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Book Review: Inquiry About God: Selected Essays Volume 1

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range of experience within an holistic epistemic setting. However, the book neglects religious experience within Chinese religious traditions, eastern religions more broadly, and non-Christian theistic religions. The Chinese subjects introduced are usually converts to Christianity or missionaries and, if not, at least invoked when they speak in favour of Christianity—as are the practitioners of Eastern religions more generally (140, 232, 234, 218–219, 268, 271). The monism more prevalent in Eastern religions is rejected quickly towards the end of Chapter 17. As for Judaism, the case of a secular kibbutznik becoming a religious Jew after a mystical experience is presented (260–261), but along with the case of Weil’s conversion to Christianity (259–260). Religious experience within Islam receives a single mention (271).

On a few minor points, the indices are incomplete, and the book includes quite a few formatting errors, particularly in the offsetting of various items in lists or principles (72, 78, 80, 81, 126) and other typographical errors, including an error in the header of every other page in Chapter 8.

While advancing the debate about religious experience, Kwan acknowledges that his book will not be conclusive, particularly because of the limitations of space provided by a single volume. Skeptical readers will likely not be persuaded by this book. This owes in part to the sheer number of arguments and topics raised (and that then cannot be adequately addressed), but also to particular problems with the arguments, some of which I have identified in this review. However, to conclude that this is not a good book because it is not conclusive would be to commit something analogous to a super-reliability fallacy. After all, the book is often insightful, and even where the arguments do not persuade, they provoke much thought. The book will be of interest to philosophy students and philosophers of religion, particularly those working on religious experience and related topics in epistemology.

Inquiring About God: Selected Essays, Volume, 1 by Nicholas Wolterstorff, edited by Terence Cuneo. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 313 pages. \$85 (hardcover).

Practices of Belief: Selected Essays, Volume 2, by Nicholas Wolterstorff, edited by Terence Cuneo. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 435 pages. \$85 (hardcover).

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As I discussed with some graduate students at my university that I would be working on a review of Wolterstorff’s essays, they immediately became interested but asked, “When will a collection of his essays on theological aesthetics become available?” What this question indicates is the wide

breadth of topics that Wolterstorff has worked on over the years. He has hit on issues in metaphysics, ethics, philosophy of religion, epistemology, and aesthetics. This two-volume collection of essays gives us a good sampling of Wolterstorff's works on philosophy of religion and epistemology. The aim of both volumes is to present essays that can represent Wolterstorff's views on a topic without overlapping significantly with other essays in the collection. Neither claims to be an exhaustive or systematic treatment of Wolterstorff's thoughts. I wish to highlight a few of the themes throughout each volume.

Inquiring About God, Volume 1, contains an introduction and thirteen essays on philosophy of religion and philosophical theology. Twelve of the essays have been previously published in various journals and books over the years. Chapter 10, "Is God Disturbed by what Transpires in Human Affairs?" has not been previously published. Throughout this volume, Wolterstorff engages in dialogue with major thinkers such as Kant, Aquinas, Augustine, Anselm, and Barth to name but a few. What makes Wolterstorff such an important philosopher is the way he engages these thinkers. His approach is first to explicate a dialogue partner's view with careful attention to her philosophical assumptions well before seeking to critique or appropriate her position. "Thou must not sit in judgment until thou hast done thy best to understand. Thou must earn thy right to disagree" (302). Even though this is primarily a volume on philosophy of religion, one will find interesting discussions on epistemology, emotion, philosophy of language and interpretation, as well as philosophy of time.

Chapter 1, "Analytic Philosophy of Religion: Retrospect and Prospect," offers reasons why one should do analytic philosophy of religion. The thrust of his answer is not that analytic philosophers seek clarity and rigor—though they do seek such things—but instead that the analytic tradition is an important narrative within the history of twentieth-century philosophy. Wolterstorff tells the tale of Locke's epistemology, Russell and Moore's realism overthrowing the popularity of Hegelian idealism, as well as the collapse of logical positivism and classical foundationalism. The collapse of positivism and classical foundationalism made way for analytic philosophy of religion and reformed epistemology (a theme discussed at length in Volume 2). Wolterstorff also notes that as analytic philosophy of religion has flourished, so has the study of medieval philosophy and theology. Analytic philosophers of religion prefer to have conversations with thinkers like Anselm instead of Kant.

