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John Martin Fischer, OUR STORIES: ESSAYS ON LIFE, DEATH, AND FREE WILL

Stewart Goetz

BOOK REVIEWS

Our Stories: Essays on Life, Death, and Free Will, by John Martin Fischer. Oxford University Press, 2009. Pp. 184. $65.00 (cloth).

STEWART GOETZ, Ursinus College

This first-rate book consists of a collection of ten interesting papers, all but one of which has appeared elsewhere. Seven of the papers are authored by Fischer alone, and three are co-authored (the co-authors are Anthony Brueckner, Ruth Curl, and Daniel Speak). As the title accurately states, the papers concern (the meaning of) life, death, and free will.

I start where the book ends, with Fischer's treatment of the meaning of life and free will. In the philosophy of action, Fischer is a compatibilist, and he believes the value of acting freely (or in a way as to be morally responsible) is the value of self-expression, which does not require alternative possibilities and is a kind of or akin to aesthetic value. Self-expression is the making of a certain kind of statement that has a distinctive narrative meaning and transforms our lives into stories. One way of summarizing Fischer's view is to say that our lives have a narrative dimension of value/meaning that is explained by our ability to act freely, and this entails that when we act freely we are engaged in a kind of artistic self-expression.

Narrative value/meaning, however, is not the primary form of value/meaning. A person's life also has the more basic moral and prudential forms of value/meaning, where both of these require our acting freely. If Fischer believes that prudential value/meaning (e.g., something like happiness) is the primary kind of value/meaning, then it would not be unnatural to conclude that he believes there is some single, fixed meaning to our lives that is, as it were, given and, perhaps, purposed. But Fischer seems to deny that this is the case. He insists that there is not a single story of our lives—a given narrative to which we add sentences, and there is no fundamental or privileged purpose or set of purposes (172). Though there is no fundamental or privileged purpose for our lives, Fischer believes (contrary to people like Bernard Williams) that immortality is not necessarily undesirable and might obtain, for all that we know. Thus, understanding our lives as narratives is compatible with a story without

an end (death, followed by an experiential blank, would be THE end). "Narrativity need not entail the necessity of endings" (146).

Given that this is the journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers, it is appropriate to contrast Fischer's view of value/meaning with a different one that seems reasonable on its own terms and is compatible with theism. Let us concede Fischer's list of the different kinds of value/meaning but prioritize them in the following way in light of the possibility of immortality. Most fundamental is prudential value/meaning, where this is purposefully fixed for us by our Creator. Our prudential value/meaning in its maximal form is our experience of perfect happiness (which, at a minimum, is a quality of existence that is pleasurable and excludes experiences of pain), which is the fulfillment of our Creator's purpose for us as individuals. This understanding of prudential value/meaning seems to be at odds with Fischer's because it excludes an idea that Fischer seems to endorse, which is that acting freely is part and parcel of well-being. Fischer says of someone who never acts freely that "his overall level of well-being is to be determined by simply adding his momentary welfare values" (151). An implication of this claim is that were this person to act freely, his doing so would itself become an additive component in the summation that yields his overall level of well-being. But this seems to be a mistake. As I will point out in the next paragraph, while it is reasonable to hold that choosing freely (in the libertarian sense) is a necessary condition of experiencing one's maximal level of well-being, it is wrong to maintain that acting freely (in any sense) is itself an additive component of that well-being.

What about moral value/meaning? On the account of value/meaning I have in mind (which, given constraints of space, is very vague), moral value/meaning is secondary in nature and arises out of the need for justice, where justice requires that only those who choose moral life plans fulfill the purpose for which they were created (only those who adopt moral life plans experience perfect happiness). Moreover, moral value/meaning requires free will, but free will that is libertarian in nature. Narrative value/meaning is, thus, tertiary in nature and a function of how we choose in the libertarian sense. Those who choose a moral way of life, which is one kind of narrative value/meaning, realize the maximal prudential value/meaning for which they were created. Those who choose an immoral way of life, which is a second kind of narrative value/meaning, fail to realize the maximal prudential value/meaning for which they were created.

