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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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**Sjoerd L. Bonting** is an Anglican priest-theologian and emeritus professor of biochemistry, Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands. He is the author of *Creation and Double Chaos* and other books on the science-theology dialogue.

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**Celia Deane-Drummond** is Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame. Her recent books include *Seeds of Hope: Facing the Challenge of Climate Justice* (2010) and *Religion and Ecology in the Public Sphere* (edited with Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, 2011).

**Ting Guo** is currently studying for a PhD at the University of Edinburgh. His research is focused on Artificial Intelligence, spirituality and human anthropology.

**Roger Paul** is currently the National Ecumenical Officer for the Church of England, and previously served in parish ministry for 28 years. He has a doctorate in ecology and is the Science and Religion Forum's Treasurer.

**Christopher Southgate**, a former editor of *Reviews*, is Senior Lecturer in Theology at Exeter University. He is the author of *The Groaning of Creation: God, evolution and the problem of evil*, and the editor of *God, Humanity and the Cosmos: a textbook in science and religion* (3rd ed. 2011).

**Aku Visala** is a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the Center of Theological Inquiry, Princeton. He is the author of *Naturalism, Theism and the Cognitive Study of Religion: Religion Explained?* (Ashgate, 2011).

## EDITORIAL

As winter closes in, the September conference will probably seem a distant memory to many readers. I am very grateful, therefore, to Neil Spurway for providing a report which captures both the spirit and the important content of such an excellent event. I am also glad to be able to continue the broad theme of the conference (at least in terms of the self) in many of the reviews featured in this edition. I am sure readers will be delighted that Roger Paul has contributed a piece for our *Book that made a difference* series. Roger draws our attention to Martin Buber's insights about the self as fundamentally relational and he draws our attention to the inevitable ethical implications of Buber's understanding of relationality. Although I am sure most readers would be reticent to endorse the Cartesian 'I' as an unproblematic separate entity, Aku Visala in his article review evaluates R. Scott Smith's epistemological argument for substance dualism. In Smith's intriguing account, substance dualism is necessary for us to have any knowledge at all. In his critique Visala places Smith's work in the wider context of developments in naturalism and epistemology, and in the field of the cognitive sciences.

On a slightly different tangent, Mary Midgley's new book, reviewed by Sjoerd Bonting, highlights problems in the atomistic individualism endorsed by Richard Dawkins and E. O. Wilson. Bonting's own recent publication inevitably raises important questions about the self in its defence of near-death experiences as evidence for life after death. These questions are given considerable analysis in Wentzel van Huyssteen and Erik Wiebe's notable new volume *In Search of Self*, reviewed by Ting Guo. This volume offers various substantial theologies of selfhood in the light of postmodern thought and its recognition of our transitory and rather fragmented identities. Once again the importance of exploring our human selfhood as relational comes to the fore.

Reviews of other notable volumes are contributed by Philip Bligh, Peter Colyer and Christopher Southgate, and so this proves to be a substantial volume. Thank you to all our reviewers. The editor is always grateful for offers to review so please do not hesitate if you feel that irresistible urge to put pen to paper.

## **ARTHUR PEACOCKE PRIZE**

The Forum is delighted to announce that the Arthur Peacocke Essay Prize 2012 was awarded to Daniel Kodaj of the Central European University, Budapest for his essay 'When Soul Matters'. Daniel is to be congratulated for his essay and an abstract appears below. Congratulations also go to Gary Slater who was awarded

the runner-up prize for his essay 'Can the Concept of the Soul still have meaning? A Peircean Response'.

**Daniel Kodaj, When Soul Matters** (abstract of the essay for which the 2012 Peacocke Prize was awarded).

The paper argues that souls exist and natural science has no theoretical dominion over them. The argument is predicated on a distinction between constitutive and non-constitutive concepts. Roughly, the idea is that a select class of concept (the concept of soul included) are such that their uses enter into the metaphysical constitution of the entities they pick out. The paper claims that such concepts cannot be reduced to scientific concepts, therefore realism about souls isn't a scientific issue and it is justified on normative grounds. The paper ends by indicating the connection between the present position and traditional problems about the soul.

