**Analytic Philosophy of Religion, Introduced**

Tim Bayne, *Philosophy of Religion: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2018. £7.99. pp. 133. ISBN: 978-0-19-875496-1).

Tim Bayne has written an accessible and engaging Very Short Introduction to philosophy of religion as it is usually practiced by analytic philosophers. For a book of this kind, aimed at the prospective undergraduate and the interested general reader, this may be sufficient. He covers the standard territory with ease: foundational concepts (chs 1–2), arguments for the existence of God (ch. 3), divine hiddenness and the nature of faith (ch. 4), the problem of evil (ch. 5) psychology of religion (ch. 6), religious language (ch. 7), and the afterlife (ch. 8). Bayne deftly summarizes and illustrates the familiar logical puzzles thrown up for philosophers by religion: for example, is divine omniscience compatible with free will (p. 18)?

The traditional arguments for God’s existence, which can seem hackneyed to those who are more familiar with philosophy of religion, are given a new lease of life here. He helpfully distinguishes between temporal and atemporal versions of the cosmological argument, acknowledging the early Islamic influence. He clearly and succinctly unpacks the fine-tuning argument’s underlying claims, providing helpful examples of concepts which might appear abstruse to the uninitiated, such as the Inverse Gambler’s Fallacy—the error of assuming that because an event is unlikely, it must be one of a series of events (p. 38)—drawing out its relevance to the question whether we should find it surprising that the universe seems fine-tuned for the emergence of life.

Given the significant strengths of this short book, it may seem uncharitable to complain of limitations. But Bayne’s book provides an unduly restricted view of the field he aims to survey. In the opening pages (p. 3), he recalls Pascal’s famous, incisive contrast between the God of Abraham and Isaac and the God of the philosophers, only to go on to focus on something called ‘classical monotheism’—an abstraction used to buy philosophical precision at the price of near-irrelevance to the actual practice of the world’s faiths. At one point (p. 17), Christianity is characterised as a ‘version’ of theism, as though it were some variant of a purely intellectual position and not also a practiced religion.

‘Continental’ philosophers are notable by their absence from Bayne’s book, and where they are mentioned, it is only in passing. In connection with the story of Abraham and Isaac, Bayne asks whether worshipping God involves abandoning one’s role as a moral agent—but without mentioning Kierkegaard, who seminally addressed the question in *Fear and Trembling*. Kierkegaard is later mentioned only briefly as an example of a philosopher who took seriously the emotional and existential dimensions of religious faith (pp. 62–3).

In truth, the most exciting contemporary work in philosophy of religion is being done by philosophers (John Cottingham and others) who attempt to combine the rigor and precision of analytic philosophy with the existential depth of European phenomenology in a more ‘humane’ approach to the discipline (see Fiona Ellis (ed.), *New Models of Religious Understanding* (OUP, 2018)). Ultimately, Bayne’s one-sided focus on narrowly analytic approaches left a familiar, bland taste in the mouth of this reader.

Tim Bayne has written a lucid introduction to philosophy of religion as it has been practiced for decades. How much more interesting it would have been had he given us a more balanced picture of the current state and direction of the discipline.

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