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## Thomas D. Senior, THE RATIONALITY OF BELIEF AND THE PLURALITY OF FAITH

David P. Hunt

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neutral, in fact, with respect to the metaphysical assumptions Drees trumpets as the only proper respect we owe the natural sciences.

As a philosopher, in general, I found the lack of any serious defense of the basic presuppositions from which Drees surveys the field very disappointing. However, the volume is still useful, clear, learned and provides a helpful survey of recent discussion. Drees' own undefended biases, however, mar his interactions with the literature of religion and science.

#### NOTES

1. See A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (1925; New York: Mentor Books, 1948); and John Dillenberger, *Protestant Thought and Natural Science* (1960; Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Pr., 1988).
2. See, *i.a.*, C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (1947; New York: Macmillan, 1978); R. G. Swinburne, *The Concept of Miracle* (London: Macmillan, 1970); G. I. Mavrodes, "Miracles and Laws of Nature," *Faith and Philosophy* 2 (1985), 333-346.
3. Whitehead, 58
4. *Religion and Science* (Oxford: Oxford Univ Pr., 1978), 243.
5. Three well-known books have helped make scientism unpopular: Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (Chicago: Univ of Chicago, 1962); Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1970) and Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Eng. trans., Boston: Beacon Pr., 1971). I have found particularly persuasive the work of Nancy Cartwright, *How the Laws of Physics Lie* (Oxford: Clarendon Pr., 1983).

*The Rationality of Belief and the Plurality of Faith*, ed. **Thomas D. Senior**. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995. Pp. x, 291. \$39.95 (cloth).

DAVID P. HUNT, Whittier College

This is a collection of eleven original essays by leading American philosophers written in honor of William Alston. The essays are not necessarily about Alston's work (though some are); nor do they necessarily take up debates with which Alston has been closely involved (though most do). They are, however, united by a concern for the epistemology of religious belief, a subject to which Prof. Alston has made unsurpassed contributions over the last decade or so. It is not surprising, then, that Alston's is the most frequently cited name in the index. It is also noteworthy, and gives some sense of the book's orientation, that the next most-cited figure (with only one citation fewer than Alston himself) is John Hick.

The essays are divided into three groups, with the first group collected under the title "Natural Theology and the Knowledge of God." The first essay in this group, Marilyn McCord Adams' "Praying the

*Proslogion: Anselm's Theological Method,*" offers Anselm as a model for Christian philosophers seeking to understand the relationship between faith and reason. In contrast to the *Monologion*, whose potential audience encompasses unbelievers as well as the monastic brothers who solicited the treatise, the *Proslogion* is addressed to the believer, before whom it sets two goals: (i) the contemplation of God, and (ii) an understanding of what is already believed. These are interdependent goals, but according to Adams the former has priority: "it is (i) the aim of seeing God's face that dominates and frames (ii) the project of understanding."<sup>1</sup> An indication of this is that the *Proslogion* constitutes an extended prayer in which the soul petitions God for help and is rewarded with illumination. This collaboration between seeker and Guide yields the *Proslogion's* famed *unum argumentum*. Adams argues convincingly that this single argument should not be identified narrowly with the ontological argument of chapters 2-4 but with the treatise's complete derivation of the "Anselmian" conception of God, and that its advantage over the *Monologion's* treatment of the same issues lies in its unity and simplicity. While Anselm does not intend this product of *fides quaerens intellectum* primarily for the unbeliever, it nevertheless results, Adams maintains, in a demonstration with considerable appeal *sola ratione*. As such, Anselm's *Proslogion* shows us how to see "philosophizing as a way of praying, and praying as a way of philosophizing."<sup>2</sup>

