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Robert Audi and William J. Wainwright, eds., RATIONALITY, RELIGIOUS BELIEF, AND MORAL COMMITMENT

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BOOK REVIEWS

Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment, by **Robert Audi and William J. Wainwright**, eds. Cornell University Press, 1986, 341 pages.

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This very fine book is the collection of papers presented at a Research Conference in the Philosophy of Religion at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, April, 1984. It is dedicated to William P. Alston, whose influence on the conference and its product is obvious. Most of the principal speakers and commentators were either students or students of students of Bill Alston, and he served at the conference as commentator at large.

Some current trends in the philosophy of religion are easily discernible in this text. Papers on the rationality of religious belief dominate, with five of the thirteen papers devoted to it and a sixth, by Ralph McInerny, addressed to it in part. All but one of these epistemological papers takes up the Calvinian position against evidentialism. On the other hand, traditional metaphysics is in short supply and even problems of modality, which under Plantinga's influence have been extensively analyzed using possible worlds semantics, appears heavily only in the very interesting paper by William J. Wainwright ("Monotheism.") The neglect of metaphysics is presumably not an example of a trend.

A noteworthy and generally welcome direction in the field of philosophy of religion is its broadening to include topics which are most naturally classified under Christian theology. In this collection the two papers by Robert and Marilyn Adams are the most obvious examples of such a move. The former, called "The Problem of Total Devotion," addresses the issue of how a genuine and serious interest in love for one's neighbor can be part of a life that expresses total devotion to God. The latter, "Redemptive Suffering: A Christian Solution to the Problem of Evil," is a very careful and sensitive development of the Christian doctrine of the Redemption on the Cross as God's use of a non-coercive strategy to lead free creatures to abandon sin, the primary evil for the Christian. Suffering is justifiable in the Christian world view when seen as a part of the incommensurate good, intimacy with God. Adams draws on the Christian mystics to make the courageous statement that temporal suffering may itself be a vision into the inner life of God. She suggests that God's consciousness may include deep agony as well as ecstatic joy, or alternatively, the divine consciousness may be something beyond both joy and sorrow and that our experiences of each may be direct, though imperfect, views into the inner life of God.

These papers show that the influence of Calvinian epistemology on current

work in philosophy of religion goes far beyond explicitly epistemological writings. Since it is the Calvinian position that the success of natural theology is not a necessary condition for the reasonableness of Christian faith, many Christian philosophers are taking to heart Plantinga's advice to presuppose the truth of Christian doctrines in philosophical investigation. The result is a blurring of the distinction between philosophy of religion and systematic theology. It remains to be seen whether there is any harm in this. In any case, it has led to some very interesting work.

Four papers address evidentialism. All are exceptionally thorough and well-argued. Briefly, evidentialism as applied to theistic beliefs is the view that unless one has adequate evidence for such beliefs, they are not rationally proper. Most discussions of evidentialism have connected it with foundationalism, as Alvin Plantinga formerly did, but in this volume, in response to an objection by William Alston, Plantinga has replied to a possible evidentialist objection rooted in coherentism rather than foundationalism.

Nicholas Wolterstorff's paper ("The Migration of the Theistic Arguments: From Natural Theology to Evidentialist Apologetics") is definitely one of the most interesting I have ever read on this topic. He and Kenneth Konyndyk ("Faith and Evidentialism") reject evidentialism, but at the same time draw attention to the similarities they see between Aquinas and Calvin and the dissimilarities between both of them on the one hand and John Locke on the other. The result is that the Reformed Epistemologists have shifted their attack away from traditional natural theology towards the Enlightenment project of evidentialist apologetics, which they now see as distinct. This is an interesting change from the early views of this group of philosophers.[1]

I found Wolterstorff's argument that Aquinas is not an evidentialist convincing. The science of natural theology ought to be distinguished from the modern project of evidentialist apologetics. Nonetheless, I have some concerns about his objections to John Locke. Locke's brand of evidentialism is a tempting object of attack because it is so strong, though that is also part of its charm. The motive for his evidentialist principles is a sensible desire to distinguish between those special people who have authentic communication with God and the poor deluded souls whose imagined communications are not only not of divine origin, but constitute a social evil which ought to be resisted. As Wolterstorff tells us, Locke was vexed by the claims of the enthusiasts. He quotes Locke: "How shall any one distinguish between the delusions of Satan and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost? He that will not give himself up to all the extravagancies of delusion and error, must bring this guide [that is, reason] of his light within to the trial . . . Every conceit that thoroughly warms our fancies must pass for an inspiration, if there be nothing but the strength of our persuasions whereby to judge of our persuasions. If reason must not examine their truth by something

extrinsical to the persuasions themselves, inspirations and delusions, truth and falsehood, will have the same measure, and will not be possible to be distinguished" (*Essay* IV, xix, 13-14). The cure for irresponsible belief according to Locke is to adopt the principle that any claim to special revelation from God must be given up without sufficient evidence.

