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Book Review: Religious Tolerance Through Humility: Thinking With Philip Quinn

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Religious Tolerance through Humility: Thinking with Philip Quinn, edited by James Kraft and David Basinger. Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008. Pp. 138. \$89.95

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The essays in this book revolve around the general issue of whether or not exposure to diverse religious viewpoints can and should lead to a humility which in turn can and should lead to more religious tolerance. A strong diverse lineup including essays by David Basinger, William Lane Craig, Keith Yandell, John Greco, William Hasker, James Kraft, Peter Byrne, Robert McKim, Jerome Gellman and the late Philip L. Quinn ensured that there would be both debate and thoughtful insight. Quinn thinks that in many instances, one's reasons for one's religious beliefs are generally no better than those of others who hold different competing religious beliefs, and that this epistemic realization leads to humility and can minimize intolerant behavior. Certainly none of these authors agree with Quinn entirely, and most raise serious objections to the claim that religious diversity leads to epistemic humility or tolerance.

Starting with the notion that the religious beliefs of others which conflict with our own can provide potential defeaters (in a Plantingian sense) to our own religious beliefs, Quinn's initial excerpt essay brings to the foreground the philosophical question and personal existential struggle that many of us feel in the face of intelligent non-Christians' authentic beliefs.

Craig disagrees with Quinn's claims that diversity provides substantial defeaters, and rejects the view that there is an epistemic standoff among world religions. Craig agrees with Plantinga that there are many cogent arguments for theism, and believes that there are substantial defeaters against non-theistic religions. Craig finds Quinn's claim that religious tolerance can arise from religious uncertainty and moral conviction to be unconvincing because some religions undermine the possibility of moral conviction, according to Craig, and ultimately tolerance is to be found in the certainty of the intrinsic value of each God-created individual, not in religious uncertainty.

Basinger does not agree with Quinn that religious diversity as a phenomenon produces epistemic humility, but he agrees with Quinn's sentiments as he relies on his personal experiences as a teacher and academic to claim that people who do have a higher awareness of other faiths and interaction with those of other faiths tend to be more tolerant and humble. But it is not because they have come to doubt their own position in light of others' beliefs. Again, uncertainty is not the cause of humility.

Gellman provides a Jewish voice in the book and says that "Quinn's strategy has a chance of advancing tolerance only in a society where tolerance is already a well-established social phenomenon and Quinn is trying only to get slackers to join in" (p. 50). Gellman's basic criticism is that most

cases of dangerous religious intolerance arise in cultures with civil traditions which lack an understanding or respect for religious freedom.

Greco's essay is really about theism and atheism. He argues that religious belief is rational not so much because of argument but because of perceptions and testimony. The bottom line for this discussion of religious diversity and humility is that if perception and testimony are the real basis of rational religious belief, then multiple religious belief structures can be seen as rational, due to the different perceptions and testimonial communities from which such beliefs arise.

Kraft argues that Islam is not more violent than Christianity. Kraft tends to agree with Quinn that awareness of religious diversity can lead to a loss of confidence which can lead to epistemic humility and tolerance. This loss of confidence is the price we must pay in order to have a safer world.

McKim grants Quinn and like-minded thinkers that "facing up to various facts about other religious traditions probably often has a certain toning-down effect on people's religious beliefs" but if people's religious beliefs combat intolerance and help promote tolerance, then it doesn't seem that undermining those religious beliefs would in fact lead to greater tolerance, but less (p. 76). McKim also criticizes the notion of tolerance: "Tolerance is inadequate, given broad parity, because it is too begrudging, too lacking in generosity. It sees others as an annoyance, a burden to be borne, something to put up with, to live with and to endure, something in the face of which you choose to 'grit your teeth and bear it'" (p. 82). Instead of tolerance, McKim suggests a posture of 'respectful curiosity.'

Hasker argues that Quinn's development of thinner theologies along the lines of Alston in a Kantian direction ala John Hick guts authentic religious belief to such an extent that they become ineffectual. Hasker suggests, instead of this approach, a Rawlsian overlapping consensus method where the various religious doctrines are drawn on to provide broad liberal protections for difference.

Byrne suggests that while the problem of intolerance is likely the result of religious exclusivism, the solution to religious intolerance is not to be found in religious diversity or epistemic humility, but in political prioritizing of principles of liberty over the individual's moral beliefs about what is right or wrong. (An example would be that we allow people to worship what others of us would consider false religions for the sake of liberty and religious freedom.) Byrne raises the question of how a religious group which sees others as God-hated and damned for eternity can simultaneously respect and accept those who are seen as "the damned, traitors to God, or as vermin" (p. 108). He concludes that "Soteriological exclusivism thus appears to be the potential enemy of tolerance" and political liberalism is our best defense against this danger (p. 109).

Keith Yandell's essay completes the book with a critique of Quinn, Alston, and Hick, with conclusions similar to Hasker's view that an attenuated, general religion is ineffectual and actually undermines the possibility of essential beliefs: "Thus no one can claim to 'know God', let alone know

that God became incarnate in Jesus Christ to die for our sins and be raised for our justification" (p. 122).

This book honors Quinn not through agreement or support of his views on religious humility and tolerance, but by seriously engaging his thought and these questions that he found to be important. The result is a good set of diverse essays which highlight many of the key issues and questions in the debate. No particular conclusion is reached here, but the relationships between humility and tolerance and religious diversity are explored fruitfully, and hopefully this book will lead to further work and discussion on this topic. It seems true that interaction with kind, thoughtful believers of other faiths can make us more sympathetic to other belief systems even if we do not agree with them. And it also seems clear that such sympathy with beliefs we disagree with is not due to loss of confidence in our own faith necessarily, but rather due to realizing the humanness of those believers and understanding why they might believe as they do. In short, humility which can come from awareness of religious diversity is not in any significant way connected to loss of an exclusivist faith position.

Developmental Theism: From Pure Will to Unbounded Love by Peter Forrest. Clarendon Press, 2007. Pp. 199. \$55 (cloth)

DANIEL DOMBROWSKI, Seattle University

Both the existence and the concept of God are examined in this thought-provoking book. The author's treatment of the existence of God is built foursquare on a philosophical anthropology. There is a spectrum of philosophical positions regarding what human beings are: reductive materialism sees consciousness and agency (the mental) as redundant of the physical; moderate materialism sees the mental as nonredundant of the physical, but as nonetheless correlated with the physical in a metaphysically necessary fashion; moderate idealism sees the physical as nonredundant of the mental, but as nonetheless correlated with the mental in a metaphysically necessary fashion; reductive idealism sees the physical as redundant of the mental; and, of course, dualism sees the mental and the physical as correlated only contingently.

Forrest thinks that the probability of theism is negligible only if we are almost certain of reductive materialism. That is, we have good reason to be theists. But the author does not so much think that we should be confident theists as that we should not be confident atheists.

Among the options in philosophical anthropology listed in the first paragraph, it is moderate materialism that Forrest defends, a position that coheres with theism better than its chief rival, dualism. Because of the current dominance of materialism in philosophy, he thinks that philosophical theists should pay attention to a type of theism that is built on a moderate