

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 counterpart, *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 plausible 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 concomitant 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 particular 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 a 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.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO

MATTHEW DAVIDSON