Wolterstorff finds Locke's reasoning here curious. "Is not God's power and freedom such that he might well reveal something to some person without providing good evidence for his having done so? Might he not simply effect in the person the firm conviction that he has said such-and-such? Locke himself affirms that God may well speak yet today. What reason is there for thinking that he cannot or will not sometimes do so in the absence of good evidence? But it we agree that he could and might, and also accept Locke's rule for belief, we are then in the curious position of admitting that God may speak in the absence of evidence while resolving never in the absence of evidence to *believe* that he has done so" (p. 42).

The only thing curious to me in this passage is the fact that Wolterstorff finds Locke's view curious. Surely the fact that God's power is such that he *might* reveal (i.e., it is logically possible that he reveal) something without providing good evidence is no reason to think that he has done so, now or ever. Wolterstorff worries that following Locke's advice would put us at risk of not believing that God is speaking when he has done so. But what kind of risk is that if the evidentialist principle is true? In fact, if the principles of rationality are ordained by God and evidentialism is one of them, a person would be at risk of violating God's will if he did *not* follow it. This is, of course, no argument that evidentialism is true, only that if so, there is nothing odd about following it.

Though Wolterstorff does not seem to be nearly as worried as Locke is about the justifiability of beliefs based on putative individual revelations, one could worry as much as Locke did and still not accept a generalized evidentialist principle. Konyndyk points out that the dogmas of the Faith cannot pass the evidentialist test on either Aquinas' or Calvin's view, and that is surely right. But it doesn't follow from this that certain *other* beliefs don't need evidence to be rationally justified. The claims of the enthusiasts and others of their ilk may be examples. And though a belief in the Trinity can be rational though it goes beyond what the evidence allows, it may still be the case that a belief in God's existence is not rational if it goes beyond what the evidence allows. So one could be an evidentialist with respect to what Aquinas calls the preambles of faith (God exists, is one, etc.) though not about the articles of faith. Ralph McInerny calls attention to this distinction in his paper in this collection ("Analogy and Foundationalism in Thomas Aquinas"), claiming that Aquinas was a foundationalist about the former category, though not about the latter.

Konyndyk considers a number of forms of evidentialism, including two ver-

sions each of Cliffordian, Lockean, and communal evidentialism, as well as the "sensible evidentialism" proposed by Stephen Wykstra. For each he suggests the probable reaction of Calvin and Aquinas and concludes that the stronger forms of evidentialism are incompatible with their views on faith, but that one or two weaker forms might not be. For example, he says both Calvin and Aquinas might accept the following principle:

> (CE2) If the members of a community hold a set of beliefs S for which no subset of members of that community possesses adequate evidence, then each member of that community has a defective belief structure.

Though I will not discuss this principle here, it does seem to me that something like it is both plausible and not precluded by Christian faith.

Robert Audi argues in "Direct Justification and Theistic Belief," that a moderate form of evidentialism may be true, or at least has not yet been refuted. He says that even if theistic beliefs need not be based on other beliefs to be justified, they may nevertheless be justificatorily dependent on certain other beliefs. For example, it may turn out that a believer must either have, or be justified in having, adequate argument against any plausible antitheistic arguments of which he ought to be aware. Similar conditions for rationality have been defended recently by Philip Quinn, who suggests that my belief that God exists is justified only if I have no sufficiently substantial reasons to think that any of its potential defeaters is true and this is not due to epistemic negligence on my part.[2] In response to Quinn, Alvin Plantinga has agreed that potential defeaters to theistic belief must be undercut by finding mistakes in the argument for the defeater, and so negative apologetics is necessary for the rationality of theism.[3] But if so, Audi is right that theistic belief is justificatorily dependent on the rationality of certain other beliefs, such as the belief that there is a certain mistake in an argument from evil. So some form of evidentialism is beginning to look more and more plausible, though in a much weaker form than those generally discussed.