Fischer believes that there is the appearance, but not the reality, of a conflict between the concepts of a narrativity and immortality (157–160). If a narrative must have an ending, then strictly speaking our lives cannot be narrative stories that "end" with immortality, because immortality is something that never ends. Fischer responds that perhaps, strictly speaking, an immortal life cannot fit into a narrative framework that has a

narrative value/meaning as a whole. But an immortal life could have something much like narrative value/meaning insofar as the relevant temporal stages of that life could exhibit the defining characteristics of narrative value/meaning, even though there is no whole life-story with an ending. In this case, the whole would not have a property of its parts. In this context, Fischer states that an immortal life might be like "a series of novels with the same protagonist, like a mystery series with the same detective. Over time the detective's character may change, but the changes can be organic; they need not be discontinuous" (158).

Because I am not committed to defending the reality of narrative value/meaning, I am not bothered by the fact that the idea of immortality is in tension with that of narrative value/meaning. However, it seems to me that there is no need to hold (as Fischer seems to assume at this point, but see the next paragraph) that immortality (at least, immortality understood as perfect happiness) includes continued character development. I believe a more reasonable view of immortality sees it as a kind of existence in which a person's moral character is perfected and needs no further improvement. Immortality is fundamentally a state of perfect happiness (well-being) wherein further development of moral character is otiose. If this is the case, then there is no moral narrative structure in the context of immortality.

Bernard Williams argues that if immortality involves a fixed (moral) character, then it will inevitably become boring and alienating (82). As Fischer points out, there is a distinction between self-exhausting and repeatable pleasures. A self-exhausting pleasure is one associated with an activity the performance of which terminates any further need to do it again. An example Fischer provides is of an activity that you desire to do just once to prove to yourself that you can do it:

> Imagine . . . that you are somewhat afraid of heights, and you have been working hard to overcome this phobia. You form the goal of climbing Mt Whitney just to show yourself that you have overcome the fear—just to show yourself that you can control your life and overcome obstacles. Upon climbing the mountain, you may in fact be very pleased and proud. Indeed, you may be deeply satisfied. But also you may have absolutely no desire to climb Mt Whitney (or any other mountain) again. You have accomplished your goal, but there is no impetus toward repeating the relevant activity or the pleasure that issues from it. (85)

Although Fischer does not mention the following point in response to Williams, it does seem coherent to suppose that even if there were no other kind of pleasure than that which is self-exhausting, the intelligibility of the idea of perfect happiness would still not be undermined. What would be required for perfect happiness would be a potentially infinite number of unrepeatable activities each of which provided its subject with pleasure. And given that there is nothing incoherent in this concept, it would be possible for a person to be perfectly happy for eternity by means of the

performance of an unending series of unrepeatable activities with their accompanying self-exhausting pleasures.

But as Fischer notes, there is another kind of pleasure. There are repeatable pleasures:

> Here an individual may well find the pleasure highly fulfilling and completely satisfying at the moment and yet wish to have more (i.e., to *repeat* the pleasure) at some point in the future (not necessarily immediately). Certain salient sensual pleasures leap immediately to mind: the pleasures of sex, of eating fine meals and drinking fine wines, of listening to beautiful music, of seeing great art, and so forth. . . . Given the appropriate distribution of such pleasures, it seems that an endless life that included some (but perhaps not only) repeatable pleasures would *not* necessarily be boring or unattractive. (85)

As Fischer goes on to point out, religious persons (and who is more likely to believe in perfect happiness than a religious person?) can experience not only repeatable pleasures of the sort just mentioned but also repeatable pleasures that come with the repeatable activities of worship of and thanks to God. Thanking God for the repeatable pleasures that He has granted is itself a source of additional pleasure.

I have focused in this review on the latter half of *Our Stories* in which Fischer treats at length the meaning of life and its relationship to free will. The first half of *Our Stories* focuses on death and whether it is bad, if there is no immortality or afterlife of any kind but only a permanent experiential blank. Given that this review resembles a life without immortality in that it must have an end, I cannot do justice to the interesting issues that Fischer raises and addresses in his discussion of death. For now, it will have to suffice to say that *Our Stories* is a collection of first-rate essays that will leave the reader pondering many interesting and important issues related to concerns that we all share in virtue of our being human. The book is eminently readable and suitable for any course that deals with death and the meaning of life. I highly recommend it to anyone who is interested in reading thoughtful essays about these topics.