The second essay, by Brian Leftow, is titled "Can Philosophy Argue God's Existence?" Leftow's objective is to defend natural theology, not against the usual cast of atheologians, but from suspicious fellow-theists like Tertullian, Calvin, and Kierkegaard. Such theists are not primarily concerned to deny the soundness of certain arguments produced by the natural theologian; what they deny is that the entity demonstrated by these arguments—the "God of the philosophers"—could ever be identical with the God of the believer. Leftow focuses his examination of this position on Karl Barth, who raises two problems for natural theology's approach to God. The first is that the terms we use in talking about God are equivocal. Leftow spends some time discussing whether this objection can be undercut (à la Alston) by replacing a descriptivist with a causal theory of divine reference, concluding that this move is only partly successful in rehabilitating natural theology. Leftow prefers a direct attack on the equivocality thesis itself, arguing that Aquinas's notion of analogical predication provides for literal (if somewhat vacuous) information about the formal relations between Creator and creation.<sup>3</sup> Leftow then turns to Barth's second objection to natural theology, which concerns the motives of natural theologians. Barth imputes to natural theology, with its aim to arrive at God by its own efforts independent of divine grace, the desire for self-deification which is the root of all sin. Leftow provides a careful and sympathetic assessment of Barth's presupposition that rootedness in sin might be a defeater for knowledge-claims about God, but he concludes that there is little if any reason to agree with Barth that the impulse toward natural theology is indeed rooted in sin. (The Anselm of Marilyn Adams is an obvious counterexample to Barth's claim, making this opening pair of essays particularly apposite.)

The next essay, "William Alston on the Problem of Evil," offers William Rowe an opportunity to respond to Alston's critique of his (Rowe's) version of the inductive problem of evil. One theodicy that Alston regards as a live possibility is the free will theodicy; another is the appeal to the general benefits of a lawlike order (of which suffering is a natural consequence). After explaining why he believes that both these theodicies fail, Rowe takes up Alston's attempts to reinvigorate them by appealing to *unfamiliar* goods. Against Rowe's own proposal that the absence of any *known* good that would morally justify otherwise gratuitous suffering makes it more probable than not that *no* good would morally justify such suffering, Alston argues that this inference requires more background knowledge than we can claim to possess regarding the relationship between the goods in the sample class and the class of goods simpliciter. Rowe regards this criticism as well taken, and directs the interested reader to the response he offers elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> Alston's other argument is that present knowledge of values may be limited: just as scientific knowledge has increased and will presumably continue to increase, so moral knowledge might increase, bringing future theodical insights that are currently beyond our ken. Rowe is dubious of the analogy with scientific progress, and opines that moral knowledge already available to us precludes the (live) possibility that otherwise gratuitous evil will ever be justified. He ends by acknowledging that Alston has raised some significant doubts about the inductive argument from evil, while insisting that the atheist remains justified in the judgment that gratuitous evil exists.

The first group of essays concludes with "God's Knowledge and Its Causal Efficacy," by Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann. Their interest in this topic lies with Aquinas, who holds that God knows things insofar as He is their cause. This position is doubly problematic: first, it suggests that every fact about creatures is entailed by God's causal activity, and this is hard to square with human freedom; second, it requires God to draw the intelligible species by which He cognizes things from His own nature rather than from things themselves, making it hard to understand how He could know particulars at all. In reply, Stump and Kretzmann note that even human beings cognize particulars through their abstracted forms. In human perception a particular thing serves as the object of cognition in virtue of the fact that the form through which it is cognized is acquired from that thing, while in God's case universal forms are present in the mind without being derived from external things. What then makes divine cognition the cognition of this particular rather than that? Stump and Kretzmann suggest that in this case it is *application to* rather than *derivation from* that connects an intelligible species with its particular object, and that Aquinas's causal account is not designed to show how God is in epistemic contact with things, but how those things are intelligible to Him (given that He is in epistemic contact with them). So understood, the account does not by itself make knowledge of particulars problematic; and insofar as God's ideas are causative, they serve as *formal* (not efficient) causes of created *things* (not events or states of affairs), thereby removing the threat to human free-

dom. So how *does* God come into epistemic contact with created things? Aquinas's account on this score is admittedly incomplete, but in this respect it simply mirrors the incompleteness in our own understanding of how human representations constitute epistemic contact with the external world.