## **REPORT OF THE 2012 CONFERENCE**

THE SOUL: CAN THE CONCEPT OF THE SOUL STILL HAVE MEANING? REGENT'S PARK COLLEGE, OXFORD, 6-8TH SEPTEMBER 2012

Even a Cambridge man must concede that Oxford, in bright sunshine, is one of the world's beautiful cities. And that is how it was, on these three September days. Regent's Park is not the grandest college – indeed technically this former Baptist institution is a "hall", not a college, of the university – but its creeper-lined courtyard

was calming, its catering staff delightful, and its chapel an excellent lecture room once we'd lifted the screen to make it visible further back than about row five.

Prof Peter Harrison is still a highly-committed Vice President of the Forum, even though he has resigned his Oxford chair and moved back to Australia. He flew over specially to attend this meeting, and several members of the public came to hear him open it by giving the Gowland Lecture on *Descartes' error? Dualism and the immortal soul*. Peter questioned whether Descartes was really guilty of the view now universally attributed to him – crude mind-body dualism. For Descartes, body and soul/mind were both incomplete substances, united to form an “entity in itself”. When a correspondent challenged him to explain how an immaterial entity could influence the material body, he responded that we don't know how matter influences matter either. Anticipating Hume, he recognised that we never see causation, only a sequence of events. In lieu of mechanical causation, argued Peter, Descartes attributed all agency – the hammer on the nail, as much as the mind on the body – to the hand of God.

Far from being a Vice-President, the Friday morning speaker was a newcomer to the Forum, Prof Chris Frith. A brain scientist, formerly of UCL but in retirement working mainly in Århus, Chris began his career studying psychiatric disorder, and for the last 25 years or so has used brain imaging techniques to investigate normal interpersonal reactions. His topic was *The brain, consciousness and the soul: Is the brain all there is?* With

engaging charm Chris showed many examples of the representations of the world in people's brains becoming aligned with those of others with whom they were interacting (his Wiley-Blackwell paperback, *Making up the mind*, tells this story up to 2007). The key messages for our theme were how great a majority of our mental activity is unconscious, and how very social we are as animals. Enhancing social interaction is the chief benefit of consciousness, which otherwise we manage very well without. This aspect, in particular, of Chris's thinking fitted excellently with what was to follow.

Prof Alister McGrath, now of King's, London, paid a fleeting visit from another conference to speak on *Theological aspects of the concept of soul*. Though the mediaevals had taken the New Testament to justify speaking of "body, soul and (sometimes also) spirit", the notion of an immaterial soul was Greek and secular, not theological: the Old Testament conceives the human as an animated body, not an incarnate – let alone an imprisoned – soul. Thus Michelangelo's great picture is not actually of Adam's creation but his animation. While the awful challenge of such blights as Alzheimer's disease cannot be lightly dismissed, it is in relationality to other living creatures, to our fellow human beings, and ultimately to God, that our animated natures are to be fulfilled.

The Friday afternoon academic sessions were of contributed papers, two of them delivered innovatively via Skype, from Pakistan, by people who had visa problems. At the Forum's AGM, which followed, Rev Dr

Kenneth Wilson was succeeded as Chair by Rev Dr Michael Fuller. Later came the dinner, for which Prof Wilson Poon, the Edinburgh physicist, had been persuaded by our incoming Chair to accept an unfamiliar role as post-prandial speaker – a role he fulfilled with challenge and wit.

Saturday's first lecturer was Fr Peter Hunter, OP, from across the road in Blackfriars Hall, Oxford. Billed to give *The Roman Catholic view of the soul*, he assured us that there wasn't just one, so he would give his own. In doing so, he threw out sparks in all directions, but perhaps did not persuade everyone that they were all mutually consistent. Nevertheless, much like Alister McGrath, Peter Hunter was for Aristotle and Aquinas, not the Platonists – the soul does not pre-exist, is not an added ingredient but the “form” of the body, as the shape of a statue is the form taken by the bronze. To count the number of “souls” aboard a ship is thus entirely proper usage, and it is the whole human person, not the soul only, which is in the image of God. Despite this, somehow he believes the soul is immortal, “though the resurrection of the body is much more important”.

Finally, we had the privilege of hearing Prof Nancey Murphy, one of the sanest of theologians, whose chair is that of Christian Philosophy at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena. Her title was *Mind, soul and cognitive neuroscience*. Concurring with previous speakers that Old Testament thought is not dualistic, Nancey indented for a physicalist anthropology first on biblical, but then on closely-argued philosophical and scientific grounds.