Justice: Rights and Wrongs, by Nicholas Wolterstorff. Princeton University Press, 2010. Pp. 416. $25 (paperback).

ADAM BARKMAN, Redeemer University College

Nicholas Wolterstorff has been thinking and writing about justice almost from the very beginning of his career and, like a fine wine, his thought, as expressed in *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, has nicely aged. Gone are some of the rough edges and imbalances that characterized his first book on justice, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*. Here is the work of a philosopher who

has, it seems, read everything, understood all that he has read, and, with characteristic passion for doing all things Christianly, taken seriously the Reformed injunction to view all theories of justice through biblical spectacles. His theory of justice is original, stimulating and valuable, though, as to be expected given these, it is also frustrating and controversial. This book will make you think.

Justice is divided into three parts: a brief history of rights (he calls it the archeology of rights), the goods to which we have rights, and having a right to a good. Although he touches on the extremely important relationship between justice and love, he has relegated the balance of this topic to a forthcoming sequel.

He begins the first part of the book by insisting on an explicitly Christian approach to justice and then continues on to distinguish between primary and retributive justice (ix), and, somewhat originally, two basic theories of primary justice: justice as "right order" and justice as "inherent rights" (30). I had to read this section more than once to appreciate this important distinction since until then, I had always assumed that right order requires a theory of inherent rights, and in this way, found myself to be somewhere between these two even at the outset.

As the title suggests, Wolterstorff argues that justice is best thought of as inherent rights, wherein "rights are normative social relationships" (4) and inherent rights are rights that are natural or non-conferred—even, a bit shockingly given Wolterstorff's Reformed background, "by God or by some socially transcendent norm extrinsic [to the rights bearer]" (10). God, Wolterstorff makes clear from the outset, isn't beyond the scope of justice or rights-talk; indeed, a correct understanding of God is essential to a correct understanding of justice. Nevertheless, one of the weakest aspects of the book is that we never get a perfectly clear, perfectly laid out definition of justice which we could hold on to throughout the entire book. Given the depth and breadth of the material covered, this would have been extremely helpful.

One of the chief goals of *Justice* is to disabuse the notion of rights as presented by right order theorists. In the spirit of redeeming creational goods, Wolterstorff insists that "the practices of *honoring* and *claiming* rights . . . have been distorted," not that rights themselves are a distortion of justice (7). To prove his case, he endeavors to expose the problems in the story of rights as told by right order theorists, who typically point to fourteenth-century nominalism as the origin of human rights theory. Though not a historian of philosophy, Wolterstorff does an adequate job of tracing rights-talk back past the Middle Ages to the Church Fathers and finally into the New and Old Testaments. Ultimately, Wolterstorff wants to argue for inherent human rights because he thinks the Bible supports such. It is in these sections that Wolterstorff is at both his strongest and weakest.

On the one hand, his critique of right order theorists is outstanding. In my mind he is best, not so much in showing that right order theorists are totally wrong, but rather that any tolerable right order theory also needs

a theory of inherent human rights. Reading his critique of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, the O'Donovans is much like waking up from a dream: until that moment, these seemed so convincing, so all-encompassing, that their flaws—clear now—were difficult, if not impossible, to see: duty was all that mattered and rights were simply not addressed (though the notion always haunted these theories). Wolterstorff is a splash of cold water on the face.

On the other hand, Wolterstorff, not being a historian, sometimes seems to push his case, especially when trying to find inherent human rights in the Old Testament. For example, while trying to refute O'Donovan's claim that the Old Testament typically refers to justice as rectification, not primary justice, I find Wolterstorff a bit desperate (71). However, in the end I still think he proves his case, mostly by asking, and then in careful detail, analyzing, three key questions: (1) "Is there any recognition of Israel's writings of the recipient-side of the moral order?" (2) "Is there any recognition of the worth of persons and of human beings?" and (3) "Is there any indication that that worth is seen as grounding how a person or human has a right to be treated?" (91). The Israelites, Wolterstorff insists, saw that it was unjust to deprive God of that to which He has a right (namely, to be worshipped, to be treated as the most important thing), and they also saw that by murdering another, for example, they understood themselves to be violating the other person's inherent right—because they are made in the image of God—not to be murdered.