Part II, "The Epistemology of Religious Experience," begins with Robert Audi's essay, "Religious Experience and the Practice Conception of Justification." The practice conception is one in which beliefs acquire justification from socially established patterns of belief-appraisal, so long as they arise in prescribed ways and there are no overriding reasons to reject them. (Alston's position, in *Perceiving God*, is a paradigm of the practice conception.) Audi has many interesting things to say about the relation between this conception of justification and those provided by intuitionism and Jamesian pragmatism; but the thrust of his essay is really away from justification and toward *rationality* as the most appropriate basis from which to assess the claims of religious experience. Rationality is a weaker concept than justification, inasmuch as it does not entail, but is itself entailed by, justification. Nevertheless, Audi suggests, it is strong enough to counter charges, such as intellectual laxity, that are often brought against religious believers, and provides the relevant norm by which to assess the traditional problem of "faith *v.* reason." Not only is rationality less tied to specific reasons than is justification to specific justifiers, but it is also (unlike justification) a virtue concept which applies primarily to persons and only secondarily to beliefs. Finally, Audi proposes that discussion of the relation between faith and reason can also be profitably opened up by including nondoxastic as well as doxastic objects for faith, where the former have a cognitive and action-guiding force stronger than that of mere hope while falling short of genuine belief. This is interesting territory, which Audi only sketches; but the possibility that religious experience is particularly well suited to supporting the *rationality* of nondoxastic faith, as opposed to the *justification* of doxastic faith, makes it a territory well worth exploring.

In "The Epistemic Value of Religious Experience: Perceptual and Explanatory Models," William Hasker engages an article in this journal by William J. Abraham which favors the "explanatory model" over the "perceptual model." The latter (whose foremost proponent is of course William Alston) regards the epistemic support which religious experience provides for religious beliefs as importantly analogous to the support that sense-perception provides for ordinary beliefs about the external world. The explanatory model, on the other hand, treats religious experience as a datum for explanation, where this datum is best explained by some sort of religious hypothesis. Abraham marshals two kinds of considerations against the perceptual model: the first is that apparent experiences of the Holy Spirit may leave their authenticity an open question in ways that apparent perceptions of ordinary objects do not; the second is that the concept of the Holy Spirit is embedded in a rich conceptual scheme that makes claims about spiritual experience quite different from claims about ordinary experience. In each case Hasker undermines the alleged dissimilarity, sometimes by noting ways

in which religious experience may be more straightforward than Abraham supposes, but more often by drawing attention to ways in which perceptual experience may be considerably more complicated (and so more like the religious cases that Abraham regards as typical). Hasker also considers the positive reasons Abraham offers on behalf of the explanatory model, arguing that they fail to support its advertised virtues, and that Abraham's own account presupposes perceptual knowledge supposedly excluded by the explanatory model. Hasker concludes that the perceptual model has little to fear from Abraham's critique.

The last essay in this section is William J. Wainwright's "Religious Language, Religious Experience, and Religious Pluralism." Alston defends a view of religious language which falls between "wholesale univocity" and "pan-symbolism": there is a literal aspect to personalistic predications, since a functionalist analysis of the relevant mental concepts yields abstract features which are univocally sharable by God and human beings; but inasmuch as these features are realized quite differently by God than by us, there remains a metaphorical aspect to these predications as well. Since their literal truth is too weak to justify the various attitudes and practices that the Christian understanding of God is supposed to support, it is necessary to examine that part of our God-talk that escapes the functionalist analysis. Wainwright argues that at least some of this remainder can be given a literalistic unpacking in terms of likeness-statements, and that these can be cognitively richer than Alston supposes; but neither Alston's functionalism nor his own defense of likeness-statements, Wainwright notes, addresses the most significant argument for pan-symbolism, that of John Hick. If the religious experiences associated with the major religious traditions are equally veridical, the literal ascription of personalistic predicates to God becomes problematic, since there are traditions in which the divine is experienced as possessing the complement of these predicates. For such predications to be taken literally and univocally, it is necessary to undermine Hick's argument for religious pluralism by showing that the theistic variety of religious experience is cognitively superior to the non-theistic variety. Given diverse experiences of the divine, Wainwright maintains, religious experience (unsupplemented by metaphysical or empirical arguments) cannot serve as an independent source of support for theism.