Making use of complex systems theory, she emphasised the significance of whole-part interaction (“top-down causation”) in adaptive, goal-seeking systems. Thus far an ant colony models a brain. But if that brain is to acquire the powers of reasoning and morality it must develop symbolic language and the capacity for self-evaluation. Her arguments are detailed in her book with W.S. Brown: *Did my neurons make me do it?* (OUP, 2007). Perhaps more than any other speaker Nancey was happy to conclude that “we are fearfully and wonderfully made”.

Afterwards, Nancey Murphy herself expressed a view with which I think all present agreed, namely that this had been an unusually coherent, and therefore satisfying, conference. Much credit for it must go to our indefatigable Secretary, Dr Jeffrey Robinson; and he had, in turn, been greatly helped by Membership Secretary Hilary Martin. Let me end, however, by quoting Kenneth Wilson’s closing remarks. In his inimitably relaxed, whimsical style, Kenneth emphasised the role of theology as enquiry. Human beings must be inherently eager to know one another, and thereby to model God’s relation to us all. And that is what the Forum is about. Its members should be as grateful to Kenneth, for his three years of Chairmanship, as those who heard this conference’s five lead speakers were for their scholarly, challenging, and – yes – remarkably coherent, talks.

Neil Spurway (with thanks to Andrew Robinson for comments).

## A BOOK THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE

**Martin Buber**, *I and Thou* (1937; translated with an introduction by Walter Kaufmann 1970)

REVIEWED BY ROGER PAUL

As a natural sciences student in the early seventies, two things bothered me. The first was the way in which the science I encountered raised questions which went far beyond the science itself – questions which were more to do with how we know things and about the nature of reality, but in response to which science did not seem to have the tools or give the space to address. The second was the way in which religious persons I met, although highly intelligent, seemed to leave their intelligence behind at the chapel door. In particular, the insights and challenges of science were not much on their radar, and ‘religion’, ‘faith’, ‘spirituality’ occupied its own self referential bubble.

At this time, I was asking myself about not just holding science and theology together, but letting them interact in creative ways: Bishop John Robinson, in *Honest to God* (1963), had more or less deposed the God ‘up there’ and the ‘God out there’, to which I have more lately added ‘the God in here’. So what was left? Was continuing to think of God as supernatural, or of the spiritual as a substance, even a spiritual substance, a dead end? Were the rapidly expanding scientific disciplines driving God further and further away, and

closing the 'gaps' in which God or the Spirit might be found in the life of the world and human life in particular? Is science concerned with one side of the duality between matter and spirit, and religion (and indeed the arts) the other? If, as seems more likely, there is one world, in which both scientific knowledge and religious faith are authentic, but in which science has claimed the greater ground, how can we still speak of religious faith?

Two significant events helped to form my thinking at this time. The first was the arrival of Arthur Peacocke as Dean of my College (in early 1973). Later on he was my Director of Studies when I returned to Cambridge in 1978 to study Divinity. The second event was reading a little book – a most unlikely book perhaps for those engaged in the interface between Science and Theology – by the existentialist philosopher, educationalist, student of Hasidism and of the Jewish scriptures, Martin Buber. *Ich und Du*<sup>1</sup> was first published in 1937 and was translated that year into English by Ronald Gregor Smith, whom Buber thought was his best translator. But by 1969, there was a consensus that a new translation was needed. The copy I now have before me is the second translation, by Walter Kaufmann, first published in 1970. When Kaufmann was first approached he was reluctant to undertake the project because he felt that the German text was untranslatable – it has so many layers, moving between aphorism, logic, image and illustration, poetry

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<sup>1</sup> Buber, M. *I and Thou*; trans Kaufmann, W. (T & T Clark: Edinburgh) 1970.

and prose, and forcing some key words into meanings which are not the usual coinage. Reading the footnotes to the text is itself a fascinating exercise, as one is drawn into the subtleties of Buber's meaning.