Locke's doubts about private communications with God is not merely an example of Enlightenment skepticism. In fact, it has been a commonplace reaction within the Church for centuries. It is expressed in an especially interesting and forceful manner in the views of St. John of the Cross, ably examined in this collection by Nelson Pike ("John of the Cross on the Epistemic Value of Mystic Visions"). He says one must perform what is traditionally referred to as a "discernment of spirits" to determine whether an apprehension is a communication from a religious source such as God or an unreliable informant such as the devil. Pike shows that according to John this is an especially complicated and dangerous task. But even in those cases in which it is discovered that the source of the communication is reliable, St. John parts company with virtually all other Christian mystics in claiming that the apprehension in question cannot be taken as a

source of propositional knowledge. This is because the meaning of mystic apprehensions is opaque. Since St. John does think these apprehensions have cognitive value, Pike interprets John as maintaining that mystic apprehensions give a certain depth understanding of truths already accessible by other means. Those other means are the "Public Revelation" to the Church contained in Scripture and Tradition.

Here St. John does not just make the communal basis for religious belief primary; it is the whole thing. Individual revelation adds no truth to that which is contained in the Revelation common to the whole Church. At the end of his paper Pike asks whether St. John can give an account of Public Revelation which does not derive it from instances of individual mystic apprehensions already rejected as sources of propositional knowledge. It seems to me to be important that there be a difference between the grounding of Revelation and the grounding of beliefs deriving from individual mystical experiences, and this needs to be more fully discussed in religious epistemology.

The middle section of the book includes five papers under the loose heading of "Religious Commitment, Moral Obligation, and the Problem of Evil." Besides the two papers by the Adamses already mentioned, there is a highly interesting and unusually strong version of the argument from evil presented by William L. Rowe in "The Empirical Argument from Evil," an original version of the moral argument for theism by George Mavrodes in "Religion and the Queerness of Morality," and Philip L. Quinn's defense of the thesis that there can be conflicts between two indefeasible requirements, one moral and one religious, in "Moral Obligation, Religious Demand, and Practical Conflict." I wish to discuss the latter briefly.

Philip Quinn defends the possibility that there are conflicts between moral obligations and religious demands, where the source of the latter is seen as external to the moral realm, and that this can be so even when neither requirement is overridden. He argues that not only are such conflicts possible, but that a person may be justified in believing he is facing one of them. He suggests the story of Abraham and Isaac as an illustration of such conflict from his reflections on Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*.

Quinn argues convincingly that though it is possible to save the appearances of conflict without assenting to his strong thesis, the best explanation is that the conflict is just as it seems. A crucial assumption for his argument is that the moral realm is not the only source of ultimate values. As he puts it, "The tendency to moralize the whole of our lives is to be resisted" (p. 203). He does not say just where he thinks the outer boundaries of the moral realm are, but he does assume there are values important for human life outside these boundaries and that they can be the source of requirements for action. This point is related to recent discussions on the relationship between the good life and the moral life.[4]

I am in sympathy with Quinn's position here and find the application to the Abraham story plausible.

Less plausible, though, is his explanation of what it is about the divine nature that engenders such conflict. Quinn reminds us that on the plenitude of being model of divine goodness God's goodness consists at least in part in his being metaphysically perfect. That is, God is metaphysically complete and the source of all lesser perfection in the creaturely domain. Divine goodness includes more than moral goodness, then, and this leads Quinn to assert two theses: (1) It is God's goodness that explains why his commands indefeasibly impose requirements, and (2) it is the fact that divine goodness has nonmoral components that explains why those indefeasibly imposed religious requirements can sometimes be in Kierkegaardian conflict with moral requirements.

But though it is not unreasonable to say that God's goodness includes more than the moral, isn't it unreasonable to say that any one part or aspect of God's goodness can be in conflict with any other? To say so suggests that there can be a conflict within God's own nature, the source of all value, moral and nonmoral. But even if Quinn's attempt at an explanation of the metaphysical grounding of the conflict is incorrect, the intuitive support for the existence of these conflicts is so strong that the thesis may not be weakened significantly.

The last section of the book consists of three papers on the divine nature. They include Ralph McInerny's paper mentioned above, "Analogy and Foundationalism in Thomas Aquinas," William J. Wainwright's paper, "Monotheism," and "God, Creator of Kinds and Possibilities" by James Ross. The Wainwright paper contains a series of arguments which attempt to show that the thesis that there can be no more than one God follows from one or another divine attribute, usually supplemented by certain metaphysical assumptions. Wainwright draws on numerous sources for his arguments, particularly medieval theologians, whose arguments he then reworks and presents in contemporary idiom. The result is that the arguments are greatly improved over earlier versions. Some of them he rejects, but several he finds sound. I found this paper very useful to my own research and believe others will as well.

In the final paper in the collection James Ross gives an intriguing argument against the theory of Divine exemplarism, arguing that there is no domain of kinds, haecceities, individual essences, possible individuals, or the like from which God works in creating the universe, but that God brings into being both possible kinds and possible individuals through his act of creating actual individuals. The possible is dependent upon the actual. If a different set of individuals had been actual, a different set of individuals and kinds would have been possible.

