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## Book Review: Pantheism

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means to think about the Christian faith as the deeper foundation for A and Judge William? Might the despair of the aesthetic stage be ended only by the gift of faith as described in *Upbuilding*? She does not hint at such possibilities, but lets readers come to their own conclusions.

Yet, it is partially because of this chronological focus that at times her analysis suffers from a lack of depth. This is especially true with her development of the upbuilding discourses, which do not have the vitality or analytical clarity of her development of the pseudonymous texts. Another shortcoming is the fact that reading Kierkegaard can be a daunting task, what with his use of terms such as *incommensurability*, *qualitative*, *necessity*, and *passion*. By merely working through the texts, she often does not provide the necessary definitions that would provide a reader the conceptual tools to best enter into the text. Maybe a short chapter on key themes as a part of the introduction would have alleviated this difficulty.

These two works offer different ideas about the function of an introduction. Evans's details the philosophical themes of Kierkegaard's thought, whereas Ferreira helps a reader work through the authorship. Though each has limitations, both texts can provide a means to begin to access this important thinker.

*Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers: From Plato to the Present*, by John. W. Cooper. InterVarsity Press, 2007. Pp. 368. \$28.00 (paper).

DOUGLAS HEDLEY, Cambridge University

Cooper has produced a lucid, fascinating and highly readable book; and it reads like a heresy hunt. Heterodox "pantheists" are lurking in large numbers among the thickets of two millennia of Christian thought, some of them among the most admired and celebrated thinkers of the Christian tradition. Cooper is on the scent of these heretics and tracks them down relentlessly. Indeed, he can ferret out a pantheist in manifold and diverse quarters: from the brooding mystical speculations of Russian orthodox thinkers, the austere and rigorous teutonic theologies of the twentieth century to the colourful American narratives of liberation and ecological post-colonial deities. Cooper also provides very useful summaries of neglected and influential thinkers such as Lotze and Dörner.

Cooper rightly points out that Platonism is a source of much in Orthodoxy and heterodoxy within the Christian tradition. Anselm or Aquinas are obviously drawing upon Platonic tenets. Cooper is also quite correct to avoid the all too common confusion between pantheism of the broadly Spinozistic-Stoic kind and the insistence upon transcendence with Neoplatonism proper. He quite rightly corrects influential works that confuse pantheism with panentheism (130). Cooper is also quite candid about "classical" theism's deep debt to Platonism, and the paradoxical proximity

of much panentheistic and theistic speculation. But one could press this rather further. Plotinus is the first Western philosopher to identify ultimate reality with "Will" (Ennead VI, 8) and he is the first Platonist to insist upon the forms of individuals (an idea that finds expression in Leibniz's monadology).

There is much brilliant insight in the book and a vigour and clarity that is admirable. For example, the emphasis upon F. J. W. Schelling is quite proper in a book of this kind, though Schelling tends to be ignored in the Anglo-Saxon world. Schelling was much admired by Heidegger and Tillich, and indeed by a number of prominent Russian orthodox thinkers. But Cooper's treatment of Schelling is a good point at which to raise a problem with the book.

Part of the story of the origins of German Idealism lies in the odd interpretation of Spinoza in the so-called *Pantheismusstreit*. Not only was the notorious seventeenth-century "atheist" hailed as a "god intoxicated man," but his philosophy was assimilated to the Cabbalistic *Zimzum*. It was an intoxicating mixture of this transformed Spinozism, German nature mysticism (derived from Paracelsus and Boehme), and the Kantian avowal of freedom that formed the basis of much eighteenth-century cosmological speculation. There were Neoplatonic elements in this new cocktail, but one should not forget that the product of these speculations was utterly incompatible with elements of late antique Neoplatonism. Aquinas and Plotinus have far more in common with each other over divine simplicity or the radical asymmetry between the *transcendent* arche and the material cosmos than either might have with Schelling or Whitehead.

Another example of Cooper's over-eagerness to classify potential panentheists is his treatment of Heidegger. To regard Heidegger as a panentheist is deeply unconvincing. First, Heidegger is so deeply influenced by Nietzsche and both profess atheism explicitly. Heidegger's use of language is as problematic as that of Spinoza. Like Spinoza, Heidegger employs, in his often bafflingly obscure manner, characteristically Neoplatonic language, but it is dangerous to infer that he adheres to Neoplatonic tenets. Jean-Marc Narbonne has written illuminatingly upon the Epicurean elements in the late Heideggerian concept of Being as *Ereignis* or Event, and Heidegger certainly seems closer to Stoic or Pre-Socratic materialism than a Platonic conviction in a noetic cosmos.

