disjunctivism, epistemic agency, or human and nonhuman animal rationality should also find this work illuminating.

Reviewed by Kegan J. Shaw
Liberty University
Central Virginia Community College
kshaw@liberty.edu

Wise Stewards: Philosophical Foundations of Christian Parenting. By Michael W. Austin. Kregel: Academic and Professional, 2009. 192 pages. $13.99.

In the introduction, Michael Austin claims that much of contemporary Christian writing on the family deals with social and public policy issues for successfully navigating family life (15). Yet it is not common to find books on Christian parenting written exclusively from a philosophical perspective. *Wise Stewards* attempts to remedy such a gap in the literature. In doing so, it aims *inter alia* at showing the value of philosophical reflections in shaping and enhancing Christian parents' understanding of the family life. *Wise Stewards* is an ethic for parenting written distinctly from a Christian point of view.

In chapter 1, Austin's discussion begins with a philosophy of parenting. Austin claims that parenthood requires growing in wisdom which in turn requires applying truth to situations one faces in life. Wisdom, therefore, is an integral feature of a philosophy of parenting. The chapter ends with Austin's critique of some of the antitraditional family views.

In chapter 2 Austin focuses on three questions with respect to the ground for parental rights and obligations. "Is parenthood the result of a biological connection? Does causing a child to come into existence automatically imply parenthood? Is parenthood simply an outcome of society's rules and expectations?" (35). Austin rejects the foundation of the family based on biology, causation, and society. Instead he claims that helping children to *flourish in life* is the most important aspect of parenthood. But this requires genuine loving parent-child relationship.

Austin then turns to the work of the philosopher J. David Velleman, who argues *inter alia* that knowledge of one's biological origin plays an irreplaceable role for one's self-knowledge and identity formation. But contrary to Velleman, Austin claims that (although it may play some role) knowledge of one's biological origin does not play an irreplaceable role in helping one to attain self-knowledge and form identity. According to Austin, the search for personal identity (what makes us who we are) is something that has to do with self concept. Self concept distinguishes one person from the other; it also "infuses one's life with meaning" (54). Austin holds that what makes

up our identity or self concept is our character, desires, and beliefs that we possess. So such things as biological parents, biological ancestry, socioeconomic status, where we live, and so forth, do not have primary importance in helping us to attain self-knowledge and form our identity. Instead parenthood is grounded in things that foster children to attain self-knowledge and form their identity. In light of this, Austin concludes that whether one is an adoptive or biological parent, genuine parenthood must be marked by honesty, intimacy, mutual affection, and love (59). Such traits embody parental rights and obligations.

In chapter 3, Austin forcefully argues for the Christian stewardship view of parenthood. Austin claims that parents are stewards of their children, whom ultimately belong to God. Yet parents are responsible for the physical as well as the spiritual well-being of their children. Parents' love for their children has to be modeled after the love that exists between the three persons of the Trinity. Austin challenges his readers to develop a view of stewardship that is grounded in the scripture.

In chapter 4 Austin shows how virtues shape the family life. Austin argues that parents must help their children to cultivate intellectual virtues such as attentiveness, prudence, teachability, intellectual humility, love of truth, and wisdom. The same must also be true of moral virtues such as faith, hope, love, humility, forgiveness, patience, compassion, and frugality. Austin also shows how the cultivation of virtues facilitates the moral and the spiritual development of children.

In chapter 5 Austin's discussion begins with the ethics of the religious upbringing of children. Here Austin considers two arguments that reject religious upbringing. First, the *neutrality argument*, that requires parents to remain neutral with respect to the religious upbringing of their children. Second, the *autonomy argument*, that holds that children must be given a variety of options in place of their parents' religion. Austin critiques these arguments and finds them wanting. He then turns to issues such as child discipline, the problem of consumerism, educational choices, children sports, and other extracurricular activities.

Finally, in chapter 6, Austin looks at the ethical challenges reproductive technologies pose for Christian families. Austin claims that Christians must implement technology in the context of the purpose of human life, which is to love God and our neighbors. Thus, the intent behind the use of technology should be redemptive in that it must bring a positive transformation in the lives of people. Austin cautions Christians not to unwisely make decisions to have children simply because technology is available to help them. Austin concludes that Christians must not lose sight of the moral aspect of every decision that they make.

The book successfully shows how philosophical reflection on parenthood plays a crucial role in deepening our understanding of the nature of

parenthood. The book also challenges commonly held beliefs and assumptions, regarding what parenthood consists in. In doing so, it gives readers a fresh perspective on the most important aspects of parenthood. As a result, Christian parents will be challenged to reconsider their philosophy of parenting and all that it involves. This book is engaging, insightful, and informative at so many levels.