One consequence of Ross's view is that there are two levels of the possible—what would have been possible if God had acted differently in the Creation, and what *is* possible, given that God did what he actually did in creating the world.

I find this consequence unappealing, though I will not attempt to refute it here.

Many Christian philosophers held forms of the theory of exemplarism attacked by Ross, including Augustine, Bonaventure, Aquinas, Ockham, and Leibniz. The theory is intended to explain both how it comes to be that God creates and how God knows finite creatures. The Father knows himself and this act of knowledge is the perfect image of himself, the Second Person of the Trinity. As proceeding from the Father the Son is divine and expresses all that the Father can effect. The 'ideas' of all creatures, both possible and actual, are contained in the Son, and extend not only to universals but also to individual things. They are infinite in number since they represent all possible ways the Father can be imperfectly imitated. God freely chooses which among them to make actual in the creation. The explanatory force of this theory comes from the fact that intuitively creation seems to require not only will, but intellect. As Aquinas puts it, since the world was not made by chance, it must have been made by God acting on his intellect. But what is there for God to know prior to the creation but himself? The view that exemplars are ideas of the ways in which God's essence can be mirrored externally links God's knowledge of himself to finite beings in a way which shows that the creation is both non-arbitrary and non-necessitated. It is apparent, then, that exemplarism has great explanatory force.

Now Ross's objections to this theory are complex and elaborate. Even though I find many points difficult to follow and insofar as I understand them, implausible, his discussion is stimulating and it raises issues in the metaphysics of modality which probably ought to be discussed much more. Here I will merely try to give a couple of his main objections and my replies.

Ross first objects that the idea of a universal domain of exemplars is formally inconsistent since it follows from the axioms of set theory that there is no universal set. It is doubtful, though, that Augustine's or Bonaventure's notion of the class of exemplars needs to obey the axioms of set theory. In fact, even many formal systems recognize the need for a universal class which is not a set and which need not satisfy the axioms.

A stronger objection is that only actuality gives the determinacy necessary to individuate and differentiate, so there can be no merely possible individuals. Ross thinks there are no individual essences, so an essence or nature is something shareable. He argues that there can be no "nearest neighbor" to any actual member of a kind, say some human. That is, there is no possible distinct human who is separated from me by the least qualitative difference. Though this argument is not clearly made out, I have a lot of sympathy for it. If there are no individual qualitative essences, individuation becomes extremely difficult and with certain assumptions probably degenerates into incoherence. To my mind this provides a strong motive for maintaining a view quite the contrary of Ross's, namely, that there are individual essences. I have attempted to demonstrate the existence

of individual essences elsewhere.[5]

The Audi/Wainwright collection ought to be useful to almost anybody doing research in philosophical theology. It explores new directions in religious epistemology, ethics, and metaphysics, and with greater historical sensitivity than is often the case in analytic philosophy of religion. It ought to stimulate a great deal of further work.

NOTES

1. Cf. Alvin Plantinga, "The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 1980.

2. "In Search of the Foundations of Theism," *Faith and Philosophy*, II, 4 (October, 1985), p. 480.

3. "On Taking Belief in God as Basic," delivered at the Institute in Philosophy of Religion, Bellingham, Washington, summer 1986; also part of Gifford Lectures and Payton Lectures, 1987.

4. A good example is Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Harvard University Press, 1985.

5. "Individual Essence and the Creation," in Thomas V. Morris, ed., *Divine and Human Action: Essays in the Metaphysics of Theism*, Cornell University Press, 1988.

Philosophy and Miracle: The Contemporary Debate, by **David and Randall Basinger**. (Problems in Contemporary Philosophy, Vol. 2.) Lewiston, New York and Queenston, Ontario, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986. Pp. 124. $39.95

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This book assesses recent discussions of miracles. David Basinger is primarily responsible for chapters I and IV and Randall Basinger for chapter V. The authors are jointly responsible for chapters II and III.

The Basingers have several controversial theses. Chapter I argues that even though it makes sense to speak of God directly causing events that are "permanently inexplicable by science," the concept of a *violation* of natural law is incoherent. (The Basingers admit that we can coherently talk of divinely caused nonrepeatable counterinstances to natural laws. They argue, however, that these shouldn't be called violations since this implies that the laws and the event's occurrence are formally inconsistent. I doubt whether most theists have used "violation" this strictly. However, the objections of critics like Flew show that the term can easily lead to misunderstanding.)

The authors also contend that though one might have sufficient evident that reported occurrences are incompatible with well established nomologicals