analysts were covert metaphysicians. It would have made for balance had this
voice been heard and the responses of those analysts who did more than stop
their ears been recorded.

All caveats apart, this book can cordially be recommended to all who wish
not only to follow the course of Anglo-American analytical philosophy of
religion over the past century, but also to engage with the issues on their own
account.

MILTON KEYNES, U.K.  ALAN P.F. SELL

Religious Ambiguity and Religious Diversity
By ROBERT MCKIM
Oxford University Press, 2001. 296 pp. £37.50

Robert McKim has written a terrific book dealing with the topics of the
hiddenness of God (it seems as though it could be more obvious that God
exists if God does exist), religious pluralism, and the epistemic implications of
these two facts.

The book is divided into two parts. The first is called ‘The Hiddenness of
God’, and the second ‘Religious Diversity’. The overall argument of the book
is that the fact that God is hidden (from most of us at least), and the presence
of deep and widespread disagreement about the truth of worldviews ought to
lead us to consider carefully the truth of our own worldview beliefs, and ought
to cause us to hold them in a tentative, non-dogmatic fashion. McKim is a
very careful and meticulous philosopher, and he deals with these issues with
great care.

In Part I McKim begins by arguing for the proposition that the existence
and nature of God are hidden to a significant extent from most people. He
says, “the central idea is just that it is not clear whether the claims
that theists make about God are true; and this applies both to the claim that
God exists and to numerous theistic claims about the character, purposes,
will, and so forth of God” (p. 6). This claim seems obviously true to me,
but he gives a series of compelling arguments for those who aren’t at first
convinced.

Most of Part I focuses on evaluating various goods of mystery—goods that
come about if and only if God is hidden. (Goods of mystery have a counter-
part, goods of clarity—goods that come about if and only if the existence of God
is clear.) McKim looks at three goods of mystery in great detail: the ability to
act morally, the ability to freely choose to believe in God, and the ability to
have significant trust in God. He concludes that each of these go some way
towards explaining why it is that God should be hidden.

He concludes in Part I that though the hiddenness of God doesn’t give us
strong reason to believe that God doesn’t exist, neither is there a very plaus-
ible explanation of the hiddenness of God. He uses these facts to draw an
interesting conclusion: If God exists, it’s not very important for us to have a
much closer relationship with God, and it’s not even important for many
more of us to believe in God. He reasons as follows. If God exists, then the
goods of mystery must outweigh goods of clarity (such as having a much
closer relationship with God or having many more people believe in God).
But the goods of mystery examined in Part I don’t amount to very much.
Thus, the cumulative weight of the goods of clarity must not amount to very
much, either (p. 111).

Part II is entitled ‘Religious Diversity’, and it is largely an argument for and
a defence of an epistemic position that McKim calls ‘the Critical Stance’. The
core of the Critical Stance is captured in two epistemic principles. The first
of these is the ‘E-principle’:

Disagreement about an issue or area of inquiry provides reason to think
that each side has an obligation to examine beliefs about that issue.
(p. 140).

The second principle is called the ‘T-principle’:

Disagreement (of the sort under discussion) about an issue or area of
inquiry provides reason for whatever beliefs we hold about that issue or
area of inquiry to be tentative (p. 141).

About tentative belief, he says

Tentative belief has a number of components. It involves a recognition that
the belief may need revision and may be mistaken. It also involves a con-
comitant openness to alternative beliefs and an awareness that some of
these alternatives may be plausible, and that one of them may even be
correct. . . . Belief of this sort permits you to entertain as live hypotheses
various alternatives to your own position. It involves an attitude such as this: here is how I see things, but views that are quite different from mine
may instead be right (p. 154f).

One of the goods that McKim sees arising out of people adopting
the Critical Stance is tolerance towards those who disagree with you.
Tolerance per se isn’t a virtue; clearly some things shouldn’t be tolerated.
But tolerance can lead to many states of affairs that are good, in par-
ticular treating fellow human beings in a decent manner. (One would think
it would have done much good if warring Catholics and Protestants
throughout history had adopted the Critical Stance with respect to their own
beliefs.)

I find McKim’s book to be very impressive, and I recommend it highly to
those in philosophy and religious studies who are interested in the hiddenness
of God and the epistemic implications of religious pluralism. I have used it as
ta text for an upper-division undergraduate philosophy of religion class. In
teaching this book, I felt like I was teaching philosophy that has much in the
way of ‘cash value’ as to how one lives one’s life. This isn’t always the case in
philosophy of religion.

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