Convinced that primary justice and justice as rights is biblical, Wolterstorff then moves on to refute the false story—told by Nygren and Hauerwas—which would oppose love to justice or would see love replacing justice. Inasmuch as Jesus came not to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to perfect them, Wolterstorff argues that Jesus's conception of love and mercy presupposes and builds on justice: "Forgiveness has to be justice-alert; it cannot be justice blind" (105). Of course, he is far from original here (Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure* said everything better than Wolterstorff does on this subject), but this is an old truth that has been distorted in recent years, and so this voice is badly needed.

In the second part of the book, Wolterstorff discusses the goods to which we have rights. Central to this is a proper conception of the good life. Thus, Wolterstorff begins with an extremely detailed critique of eudaimonism, or rather, three forms of eudaimonism: (1) the experimentally satisfying life, (2) the happy life and (3) the flourishing life. Without getting into all the details, I found his critique of these a mixed bag, though, like trick or treating in a poor neighborhood, the mixture is more bad than good. He is at his best when questioning the Stoic's distinction between a "good" and a "preferable," but at his worst, in my opinion, when arguing that eudaimonism in any of its forms cannot find room for the inherent worth of persons or things. He spends an entire chapter trying—but failing in my view—to expose Augustine's supposed break from eudaimonism and then another chapter arguing with Aquinas (and in a related matter, with

Nussbaum) that eudaimonism is incompatible with Christ's love command; he says in no small voice, "No version of eudaimonism has room for compassion" (212).

In place of eudaimonism, Wolterstorff forwards, in his view, a more biblical alternative, which he calls eirenéism—a theory of the good life emphasizing vulnerability and sociality: "My well-being is constituted in good measure by the actions and restraints from action of others. It is in their hands" (226). This is an attractive alternative, and certainly gives uncomfortable Christian eudaimonists a reasonable (even if not an irresistible) alternative. Yet many unaddressed questions remain: Is this theory of the good life true of God, who is the perfection of happiness? Is His nature changeable and contingent on how others treat Him? Can we say that God is less happy if He is wronged? Wolterstorff's theory would suggest yes, and he may be right. But I, personally, need more convincing and so hope this will be expanded on in the sequel.

In part three, Wolterstorff develops his conception of having a right—more specifically, a moral right—to a good. This part is very technical, but rewards careful reading. Drawing on legal theory (which surprisingly enriches this philosophical discourse), Wolterstorff qualifies and defends a "weak Hohfeld thesis," which states that for every claim-right there is a correlative full-cognitive duty (257). Connected with this, Wolterstorff gives us a powerful (and refreshing, coming from a Reformed Christian) critique of divine command theory: "though God's commands do indeed place us under obligation, their doing so presupposes the normative context of a standing obligation on our part to obey such commands as God may issue to us. [The divine command theory] also proves not to be satisfactory . . . because a corollary of that standing obligation on our part is the standing right on God's part to our obedience to such commands as God may issue" (281).

His final chapters include a very nice discussion on the nature and grounding of human worth (here Wolterstorff's early work on ontology pays off), the important question of whether human rights can be grounded on anything but theism (his critique of secularism is convincing, but, as is typical of western philosophers, he doesn't address non-western alternatives), and the nature of the *imago Dei* (which he sees as the property of being loved by God equally and permanently and it is this that grounds inherent human rights).

In *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, Wolterstorff is at once fair to his interlocutors, and unafraid of exploring new ways of understanding justice, especially from an unapologetically biblical Christian perspective. Although I see this book as essential reading for all Christian ethicists, I fear that because it is so dense and technical (especially the third part), it will have limited readership. This is unfortunate since much of what Wolterstorff says desperately needs to be heard by theologians and Christians in general.