There are I think a number of reasons why this unlikely book is one that made a difference in my thinking and helped to shape how I have engaged with both science and religion. The first is that Buber begins with language. This is the first paragraph of *I and Thou*:

The world is twofold for man (sic) in accordance with his twofold attitude. The attitude of man is twofold in accordance with the two basic words he can speak. The basic words are not single words but word pairs. One basic word is the word pair I-You. The other basic word is the word pair I-It; but this basic word is not changed when He or She takes the place of It. Thus the I of man is also twofold. For the I of the basic word I-You is different from that in the basic word I-It. (53)

This seems to be saying that language is essentially relational, and does not refer primarily to things. So the word 'I', according to Buber, cannot refer to an entity but is always 'I in relation'. Immediately, talk of soul as a substance, for example, is impossible. This argument is exciting because it helps to shift the focus of the discourse between science and religion away from what we might call 'facts' to meaning. So much of the misunderstanding that there is in this discourse is due to people making category mistakes, as Nicholas Lash so crisply put it at

the beginning of his book *'Holiness, Speech and Silence'*.<sup>2</sup> Here Buber is in the company of John Macquarrie, St Thomas Aquinas and Ludwig Wittgenstein, in identifying theology as being located in the nature of language.

The second reason that this book made a difference is in the way Buber writes of these two relational attitudes, I-It and I-You. He does not dismiss one or the other as less important for human existence. Of I-It he wrote:

He perceives the being that surrounds him, plain things and beings as things; he perceives what happens around him, plain processes and actions as processes, things that consist of qualities and processes that consist of moments, things recorded in terms of spatial coordinates and processes recorded in terms of temporal coordinates, things and processes that are bounded by other things and processes and capable of being measured against and compared with those others—an ordered world, a detached world. This world is somewhat reliable; it has density and duration; its articulation can be surveyed; one can get it out again and again; one recounts it with one's eyes closed and then checks with one's eyes open. (82).

The world of I-It is the world of experience: of sensing, describing and acting upon objects, or observing and living in processes and events. Buber refers to I-It as somehow always a historical view of the world. It includes ways we relate to other people as well as to

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<sup>2</sup> Lash, N. *Holiness, Speech and Silence* (Ashgate Publishing: London) 2004

things and processes, and Buber is careful to note that by treating others as objects, we do not necessarily abuse or exploit them, or even diminish them. Respect and care are also features of this relationship with others. Buber also suggests that this world is ordered: it is a world of causality and natural law, and therefore the subject of scientific experimentation and understanding.

And of the I-You relationship he writes:

Or man encounters being and becoming as what confronts him—always only one being and every thing only as a being. What is there reveals itself to him in the occurrence, and what occurs there happens to him as being ... The world that appears to you in this way is unreliable, for it appears always new to you, and you cannot take it by its word. It lacks density, for everything in it permeates everything else. It lacks duration, for it comes even when not called and vanishes even when you cling to it. It cannot be surveyed: if you try to make it surveyable, you lose it. ... It is your present; you have a present only insofar as you have it; and you can make it into an object for you and experience and use it—you must do that again and again—and then you have no present any more. Between you and it there is a reciprocity of giving: you say You to it and give yourself to it; it says You to you and gives itself to you. (83).

The I-You relation is, according to Buber, a reciprocal encounter, in which each confronts the other, and in which I become aware of identity in relation to the other. This is such an important principle in the area of human dialogue, especially across difference and

distinctiveness. Buber's work in education flows from this dialogical principle. In my present ecumenical work, I would say that this principle is fundamental, along with the idea that in relationship we are able to exchange gifts. Buber also speaks of I-You as being to do with the present. This means that in that relationship we live entirely in the present, but it also means that the other presents itself to us as a presence. Elsewhere, Buber develops a key idea which I think has profound implications: that the I-You relation is the way we encounter the actuality of the world. Buber writes here, for example, of encountering a tree in contemplation, of being drawn into its bodily presence. He is quick to deny that therefore we can speak about a tree having consciousness – we don't know anything about that. 'What I encounter', writes Buber, 'is the tree itself.'

Human beings are constantly moving in and out and between these two basic attitudes or ways of relating. Buber maintained that as soon as we begin to describe the I-You encounter, the You ceases to be You and becomes an It. The recollection of the I-You encounter can only refer to it as something to be remembered and spoken about, and that essentially destroys the vocative, I-You language. I have reflected on this in relation to poetry: a lot of poetry is the impossible attempt to evoke encounter; it is like dancing around the edge of a crater, or of capturing a kingfisher in flight. Metaphor, image, word and sentence are deployed to evoke something which only exists in the present, and then only as gift

and through grace. I suppose all poetry fails to a greater or lesser extent.