Wainwright's essay provides a nice transition to the final section of the book, "Religious Pluralism," whose first essay is Alvin Plantinga's "Pluralism: A Defense of Religious Exclusivism." What concerns Plantinga is not so much the "salvific" as it is the "alethic" sense of exclusivism: "that the tenets . . . of *one* religion—Christianity, let's say—are in fact true."<sup>5</sup> Plantinga looks first at the *moral* indictment against exclusivism, according to which the exclusivist is arrogant, imperialistic, oppressive, and the like. Plantinga notes in response that the exclusivist has only three options in the face of religious diversity: to maintain her beliefs; to abstain from belief altogether; or to adopt the denials of her former beliefs. But if the first option is open to the charge of arrogance,

etc., it is hard to see how the last option could represent any advance on this score, since the denier is just as committed to the exclusive truth of her denials as is the affirmer to her affirmations. The same can be said for the middle option: the “abstemious pluralist,” as Plantinga labels this position, implicitly regards the other two options as mistaken, despite the knowledge that honest and intelligent people have chosen them (the very situation that leads to the charge of arrogance against the exclusivist). So much for the moral indictment; Plantinga then takes up the *epistemic* objection. One form of the objection is this: anyone who persists in exclusivism, despite the recognition that dissenters may have the same internal epistemic markers for *their* beliefs, is violating some epistemic duty and is therefore *unjustified*. But this can't be right: there is nothing wrong in continuing to believe that racism is evil despite the realization that some will disagree and that they may well have similar internal markers. Plantinga likewise considers and dismisses epistemic objections based on *irrationality* and *lack of warrant*. He allows at the end of his essay that an awareness of religious diversity *could* serve as an undercutting defeater for some of the exclusivist's beliefs; but it could also, he suggests, lead to a reappraisal of those beliefs which leaves them stronger and deeper than before.

Peter van Inwagen begins his essay, “Non Est Hick,” by presenting a “picture” of the (major) world religions as legitimate responses to a single divine reality, where the outward differences that divide these religions are properly regarded as inessential and trivial, inadequate to the divine reality behind them and reflecting the contingent circumstances in which they evolved. Though he isn't mentioned until the last sentence of the essay, this is pretty clearly meant to sketch John Hick's view of things. It should come as no surprise to readers of this journal that this is not van Inwagen's picture; indeed, on his view, there is “so much wrong with the picture that I hardly know where to begin.”<sup>6</sup> Instead, he offers an alternative picture featuring the Fall: the human situation is like that of a city, raised several feet into the air and then allowed to (literally) fall, with the resulting destruction distributed more or less randomly (some buildings leveled, others relatively intact, most standing at crazy angles). The differential effects of this primordial catastrophe represent people's differential spiritual endowments: awareness of God is relatively intact in some (saints, religious leaders), just as some buildings remain relatively upright; and this awareness is not confined to a single place or time, just as the habitable buildings are distributed randomly throughout the city. So far the picture is compatible with the first picture, which Van Inwagen rejects. They clearly diverge only when Van Inwagen adds to his picture God's response to humanity's spiritual ruin. This does not come in the form of a “world religion” like Christianity, which can only be a human creation, but through God's forging of a *people*, Israel, and provision of a *thing*, the Catholic Church. It is part of the “Enlightenment agenda,” Van Inwagen suggests, to shift attention away from the Church and toward Christianity, an abstraction which can then be compared with other abstractions like Buddhism and Islam.

