the age of fourteen. Michael Ross comments on the 'immanentist' conception of the good in her early and middle years, and claims that despite her disparagement of Aristotle he influenced her in many ways. Moreover, there was much in Plato that she rejected, e.g., the dialogue format, *elenchus* reasoning, and

the Divided Line; and in her thoughts about justice she was far more concerned with release from oppression than with philosopher-kings or the analogy between the tripartite soul and tripartite society.

These themes are complemented in Robert Chenavier's profound contribution, which argues that Weil's 'completed' Platonism included a philosophy of work (she worked for a time in the Renault factory), something on which Tracy also touches, and a materialism which could recognize the reality of the supernatural. It was Marx's realization of the importance of labour that led her to respect him as an important thinker; and she disagreed with him on his treatment of justice rather than his materialism, which she thought was compatible with an authentic spirituality.

The issue of materialism is taken further by Patrick Patterson and Lawrence Schmidt, who, like some other contributors, are anxious to distance Weil's Platonism from the caricatures of Plato that are still prevalent. They argue that she emphasized the particularity and materiality of Plato's thought in three ways: her sacramental ontology, especially in what she says about beauty; her world-affirming epistemology which sees God as drawing us to him in and through the world; and her politics of engagement with the world. They end by raising a question to which I will return, of how she can reconcile the sacramental beauty of the world with the sovereignty of might.

Emmanuel Gabellieri also emphasizes the 'incarnational' strands of Weil's thought by discussing the role of three *metaxus* here: world order, beauty, and suffering. He uses Weil's annotations in her own copy of Plato's *Timaeus* to draw out her Trinitarian thinking, and he sees analogies between her thought and that of Blondel, as well as differences from that of recent anti-Platonists like Heidegger and Deleuze.

Another recent thinker with whom Weil can be put in dialogue is Rene Girard, and this is the subject of a very rich but difficult essay by Cyril O'Regan, which perhaps tries to work in too much material. In the last section he considers how they both see Christ as a figure of countermimesis, who breaks the cycle of violence. But *en route* he discusses her view of evil as non-being, her categorization of the *Iliad* as the poem of violence, her treatment of Prometheus as a figure of countermimesis (along with Patroclus in the *Iliad* and the crucified just man in Plato's *Republic*), and much else.

Finally in this group of essays, Eric Springsted draws some analogies between Weil and St. Augustine, a surprising comparison, given that she was almost as critical of him as of Aristotle! Springsted sees her as having recovered and reformulated the 'inner' sense of Platonism, especially through her stress on attention, and he distinguishes this from Cartesian inwardness.

All the essays are substantial contributions, well worth reading. As we have seen, some of them are anxious to distinguish Plato, both in himself and in Weil's reading of him, from the figure presented to us in many philosophy courses in Britain and the U.S.A., at least until recently (not to mention the caricature of 'Greek Philosophy' still prevalent in much theology). Thus some essays play down Plato's dualism, and O'Regan goes a step further in stressing Weil's reinterpretation of the Orphic elements in Plato, e.g., by her treating *anamnesis* not as the recollection of past existences but as our attending to the transcendent dimension of our

present life, or by construing Plato's myths of a last judgement in terms of a transcendent viewpoint here and now that judges otherwise than the world does.

Scholars of Plato may well have reservations about Weil's and the contributors' interpretations of his thought. But I have three more specific queries.

(1) Aristotle. Many essays bring out her dislike of Aristotle's thought, something which strikes any reader of her works and which she extended to thinkers influenced by him, e.g., Maritain. Some contributors, however, maintain, as we have seen, that she absorbed from him more than she realized. But do we know how much of Aristotle's work she had actually studied?

(2) A similar question to the one I have asked about Aristotle could be asked about St Augustine, another subject of her scathing remarks. Springsted admits that, despite her having much in common with his Christian Platonism, she had read little of his work. Regardless of that question, I would want to make a sharper distinction between her views on beauty and Augustine's than Springsted does. Whereas Augustine seems at times, especially in the *Confessions*, to be wary of worldly beauty and fearful of its bewitching its beholders, Weil is much more welcoming, for she regards it as an incarnation of God. In terms of the ladder of beauty in Plato's *Symposium*, Augustine is afraid that people will not ascend to Beauty itself, i.e., God, whereas Weil is also interested in traffic *downwards*, both because of her wide incarnational sense and because of her utilization of the creation myth in the *Timaeus*. As Gabellieri points out, she regards both the transcendence and the descending movement of the Good as essential in Plato.

Of course, Weil's analysis of beauty has its limitations. Like many writers, she thinks of it mainly in terms of order, seen e.g., in mathematics and in the impersonal sway of natural laws, and is less appreciative of its sensual radiant character, what Aquinas called "*claritas*." She is not interested too in beauty's relation to other aesthetic concepts, but rather to other grand concepts like truth and goodness. But this takes me to my third and most serious query.

(3) Providence. In his *Simone Weil: Utopian Pessimist* David McLellan notes that whereas Israel's God was present and active in history, Weil's God is absent from it, and is only present in nature through the iron laws of necessity, so that she was suspicious of the ideas of providence and final causes. He asks how necessity can both be the face of an indifferent and impersonal God, and yet also the veil of a loving God. It seems to me that she lacks any sense of God working *through* natural laws to achieve particular purposes, partly because she associates the idea of personal providence with the common Christian tendency, as she sees it, to treat God as the counterpart of the Roman emperor who adjusts things according to his benevolent caprices, and partly because she seems to have been unfamiliar with the idea of secondary causality.

Patterson and Schmidt see something of this problem when they ask at the end of their essay how Weil's faith in the sacramental beauty of the world as an incarnation of God can be reconciled with her 'recognition of the absolute sovereignty of might' (p. 90), but respond weakly that the

weight of her argument, discernible in the rest of her writings, relativizes the offensiveness of necessity. Andic too sees the problem, but seems to think that the only alternatives are Weil's conception of necessity or else Providence 'intervening' in events (p. 167), thus failing to do justice to Aquinas' and others' teaching on secondary causes.

So there is work still to be done. But these essays push forward our understanding of Weil, and show that she was an important thinker, whose work should be read more widely.