It is only in the last third of the book that Buber begins to speak of God. He writes that 'Extended, the lines of relationships intersect in the eternal You' and 'Every single You is a glimpse of that.' And here I have arrived at the third way in which this book has made a difference for me. Encounter with the eternal You is firmly located in this one world: it is not to do with being 'up there', 'out there', 'in here', and it is not essentially to do with religion. Religion is however to do with the recollection of the I-You relation as it points towards the eternal You, of God. In this respect it is very much like poetry, and this suggests why all the arts and religion are so closely intertwined. If this is the case, then religion, and religious experience, belongs firmly in the It-world. But while belonging to the It-world, its object is the I-You encounter. This for me explains the paradox, and the impossibility of religion, and perhaps why so many scientists do not 'get' religion. How can you have an object of study, measurement, observation, which lacks density, duration and is not subject to causality? Buber's little book explains why for example, the mystical writers refer to the fundamental incomprehensibility, unknowability, and ineffability of God. As Gregory of Nyssa wrote:

What does it mean that Moses entered the darkness and then saw God in it? ... what is perceived to be contrary to religion is darkness, and the escape from darkness comes about when one participates in light.

But as the mind progresses and, through an ever greater and more perfect diligence, comes to apprehend reality, as it approaches more nearly to contemplation, it sees more clearly what of the divine nature is un contemplated. For leaving behind everything that is observed, not only what sense comprehends but also what the intelligence thinks it sees, it keeps on penetrating deeper until by the intelligence's yearning for understanding it gains access to the invisible and the incomprehensible, and there it sees God. This is the true knowledge of what is sought; this is the seeing that consists in not seeing, because that which is sought transcends all knowledge, being separated on all sides by incomprehensibility as by a kind of darkness.<sup>3</sup>

Buber's little book has had a profound influence on a number of theologians since the Second World War. Coming back to Bishop John Robinson (another Dean of Clare), formative in his own theological development was his doctoral thesis of 1946, now published as *Thou Who Art*,<sup>4</sup> which was a Trinitarian development of Buber's central idea. The themes of *Honest to God* are already recognisable here. In 1973, John V. Taylor brought out *The Go Between God*,<sup>5</sup> which also draws heavily from Buber, perhaps unfortunately naming the hyphen as the

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<sup>3</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*; Trans: Malherbe, A.J. and Ferguson, E. in the Classics of Western Spirituality Series (Paulist Press: New York) 1978

<sup>4</sup> Robinson, J.A.T. *Thou Who Art* (Continuum: London) 2006

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, J.V. *The Go Between God* (SCM Press: London) 1972

Spirit. John Macquarrie makes references to Buber in many of his writings, notably in two lectures which directly address the relation of theology to the sciences.<sup>6</sup> Although not scientists, these theologians were prepared to dialogue with scientists. As Macquarrie noted there needs to be common ground for dialogue to take place, and that one cannot assume that language about God is going to be universally understood.

As I re-read Buber now, some 40 years on, I am not so convinced by his thesis. Or let me put it another way: I am much more aware of the limitations of language and therefore of the provisionality of all our thought. The enduring mark of this book is that it keeps us firmly grounded in this one world, accepting the necessities of history and causality, while opening windows onto the eternal present.

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<sup>6</sup> Macquarrie, J. *On Being a Theologian* (SCM Press: London) 1999

## REVIEW ARTICLE

**R. Scott Smith**, *Naturalism and Our Knowledge of Reality: Testing Religious Truth-Claims*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012; pp. 254, £50, Hbk, ISBN 978-1-4094-3486-3.

REVIEWED BY AKU VISALA

The last decade has seen an unprecedented surge of philosophical defences of Christian theism. Not only have Christian philosophers presented new arguments for the existence of God and refined the older ones, they have actively produced arguments against what they consider to be the main contender to theism, that is, *naturalism*. Naturalism comes in many forms but there seems to be two common elements, one ontological and the other epistemological. The ontological claim is that, everything that exists consists of the same physical elements and forces studied by contemporary natural sciences. As one would expect, the epistemological thesis entailed by standard naturalism is then that all truths are scientifically accessible (or sometimes the more minimal thesis that science is the best way to know truths). Against this, the theist wants to maintain that there are some things in the world that do not consist of such elements and forces and consequently that there are truths that are inaccessible to science. God would be the most obvious candidate for such a thing. Some also add minds, intentionality, freedom as well as objective moral properties (values and duties) to this list. These features

have been subsequently utilised in arguments against naturalism. To put things roughly, anti-naturalist arguments attempt to show that the basic ontology of naturalism is not able to accommodate minds, intentionality, consciousness, objective moral properties and other phenomena (such as stable and independent material objects). Since we know that such things are likely to exist, or so the argument goes, naturalism is suspect. The reader can find long and detailed expositions and defences of arguments from, for example, consciousness and morality in the *Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* (2009).