Furthermore, Cooper seems to have little sympathy for the motives of proponents of this pervasive "Other God," with its immanentist aspect. The core college of the Cambridge Platonists, the great link between Florentine Christian Platonism and German Platonism in Tübingen and Jena, was Emmanuel College. The name had great significance for these late Renaissance Divines: "God is with us." The Platonists were often trying to find a model of divine immanence for the mechanical world of the corpuscularian science, the Plastic nature. Oddly, Cooper does not give them the pivotal place they deserve. These were Christians attacking a strict Protestant scholasticism, while worried about the implications of the avowed

theism of both Descartes and Hobbes. Few today read those orthodox Calvinistic scholastics like Crackenthorpe, Scheibler and Burgersdijk, then the staple philosophical fare in Cambridge, but the Cambridge Platonists exerted a pervasive influence in Europe up to the nineteenth century and have seeped into the culture and literature of the English speaking peoples through Jonathan Edwards, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Emerson and William James. From the perspective of Calvin Theological Seminary, however, this trajectory doubtless appears as a regrettable lapse.

Furthermore, it is always important to remember the polemical status of terms like "pantheist," or even "atheist," in the early Modern period. Even "Neoplatonism" is a late designation, one which in the nineteenth century was often associated with the concept of emanation. Both terms were unfortunately taken to be synonyms for pantheism. Hence it is very important to distinguish between the rhetoric of a certain period of intellectual debate and the actual claims made by certain philosophers about the relationship between God and the world.

Historical influences are hard to judge accurately within the limits of such broad compass. Cooper's argument depends upon his drawing a persuasive line between Plotinus and the Neoplatonic tradition generally and "der werdende Gott" or the God of becoming with a certain German tradition. This link exists. But it is a rather puzzling affinity. In some respects Neoplatonism *stricto sensu* stands in rather stark opposition to pantheism. This is because the One as the transcendent source of all being (potential and actual) in Neoplatonism cannot be identified in any way with the physical world except as its transcendent archetype. There is a radical asymmetry between the source and its effect, cause and caused. The Hegelian or Process idea that God needs the world is rank heresy for the Neoplatonist. The Hegelian model is closer to ancient Indian cosmogonies of creation as grounded in need and desire than the Neoplatonic vision of an utterly self sufficient transcendent first principle.

The genius of Neoplatonism lies in its capacity to avoid the extremes of radical transcendence, a deistic deity who has no intelligible link to the physical cosmos, and radical immanence, a deity that is identified with the cosmos. It does this without relying upon voluntarism or irrationalism. The greatest Christian, Jewish and Muslim thinkers drew on this great metaphysical inheritance, even while modifying and arguing against it. Maimonides, Aquinas, or Ibn Arabi are unthinkable (both literally and metaphorically) without Neoplatonism. But the impact of the Counter-Reformation was not favourable for the Neoplatonic tradition. Neither Catholic nor Protestant high orthodoxy looked very favourably upon the speculative spirit of Platonists like Eriugena or Cusa, men who revel in paradoxes: the first who could assert that creation is a process "ex nihilo in aliquid," where God is identified as that "nothing;" the second insists that God's transcendence means that he is "non-aliud." Critics could point to such deeply Plotinian ideas as atheism or pantheism.

The genius of the Romantic Age for philosophical theology was its remarkable sense of the transcendent combined with a profound awareness of history, tradition and culture. Both of these concerns coincide in a momentous attack on naturalism. Naturalism fails because it does not do justice to the contingency and cultural diversity of human experience, but also because it precludes the sense of the transcendent. Hence when Romantic-Idealistic thinkers interpreted Kant and Spinoza as the philosophers of freedom and system, respectively, they were concerned both to accord greater significance to history and language than either Kant or Spinoza could tolerate, and were quite explicit about the religious ramifications of philosophical thought. The Neoplatonic interest in the immanence of the divine facilitated the both/and of the Romantic combination of transcendence with particularity. But this does not mean that they were all panentheists (e.g., S. T. Coleridge, who was not), or that the differences between panentheists were egregious (e.g., the varied stages of Schelling's own protean career). In his determination to highlight the prevalence and potential threat to the orthodoxy of pantheism, Cooper is too ready to iron out the differences.

My major criticism of Cooper's thesis is quite simple: "Panentheism" is the product of Neoplatonism in a particular (but not the only possible) Romantic/Idealistic guise. It is true that Hegel was described as the "German Proclus" and Whitehead loved the poetry of Wordsworth; but we should be wary of drawing too swift conclusions from such facts.

As I have suggested, there is much to be praised in *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers: From Plato to the Present*. It is an impressive work of scholarship, eminently readable, and in many ways a most useful tool for students of philosophical theology. Though too schematic, this challenging and illuminating book contains a rich seam of excellent and thought-provoking material. This combination of scholarship and judgment is refreshing indeed for anyone exposed to some of the more egregious absurdities perpetrated in the recent vogue for "theological genealogies" of metaphysical nihilism. Cooper's is a fine book that I will put on my reading lists and I will encourage students to study it. But it is also a work that I would want them to reflect carefully upon and consider critically.

*The Nature of Love*, by Dietrich von Hildebrand. Translated by John F. Crosby with John Henry Crosby. South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2009. Pp. xxxvi + 395. \$40.00 (hardcover).

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Love is a recurring theme in Dietrich von Hildebrand's (1889–1977) writings; but he began his monumental work, *The Nature of Love*, only when he had almost turned 70. The German original was published in 1971. John F.