In "Perceiving God, World-Views, and Faith: Meeting the Problem of Religious Pluralism," Joseph Runzo defends a picture of the world religions which looks at first glance much more like Hick's than like Van Inwagen's. The object of Runzo's essay is to confront William Alston's defense of "Christian mystical practice" (CMP) with the challenge posed by religious pluralism. Alston's key moves are to argue (1) that a belief is *prima facie* justified if it is formed within a well-established doxastic practice and there are no sufficient overrides for the belief, and (2) that potential overrides for CMP are in fact insufficient. What are we to say about (1) and (2), given the competition other world religions provide for CMP? Alston's realism and anticonceptualism make the problem of religious diversity more serious than it would otherwise be, and Runzo doubts that Alston has the resources to solve it. Regarding (1), it's not clear that CMP enjoys any advantage over other world religions, which also involve well-established doxastic practices with discriminating override systems. As for (2), Alston offers a negative defense against the scientific assault on divine action in the world, and a positive defense in terms of the "fruits" of CMP. Runzo is sympathetic to Alston's negative defense, while arguing that the strongest response to this scientific challenge involves an historicist move unavailable to Alston. He is less sympathetic to Alston's positive defense, pointing to "the enormous empirical data" that agapistic love (Alston's prize exhibit) is not unique to Christianity. What Alston's system needs, according to Runzo, is a more salient role for faith. With this friendly amendment, Runzo appears content to endorse a picture closer to Alston's than to Hick's. While faith is left something of a cipher at the end, the difficulties Runzo raises in his essay are genuine ones for which faith may be the only answer.

The collection concludes with George Mavrodes' "Polytheism." Mavrodes begins with a quotation from I Kings 20:17-23, in which the Arameans blame their defeat by the Israelites on the fact that Israel's "gods are gods of the hills, and so they were stronger than we," inferring that the Israelites might be bested if "[we] fight against them in the plain." As Mavrodes reads this passage, the Arameans subscribe to (1) *realism* (the gods are part of the furniture of reality), (2) *pure descriptivism* (their use of the term 'god' does not presuppose a pro-attitude), (3) *pluralism* (they think there really are distinct gods), (4) *cultic polytheism* (*worship* of multiple deities) in addition to *descriptive polytheism* (*belief* in the *existence* of multiple deities), (5) *finitism* (the gods are limited—in this case, geographically), and (6) *a common world* (both sets of gods interact in a single world). This package of positions is the Arameans' response to religious diversity. How does our response compare with theirs? The Christian, of course, must be a cultic *monotheist*, and many (most?) would subscribe to descriptive monotheism as well. In that case, the gods of other religions must either be nonexistent or else identical with the Christian God (though going by other names). Some Christians, however, may be descriptive polytheists—e.g., John Hick (or so Mavrodes argues). Interestingly, Mavrodes characterizes *himself* as "a sort of descriptive polytheist"<sup>8</sup> in light of the Christian commitment to



devils and angels, which satisfy his operational definition of a "god" as a "very powerful non-embodied rational agent."<sup>9</sup> Is polytheism viable under a more robust notion of deity as well? That depends on whether this notion involves any exclusive relations like *being the creator of the world*. Such a property could be multiply instantiated only if there is more than one world. This possibility, Mavrodes argues, is either metaphysically objectionable or religiously unsatisfactory; consequently exclusive relations set a limit on any viable polytheism.

It should be evident from these thumbnail sketches that this volume contains a diversity of riches, some in the form of analytic rigor, others in hermeneutical insight, and yet others in their sheer suggestiveness. Though some of these essays engaged my thinking more than others, this reflects more my own idiosyncratic interests than any unevenness in the collection. It is because the essays are of a uniformly high quality that I have avoided selecting a few for critical appraisal while neglecting the others. There is much to ponder here, especially for Christian philosophers interested in the epistemology of religious belief.

#### NOTES

1. Page 15.
2. Page 37.
3. This is one place where Alston's work is overlooked but might have been incorporated into the argument with some profit. I am thinking of his "Divine and Human Action," in *Divine and Human Action: Essays in the Metaphysics of Theism*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 257-280.
4. "The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look," in Daniel Howard-Snyder, ed., *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
5. Page 194.
6. Page 219.
7. Page 258.
8. Page 278.
9. Page 264. Mavrodes borrows this definition from Richard Swinburne, *The Concept of Miracle* (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 53.

*Rationality in Science, Religion, and Everyday Life*, by **Mikael Stenmark**.  
Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995. Pp. xi, 392.  
\$32.95(cloth).

THOMAS D. SULLIVAN, University of St. Thomas

This book is a wide ranging and well informed general inquiry into rationality. Though religious belief is just one of the areas investigated, it receives special attention.

As Stenmark sees it, a theory of rationality lays down principles for how we should conduct our cognitive affairs. Four models are consid-