However, readers who are familiar with issues in *philosophy of mind* and *metaphysics* may find Austin's discussion in chapter 2 (50–60) ambiguous and unclear. Austin uses some important terms without qualifying them or making proper distinctions. Here I have in mind (1) self-knowledge; (2) self-concept; (3) personal identity; (4) "what is it that makes me who am I?"; and (5) beliefs and desires.

Austin's discussion of (1)–(5) is based on his rebuttal of the view of J. David Velleman, who argues that knowledge of one's biological root is decisive for the task of self-knowledge and identity formation. But Austin seems to have conflated the primary metaphysical implication of (1)–(5) with their ordinary every day usage, which usually pertains to how one conceives of himself or herself. For example, I may view myself in terms of different categories such as Ethiopian-American, male, postgraduate student, father, husband, and suchlike. Cumulatively, such categories would make up my "identity" which is rooted in my cultural, biological, communal, familial, and so forth, heritages. But taken this way, "identity" does not have a deep metaphysical implication.

In a metaphysical sense, (1) above refers to one's direct awareness of one's self as self via the use of first-person pronoun "I." (2) Above refers to reflexive-knowledge of one's self, that is, self-knowledge. (3) Above could be understood synchronically as well as diachronically. In the former sense, *X* and *Y* are said to be synchronically identical, just in case *X* and *Y* are numerically identical at any given time; whereas in the later sense, *X* and *Y* are said to be diachronically identical just in case the numerical identity holds between them over time.

Personal identity deals with two main questions: (i) what are the logically necessary and sufficient conditions for a person P_2 at time t_2 being the same person as a person P_1 at an earlier time t_1? And (ii) what kind of evidence can be given which will show that a person P_2 at t_2 is the same person as a person P_1 at t_1? The first question deals with a person's persistence over time whereas the second question deals with how we find out a person's persistence through time. (4) above refers to seeking an answer regarding my relationship to the thing I call my body or brain or any other psychological states, and so forth. (5) above refers to *propositional attitude states*, which dispose us to act in certain ways. Beliefs and desires are passive states in that we can't simply choose what to believe or desire at will; rather we find our-

selves having them. But this does not prevent us from making an informed decision on which beliefs or desires to act on.

On the one hand, Austin's analysis of (1)–(5) gives an impression for readers to draw a kind of analysis I gave above. But on the other hand, it also seems to give an ordinary way of understanding such notions. It seems hard to pin down which approach is intended as far as Austin's analysis is concerned. Although such ambiguity and lack of clarity will not directly affect the overall argument presented in the book, they may have some unwanted consequences which do not concern us here.

Wise Stewards is a fascinating book on Christian parenting. Its philosophical approach makes this book very unique regarding Christian parenting. It is an easy read, yet its nuanced arguments need careful attention. Each chapter ends with questions for reflection and application. I highly recommend this book for parents and seminary students, with an interest in applied ethics.

REVIEWED BY MIHRETU P. GUTA
DURHAM UNIVERSITY
M.P.GUTA@DURHAM.AC.UK

Inerrancy and Worldview: Answering Modern Challenges to the Bible. By Vern S. Poythress. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012. 272 pages. $17.99.

The central thesis of Vern Poythress's *Inerrancy and Worldview* is that "modern people" challenge the authority of scripture by bringing presuppositions from a materialistic worldview to its pages. That is, modern people, or those who think the Bible is errant, read it through the lens of an "impersonalistic" view of natural laws, moral properties, and structures in thought and speech. Poythress guides the reader through such diverse topics as the natural sciences, sociology, linguistics, historical criticism, and cognitive psychology so as to demonstrate how an impersonalistic worldview affects modern thinking, and hence the handling of scripture as an errant human text. The antidote to this state of affairs, he says, is to reimagine these disciplines along the lines of a "personalistic" worldview, which envisages our lawlike world of regularity as one that is upheld by God's sustaining Word. In short, given the reality of a personal God who creates a world where creaturely knowledge is possible, we should expect inerrant revelation. Along the way, he addresses certain challenges to particular problem passages and admonishes readers to take account of their spiritual pride that might hinder one's reading of scripture.

Readers familiar with Poythress' stunningly comprehensive interests will rightly think he is in a good position to provide a wide-ranging analysis of the assumptions that underlie major disciplines of research. A survey of