

EVIDENCE AND RELIGIOUS BELIEF. Edited by Kelly James Clark and Raymond J. VanArragon. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. x + 214. Hard Cover \$65.00, ISBN: 978-0-199-60371-8.

The editors of this short but wide-ranging collection initially frame the debate about evidence and religious belief in typical Reformed Epistemology terms: on the one hand stand W. K. Clifford and secular “evidentialists,” and on the other stand Alvin Plantinga and the heroes of Reformed Epistemology who deny that beliefs (including religious beliefs) require evidential justification. To their credit, the editors concede that the story is much more complicated. Many evidentialists today are not of the Cartesian or Cliffordian guild; they proffer a broader, more humane understanding of evidence. In what follows I will give an overview of the essays in this volume, briefly addressing some of the issues raised.

In the first chapter, the late James Ross rejects the notion that all justified beliefs require evidence. Like other animals, humans exhibit cognitive reliance for the sake of rewards. Ross insists that cognitive reliance on that which rewards us (tools, books, memories) goes beyond mere evidence but is typically rational. “Habitual rational belief,” in the reports of newspapers, highway signs, or natural regularities, “is not a matter of evidence; it is a matter of reward” (17). Religious faith is rational, then, because it parallels the other “faith” commitments in every part of our lives which go beyond evidence in clinging to that which rewards. Contemporary evidentialists will likely think Ross’s reward-based believing is better construed as a matter of evidence. We believe newspapers trustworthy not because they reward us but because their

accuracy in the past is *evidence* of their accuracy now.

Continuing the groundbreaking work of her 2010 Wilde Lectures in Natural Theology, Linda Zagzebski reflects on the role of epistemic self-trust in chapter 2. She believes self-trust (in our faculties and in ourselves as we conscientiously exercise our faculties) is rational and necessary for fulfilling our natural desire for truth. But our reasons for self-trust are also good reasons for trusting others. This reasonable trust in others leads, she believes, to a defensible version of the (nearly extinct) *consensus gentium* argument for God’s existence: “The fact that so many people in so many cultures in so many ages of the world have believed in a deity gives each of us a defeasible reason to believe in God” (22). Interested readers should consult her forthcoming book *Epistemic Authority* for a fuller exposition.

C. Stephen Evans, in chapter 3, attempts to narrow the distance between evidentialists and Reformed Epistemologists. Following George Mavrodes (to whom the book is dedicated), Evans maintains that because God is the creator and sustainer of all things, God can be experienced in a mediated way through all things. A flower may have certain properties which evidence God’s existence and from which his existence can be inferred via a teleological argument. However, a “spiritually seasoned” observer—perhaps one enlightened by Calvin’s *sensus divinitatis*—might simply non-inferentially perceive God’s existence from the flower (44). Such

“natural signs” can be the basis of theistic arguments or “read” directly.

Chris Tucker, representing mainstream evidentialism, contributes an important essay in chapter 4. Advocating Michael Huemer’s evidentialist principle of “phenomenal conservatism” (PC)—that seemings that P provide prima facie justification for believing that P—Tucker argues that PC explains how an experience of nature’s beauty leads to non-inferentially justified religious beliefs better than proper functionalism. He reinterprets the *sensus divinitatis*: this designed faculty may non-inferentially form the belief/seeming that “God loves me” from an experience of beauty. This reinterpretation, he argues, avoids the unsavory implication of proper functionalism that my aesthetic perception itself is evidence that God loves me. PC makes evidence easily available to justify religious beliefs; seemings provide evidence no matter what their cause (even wishful believing). To those who think PC too evidentially permissive Tucker replies that justified seemings do not necessarily provide warrant. Tucker’s reply seems overly complicated, however, as the phenomenal conservative could merely maintain that beliefs based on wishful thinking are prima facie justified, but not ultima facie justified once one realizes the seeming’s origin in wishful thinking.

In chapter 5, William Wainwright reflects upon the person-relative nature of religious arguments. Many ancients held that a proper love of the good is necessary to reason ethically. But since Christians typically identify God with The Good, it is unsurprising that a proper disposition might also be nec-

essary to good theological reasoning. What follows is a Jamesian defense of “passionally inflicted reason” (94). Religious believers, contra John Schellenberg, can be fair-minded without conceding an Enlightenment understanding of neutrality whereby belief must be proportioned to one’s strength of evidence as judged by a dispassionate, convictionless observer.

E. J. Coffman and Jeff Cervantez raise concerns, throughout chapter 6, about Paul Moser’s responses to the problem of divine hiddenness in his *The Elusive God* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008]. Moser’s responses are hampered, they fear, by their dependence on controversial epistemological claims. For instance, Moser claims that some people culpably endorse overly restrictive requirements on what counts as evidence for God’s existence, thereby keeping themselves from having evidence for theism. He thinks this “cognitive idolatry” is an attempt to be lord over the ways in which God can reveal himself. Here Coffman and Cervantez rightly note that it is more plausibly the case that such people have good evidence for God’s existence but merely use evidentiary rules to keep themselves from “*acknowledging* or *correctly interpreting*” their evidence (108). They worry that Moser’s claim is off the mark, for only a small number of people—perhaps just philosophers—actually possess such evidentiary constraints. But this seems mistaken. Many people say they don’t believe in God because they “don’t see him,” by which they mean there is no empirical or scientific evidence for God. Further, how many non-philosophers have prayed for a miraculous sign of God’s existence,

by which, again, they place strictures on God's self-revelation?