Will as Commitment and Resolve: An Existential Account of Creativity, Love, Virtue, and Happiness, by John Davenport. New York: Fordham University Press, 2007. Pp. xxiv + 706.

ANTHONY RUDD, St. Olaf College

This is an extremely ambitious book. What enables it to work is that, for all the breadth indicated in the sub-title, it is focussed on a fairly specific issue; the understanding of willing as "projective motivation." This turns out to have very wide implications for a range of topics in moral psychology, ethics, the philosophy of mind and—a bit more tangentially—the philosophy of religion. Davenport works out his account of the will and its implications in great detail and with meticulous care, developing it through conversation with an enormously wide range of philosophical (but also psychological and literary) texts. He moves easily back and forth between discussions of more analytic and more Continental philosophers (though mostly the former) and has extensive sections on historical figures—especially Plato and Aristotle, but also Scotus, Kant and others. Although he describes the book as a contribution to the renewal of existentialist thought (and sometimes describes his as "the existentialist" view), he does not discuss any of the canonical existentialist authors at length. However, the influence of Kierkegaard (about whom Davenport has written extensively elsewhere) is pervasive, though mostly in the background. The range of reference, but also the authority with which Davenport is able to write about such a wide range of texts, is most impressive. Readers daunted by the formidable length of the book may well be tempted to skip some of the detailed discussions of the literature (and the literature on the literature); but the conversational method is crucial to the book. Davenport's own quite distinctive and original position is one developed through dialogue with other thinkers, by sifting and sorting out what is and is not valuable in the existing contributions. And in doing this, Davenport is consistently careful, fair-minded and unpolemical.

Davenport introduces his subject matter by saying that "[t]his book is about the will in what can loosely be called its 'heroic' sense, as committed striving or passionate resolve." But this, he quickly adds, is not something rare or marginal; "strength of will [is] the backbone of every distinctively human life. . . volition is personal resolve, or choice that is motivated by the agent's self-assertive commitment to final goals and ends" (4). For all its centrality (as he claims) in ordinary life, Davenport notes that the "striving" will has not only been regarded with suspicion by various (especially Eastern, but also Western) religious traditions (29–37) but has also been generally neglected in the Western philosophical tradition. Naturalistic thinkers like Hobbes and Freud have dismissed the idea of the will altogether; on their view, we are moved to action by our strongest desires, with reason (sometimes) calculating the best means to the desired end; there is no need to postulate a further faculty of will in order to explain

action (47–49). On these views, the subject, considered as an agent, rather than a stage through which causal processes pass, drops out of the picture entirely. This helps to show, by contrast, why Davenport wants to make the will central to his understanding of human agency. To have a will is to be able to set one's own goals, to exercise a certain kind of freedom, and thus to count as morally responsible. It is worth noting though that Davenport does not think the account of the will he offers in this book commits him to a libertarian view of free will (see 83; 406–417). Not that he is committed to compatibilism either; the whole issue is set aside to be dealt with in future work.

Even views of human agency less reductive than those of the Hobbesian tradition still tend, Davenport complains, to "motivationally thin" theories of the will. "The thin concept of willing as the practical process of forming intentions and purposes can be interpreted in more minimalist or more robust ways. . . . But none of them sees practical willing as directly involved in controlling, shaping or forming our motives themselves" (79). Non-Hobbesian theories can allow for a gap between desire and action which the will is able to fill; but they do not allow for the kind of "existentially thick" willing by which, according to Davenport, we form our characters; which has the role of "shaping the ethos of a person" (79). More specifically, he argues that we should reject what he calls the "transmission principle," accepted by "virtually all" contemporary theories of motivation (88). According to this principle, "volition . . . does not generate any new motivation; it only transmits motivation" from our "prepurposive motives" (those "psychological attitudes that incline us to form intentions") "into the intended purposes" (87). By contrast, on Davenport's view, the "striving will" is capable of "projective motivation," that is, it can formulate goals which are not based on pre-existing motivational states. We become motivated to pursue the goal because we have willed to do so, not vice versa. The tendency of modern philosophy to reject this idea—or to not even see it as a possibility—Davenport traces to the ancient Greeks, in particular to the "eudaimonistic tradition," represented by both Plato and Aristotle. Accordingly, Davenport turns from his examination of contemporary theories of action and will to a detailed study of Plato and Aristotle (and their recent commentators and defenders) which occupies most of chapters 4–8. He attributes to both Greek philosophers the idea that desire has an "erosaic" structure; that is, desire (*eros* in the broadest sense) is a striving to gain what we lack, or to actualise what is present in us as potential. Happiness (*eudaimonia*) is the satisfying of such desire, and human action is to be explained as a quest for the good which we feel ourselves (either clearly or dimly and confusedly) to lack. Davenport thus presents his conception of projective motivation as the alternative to the eudaimonistic tradition which continues to dominate the philosophical scene.