Speaking of Kant, chapters 2 and 3 deal explicitly with Kant's epistemology and how it has influenced theology. Chapter 2, "Is It Possible and Desirable for Theologians to Recover From Kant?" answers in the affirmative. Part of the Kantian influence on theology and religious studies is the notion that one cannot talk about God before she has established that it is possible to even talk about God. On Kant's epistemological scheme, it is not possible to experience God. Further, God is outside of the realm to which human concepts apply. This puts the theologian in a pickle, to say

the least. If God cannot be experienced and our concepts do not apply to God, it would seem that it is not possible to talk about God. Farewell to theology then, or so it would appear. Wolterstorff offers an in-depth analysis of Kant's epistemology and then shows where the weakness in this scheme lies. In chapter 3, "Conundrums in Kant's Rational Religion," he offers further reasons to reject the Kantian scheme by showing that Kant's moral foundation for religion is internally incoherent.

After clearing the Kantian dust from the theological ground, Wolterstorff begins to move into the realm of philosophical theology by way of an engagement with medieval thinkers. Chapter 5, "Divine Simplicity," offers an excellent articulation of divine simplicity set against the backdrop of medieval ontology. One of the main difficulties that Wolterstorff draws out is that it seems to be impossible to predicate anything of a simple God. Chapter 7, "God Everlasting," and chapter 8, "Unqualified Divine Temporality," extend Wolterstorff's critique of divine simplicity and begin his critique of divine impassibility by way of rejecting the doctrine of divine timelessness. One of Wolterstorff's moves is to argue that the claims of scripture are *prima facie* incompatible with a timeless God. Nothing in scripture will lead one to think that God is timeless. Instead, one must offer good reasons for thinking that God is timeless and then offer a plausible way to interpret passages of the Bible that make it appear that God is acting in history.

Another move by Wolterstorff is that a timeless God cannot know what time it is now, cannot remember the past, nor make plans for the future. Within this argument, Wolterstorff is assuming presentism—an ontology of time where only the present moment exists—and that in order for God to be omniscient He must have some sort of perceptual awareness of what is going on in the world. Interestingly, the medievals would only agree with Wolterstorff on the first assumption about presentism (e.g., St. Augustine, *Confessions* XI.20. Anselm; *Monologion* 21, 22, and 24; also, *Proslogion* 13, 19, and 22). They would disagree with him on the second assumption about omniscience. As Boethius's *Consolations of Philosophy* makes clear, "how absurd it is that we should say that the result of temporal affairs is the cause of eternal foreknowledge!" (V.147; also see Augustine, *On the Trinity* 6.11; and *On Genesis* 5.18.6). They would hold that God is omniscient by having a perfect knowledge of Himself, and in no way is this dependent upon the world. It is clear that Wolterstorff would disagree with the medievals over the nature of omniscience.

Wolterstorff's other main argument against divine timelessness is that a timeless God cannot be referred to since God would come to have an accidental property, and thus be temporal. We not only can refer to God, we do so all the time; thus, God is temporal. The medievals would seem to agree with Wolterstorff's starting point, but would not accept his conclusion. Peter Lombard claims that in referring to God the accidental property befalls the creature and not God, thus preserving God's timelessness (*Sentences* Book I, Dist. VIII, XXX, and XXXIX).

Chapter 10, "Is God Disturbed by What Transpires in Human Affairs?" furthers the critique of impassibility and begins to examine the problem of evil. Wolterstorff brings out an internal conflict within Aquinas's view on the matter. Aquinas seems to hold the following three premises. (1) God is not disturbed by evil. Not having passions is a perfection. (2) A person is morally excellent if she sorrows over an evil. She is morally deficient if she does not. (3) God is aware of the evil in the world. It would seem that if God is aware of evil and is not disturbed by it, He is morally deficient.

The first volume concludes with chapter 13, "Tertullian's Enduring Question." Tertullian famously asked what Christian theology should do with pagan philosophy and literature. Wolterstorff compares Tertullian's method with Clement of Alexandria's approach to philosophy and Christian theology. He then seeks to articulate his own answer as to how contemporary Christian scholarship should take place. What makes this paper a great conclusion to the first volume is that upon reading it one will find that Wolterstorff has clearly exemplified this method throughout all of the previous essays.