Inspired by Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism, Thomas Crisp argues in chapter 7 that the probability of humans having serious insight into abstruse philosophical matters is low on the conjunction of evolution and naturalism (since our faculties were built for basic survival, not difficult philosophy). If this is correct, those affirming evolutionary naturalism possess a defeater for the key proposition in arguments from evil—something like: probably no reason would justify God in permitting evils of the kind (or with the distribution) we observe. Crisp's success will depend greatly upon whether the principle of defeat he advocates survives scrutiny.

Thomas Kelly reflects upon *consensus gentium* arguments for theism in chapter 8. Precisely at this point one weakness of the volume (and similar volumes) appears: one wishes for even minimal interaction between the contributors—not only between Kelly and Zagzebski but between Kelly and Tucker over phenomenal conservatism. Kelly maintains that we are in a poor position to say much about the evidentiary value of common opinion about God's existence. But his chapter prompts an important question: Is the observation of common opinion an evidentiary experience itself or only "a proxy for the first order evidence and experience" on which others' beliefs are based (139)? That is, is common opinion evidence or metaevidence? Given that many religious beliefs are based on communal opinion and testimony, their evidentiary value seems essential to an assessment of the rationality of such beliefs.

In chapter 9, Kelly Clark and economist Andrew Samuel find naturalistic social contract theories (primarily that of David Gauthier) "motivationally deficient" and argue that "theism provides a better motivation for rationally self-interested persons to be moral" (157). Social contract theories, they claim, restrict attainable goods to this-worldly goods. Thus, "there is, in principle, a dollar value or price for every moral act" (166). The rational maximizer on naturalistic models will publicly affirm the social contract and privately violate it when feasible. But because the theist has recourse to post-mortem gains incommensurate with ante-mortem costs and benefits, she has rational motivation for ethical action even when the ante-mortem costs are great.

William Rowe's contribution in chapter 10 considers whether God's moral perfection is consistent with his having libertarian freedom. According to Rowe, because God cannot bring it about that he lacks one of his essential attributes (*viz.*, moral perfection), God cannot perform an evil act. Further, because he lacks this alternate possibility, God cannot even perform good acts with libertarian freedom. The essay is provocative; but as a revised version of an older paper, it lacks import for the current literature (which, for example, countenances multiverse creation).

In the concluding chapter, William Hasker argues that George Mavrodes was right to see John Hick as defending polytheism. Hick briefly denies the charge, advocating the idiosyncratic position that when practitioners of various religions pray they are in contact with angelic beings but not "the Real" (which is one). As may be evident, these

last three chapters have little to do with evidence, thus fitting only awkwardly within the compilation. This notwithstanding, the present volume—especially the contributions of Zagzebski, Tucker, and Kelly—contributes greatly to the

current discussion of evidence in general and its relationship to religious belief in particular.

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MIND, METHOD, AND MORALITY: ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF ANTHONY KENNY. Edited by John Cottingham and Peter Hacker. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. xii + 391. Hardcover \$99.00, ISBN 978-0-19-955612-0.

This *Festschrift* is a collection of essays honoring Anthony J. P. Kenny on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. Professor Kenny, who has spent almost all of his scholarly life in both academic and administrative positions at the University of Oxford, has been singularly distinctive in terms of his productivity in both analytic philosophy and the history of Greek and Medieval Philosophy, along with sophisticated conceptual work on Descartes and Wittgenstein. Given those principal areas of Professor Kenny's work, this *Festschrift* is divided into four main sections: the first section is a set of essays devoted to Aristotle, the second set to Thomas Aquinas, the third set to Descartes, and the fourth set of essays centers around the work of Wittgenstein. Prominent scholars have contributed essays for this *Festschrift*, most of which were read at a special convocation honoring Kenny in 2010.

Kenny's interpretive and analytical efforts directed towards the texts of Aristotle are well known, in particular, his work with the *Eudemian Ethics* and his conviction that the *Eudemian Ethics* is superior to the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Kenny's published work in this area has been the harbinger of much sophisticated work on Aristotelian moral

theory. His most recent major work is the completion of the four volumes of *A New History of Western Philosophy*, which the publisher sees as replacing the standard now fifty-plus-year-old Copleston history of philosophy.

In Aquinas studies, Kenny dusted off the important philosophy of mind concepts of *esse intentionale* and *esse naturale*; as Kenny has written several times, he regards one of the most important contributions Aquinas made to Western philosophy is the concept of *esse intentionale*. Kenny's work in the philosophy of mind on Aquinas set the stage for so much later work by persons now familiarly called "Analytical Thomists," a designation John Haldane coined a dozen years ago. Haldane would, of course, be considered a primary exponent of this way of looking at the philosophy of Aquinas through the lenses of analytic philosophy. Kenny has been more impressed with Aquinas's philosophy of mind than Thomas's account of being expounded in his several metaphysical treatises. Fergus Kerr once suggested that quite possibly Kenny looked at Aquinas's metaphysical account of being too closely through the neo-Thomist lenses of Gilson. That there are differences with Gilson as articulated