Davenport's argument against this formidable tradition has two main stages. In the first (which occupies Part Two of the book), he tries to show

that eudaimonism is unable to deal with a fundamental paradox, that of formal egoism. This is related to the familiar paradox of *material* egoism, that someone who desires only his/her own happiness is unlikely to find it; happiness comes as a by-product of doing things which one cares about for their own sake. Davenport does not accuse Plato, Aristotle, or modern eudaemonists like MacIntyre of material egoism. But their theories are nonetheless *formally* egoistic in that they take motivation to be based on desire for what we lack. For instance, friendship is a crucial part of eudaimonia. If I lack friends, I will be unhappy, so I am motivated to develop friendships. But a genuine friendship is one in which I care about my friend for his/her own sake. The happiness I get from the friendship is a by-product of aiming, not at the happiness the friendship will bring me, but at the good of my friend. The point is, of course, a familiar one and, as Davenport fully recognises, the eudaemonists clearly want to avoid material egoism. But, he argues, they are unable to show how genuinely unselfish activity is compatible with their erosaic account of motivation, whereby what motivates me is always my desire for my good. This argument is developed through an impressively thorough and careful survey (quite impossible to summarise here!) of attempts to avoid the paradox, both by the classical eudaemonist authors, and by contemporary commentators or followers. (Contemporaries discussed include Annas, Kraut, Cooper, MacIntyre, Sherman, Hursthouse, and Watson.)

The second main stage of Davenport's argument (which occupies Part Three of the book) focuses more on the positive case to be made for his own "existential" view. This is still an argument against eudaimonism, though, as it consists in the enumeration and description of various psychological phenomena that cannot (so Davenport claims) be explained in eudaemonist terms, but which demonstrate the reality of the "striving" will and projective motivation. These include agapaistic love; "radical evil" (by which Davenport here means evil that is done simply for its own sake, and not for any benefit—however perverse—that it may bring the evildoer); acting for the sake of duty (justice); acting for the sake of certain ideals or goals (broadly ethical, but non-deontic); and pursuing meaningful but not specifically ethical projects that are not based on pre-existing desires. The method here is broadly phenomenological; putative examples of projective motivation are described (often with the help of literary and cinematic illustrations) and various philosophical and psychological reflections on them considered, with the aim of showing that they really cannot be understood in eudaimonistic terms and must be accepted at face-value as instances of projective willing.

In the course of making this argument, Davenport sketches a very interesting historical backdrop to his account. Although on his view eudaimonism has dominated the Western philosophical tradition, he notes that it has not been unchallenged. Davenport traces a rival counter-tradition back to Plato (in the *Timaeus*) and the Neoplatonists (287–303). This starts with a puzzle about divine creation. If all motivation is based on a felt

lack, what motive could God (who lacks nothing) have had for creating a world apart from Him? To deal with that problem, philosophers and theologians were forced to abandon the erosaic account of motivation, at least in the case of God; and could then use God's free (non-need-based) generosity as the model for us to imitate in agape. Davenport also draws our attention to Scotus's postulation (in opposition to Aquinas's eudaimonistic model) of a non-need-based will to justice, which he sees as the precursor to Kant's radically anti-eudaimonistic deontology (see chapter 11, passim). But he criticises both Scotus and Kant for seeing projective willing at work only in the deontological context and not more broadly. Similarly, Levinas is praised for seeing the ethical response to the other as radically distinct from any eudaimonistic concern, but criticised for seeing this as something totally different from the normal structure of motivation. On Davenport's view, projective willing is ubiquitous, appearing not only in ethical contexts—and indeed sometimes (in cases of radical evil) in anti-ethical ones.