In *Practices of Belief, Volume 2*, the focus is on epistemology. Like the first volume, this collection contains several previously published papers, yet many of these have been heavily revised. Of the fifteen essays, five are previously unpublished, giving this volume the bragging right to be considered the most recent comprehensive statement on reformed epistemology. In this volume you will see Wolterstorff interact with thinkers like Hilary Putnam, Immanuel Kant, John Locke, Thomas Reid, William Alston, Alvin Plantinga, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Roderick Chisholm as well as many others.

In chapters 1, "The World Ready-Made," and 2, "Does the Role of Concepts Make Experiential Access to Ready-Made Reality Impossible?," Wolterstorff sets out to clear the ground of metaphysical anti-realism and Kantian skepticism before turning his attention to the concept of *entitlement* in chapters 3 through 5. Chapter 6, "Epistemology of Religion," begins his examination of classical foundationalism, natural theology, the evidentialist challenge to religious belief, and reformed epistemology. After this he focuses on various ideas within the epistemology of Thomas Reid in chapters 14 and 15. The volume concludes with a delightful postscript where Wolterstorff reflects on his life in philosophy. Some of the stories he tells in the postscript are entertaining as well as illuminating.

The tale of reformed epistemology (RE) is an interesting and controversial one. RE is in part a rejection of three things: classical foundationalism, the evidentialist challenge to religious belief, and the doxastic ideal. The evidentialist challenge rests upon classical foundationalism, so part of the thrust of RE is to show that classical foundationalism is incoherent. The doxastic ideal claims that beliefs should be grounded in acquaintance, or logically derived from acquaintance, or based upon probabilistic evidence. Locke and other Enlightenment figures argued that this doxastic ideal applied to everyone and every belief. As Wolterstorff argues, RE follows

David Hume and Thomas Reid by rejecting the view that the ideal reflects the way human persons actually form beliefs. For instance, many of our beliefs are formed on the basis of testimony, and the ideal fails to consider this. RE claims that the ideal fails to hold not only for everyday beliefs, but also for religious beliefs.

RE is not only a negative project in epistemology. It is not simply the rejection of previous ideas. RE seeks to offer a positive account as well. Various RE thinkers focus on different epistemological merits, such as justification and warrant. Wolterstorff's work focuses on the merit of entitlement as it relates to rationality. Are theists entitled to their religious beliefs? Is there some epistemic obligation that they have failed to meet? When it comes to discerning if someone is entitled to her belief, one must discern if she has fulfilled her epistemic duty. This depends on various factors and belief dispositions that a person has. For Wolterstorff, there is no doxastic ideal for the ethics of belief that cuts across all persons, places, and times. "Obligations to employ practices of inquiry are *personally situated* obligations" (111). In employing a practice of inquiry, one must choose from among practices that are socially and personally acceptable, as well as personally accessible (102–103). As such, whether or not one is entitled to her belief is a complex person-situated matter.

Further, we often assess the rationality of our beliefs after we have formed them. Part of being entitled to a belief is assessing the beliefs that we find ourselves having. Our beliefs are "innocent-until-proven-guilty" (257). Being entitled could mean that a person has considered various arguments against her belief and found her belief unscathed. Or it could involve her deliberately intervening in the formation of one of her beliefs. The only way we can discern if she is rational is by scrutinizing her individual belief system and the way she has used her noetic equipment (262).

Both volumes contain valuable discussions for those interested in philosophy of religion, philosophical theology, and epistemology. Each would be useful for supplemental reading in a course on philosophy of religion or religious epistemology. Volume 2 is especially important for those who are researching reformed epistemology. Both volumes are a *must have* for those who are enamored with Wolterstorff's writings.

Nature Red in Tooth and Claw: Theism and the Problem of Animal Suffering, by Michael Murray. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 206 pages. \$70.00 (cloth).

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Michael Murray has written a provocative and challenging work on an issue that is often passed over far too quickly in discussions of the problem of evil. In this work he gives the problem of animal suffering the attention