A final crucial stage in Davenport's argument, treated most fully in the final chapter, though adumbrated in various places before that, is to reject the Sartrian existentialism that would take projective willing to be ultimately arbitrary. It might seem that if my choice of some project is not based on any need or antecedent desire within me, then it must be baseless—something I have chosen for no reason, and although I might equally well have chosen the opposite. Davenport rejects this dilemma, though. On his view, my willing x may be based on a perception of the value or worth of x, even though I had no need or desire for x. I am neither pushed by my need for x, nor drawn irresistibly by the goodness of x. I can freely (though in a sense that is not necessarily libertarian) will x for the reason that it is good, even though I could also choose not to will it. This view is expounded and defended, with great subtlety and characteristic thoroughness, through a close engagement with Harry Frankfurt's work. In chapter 13, Davenport argues that Frankfurt's account of *caring* comes close in many ways to his own account of the will, but in chapter 14 he shows that Frankfurt's view that our cares are not based on the worth of what we care about, but must simply be accepted as brute psychological facts, is untenable. This analysis of Frankfurt's subjectivism—at once very sympathetic and highly critical—is the best I know and is by itself well worth the price of admission to the book.

The length of the book will no doubt be off-putting to some potential readers. But although parts of this remarkably wide-ranging study can be appreciated in relative isolation from the main argument, the book as a whole repays a full reading. (It should be noted, incidentally, that the book is written in a very clear and readable style.) Some judicious pruning might not have hurt, but both of Davenport's main arguments had to be developed at length. Neither the paradox of eudaimonism nor the positive phenomenology of projective willing could have been presented as a simple knock-down argument. The former requires a careful examination

of a wide range of attempts to answer the problem; the latter requires the putative instances of projective willing to be described in rich phenomenological detail. Inevitably, there will be much for readers to criticise and disagree about; it will be for each reader to decide whether Part Two leaves any viable option still open to the defender of eudaimonism and whether Part Three provides compelling evidence for the reality of projective willing in Davenport's sense. But I think there is no doubt that Davenport has made a compelling case and has presented in rich detail a powerful alternative to a deeply entrenched way of thinking. And whether or not one ultimately agrees with him, I think no reader could fail to learn much from his painstaking analyses. This is a remarkable and wonderfully thought-provoking book.

Ontology and Providence in Creation: Taking Ex Nihilo Seriously, by Mark Ian Thomas Robson. New York: Continuum, 2008. Pp. xi + 223. $130 (hardback).

SAMEER YADAV, Duke University Divinity School

In this ambitious work, Mark Robson attempts to unseat a venerable philosophical tradition of understanding God's *creatio ex nihilo* widely held since its seminal articulation by Leibniz, one framed in modal terms according to which creation consists in the actualization of a determinate possible world. The ontological assumption for most modal theories whose formal semantics are rooted in the Leibnizian idiom of "possible-worlds" is that all possible objects are completely determinate individuals. Thus, although I have actually composed this on a laptop, I might have composed it on a desktop. As a way the world could have been, this possibility is general, for I have not specified whether the desktop would have been a PC or a Mac, or what software I would have used, and so on. But this possibility is not thereby indeterminate, for there is a fact of the matter about what might have been the case as regards each of these further specifications, as well as innumerable other ones. Any one maximally specified and logically consistent description (while in practice impossible to render explicit) would tell us exactly one way that the world logically could have been—a possible world. Having not fully specified the state of affairs of my having composed this review on a desktop, my assertion of the general possibility therefore includes many such determinate possibilities, thereby expressing a range of possible worlds. Each possible desktop in this range, as an exponent of a different possible world, is a fully determinate individual possible object.

According to those philosophical theologians in the Leibnizian tradition of modal ontology (and its formalized semantics post-Kripke), it is just this sort of determinacy about possibilia that characterizes God's exhaustive knowledge prior to creation. God's creation of the world was simply