From what I have said so far, one might get the impression that only theists present anti-naturalistic arguments and all non-religious analytic philosophers are firmly committed to naturalism. Although it is true that naturalism in its different forms is still the dominant position in analytic philosophy (especially in the US), there are growing numbers of discontents. One need only look at the contemporary scene to see defences of irreducible intentionality (e.g. Raymond Tallis: *Aping Mankind: Neuromania, Darwinitis and the Misrepresentation of Humanity*, 2011) or non-materialist theories of mind and knowledge (e.g., Robert Koons & George Bealer, ed., *The Waning of Materialism*, 2010); not to mention Thomas Nagel's new *Mind & Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False* (2012). So Christian philosophers are not alone in their critique of the materialism and scientism of the naturalists. Normally, when Christian philosophers and

theologians criticise naturalism, they preach to the choir, that is, to other Christians. The ever-widening secular discourse about the limits of science and the nature of the human mind provides a crucial opportunity for Christian thinkers to bring their arguments into a much larger forum.

Now, let us return to anti-naturalist arguments. In addition to anti-naturalist arguments I just mentioned, there are arguments trying to show that naturalism is incoherent or self-defeating. The second category of anti-naturalist arguments does not invoke phenomena that purportedly cause trouble for the naturalist in terms of explanation. Instead, these arguments seek to establish the conclusion that naturalism is somehow *incoherent* or *self-refuting*. The most famous argument of this kind is Alvin Plantinga's *evolutionary argument against naturalism*, which in turn is a variation of a more general argument from the impossibility of reason and knowledge on the naturalist framework.

In his new book, *Naturalism and Our Knowledge of Reality* (2012) R. Scott Smith presents an anti-naturalist argument of this kind. He seeks to show that if naturalism is true, we do not have knowledge about the external world or even of ourselves. But since we clearly do have at least some knowledge (and most naturalists agree with him on this), naturalism must be false. His argument is based on the claim that naturalistic accounts of perception fail to give us any kind of direct access to objects as they are in themselves. Thus, what we can know given naturalism is only *what things look like to us*,

that is, what they are like given a certain conceptualisation that we might have. So, on naturalism we are trapped inside our conceptualisations and have no means to assess whether our concepts match with reality.

These are strong claims indeed. One of the core commitments of standard naturalism is a commitment to scientific knowledge. Naturalism entails that science is either the only source of knowledge or at least the best one we have. In both cases, scientific knowledge is usually understood in *epistemic realist* terms, namely, that science provides us knowledge about nature and the external world, not just our conceptualisations or ideas of it. If Smith's argument goes through and naturalism is incompatible with having knowledge in this realist sense, then the naturalism is incoherent.

To back up his claim Smith takes the reader on a tour of recent naturalistic theories of perception and concept formation. He begins by looking at direct realists and reductive naturalists who claim that our mental acts are identical with certain brain states but at the same time maintain that at least some objects and entities appear directly in our perception. Here he discusses the theories of David Armstrong, Michael Tye, Fred Dretske, William Lycan and John Searle (Searle being the exception with his non-reductive materialism). In the second part of the book, he takes on the more functionalistic and neuroscience-inspired views of David Papineau, Daniel Dennett and Paul and Patricia Churchland. All these chapters read as detailed and technical critiques; and it is

sometimes difficult to see where Smith is going with his criticisms.

Only later in the book a picture begins to emerge. The naturalistic accounts of perception and representation, according to Smith, suffer from two interrelated problems. The first is that a direct perception of natural entities and objects becomes impossible. All naturalistic accounts that Smith discusses try to avoid the pitfalls of the sense-datum view of perception in which we do not perceive the objects themselves, but only their impact on our senses, the *sense data*. Most aforementioned philosophers claim that there is some sort of causal connection between our beliefs (that is, certain kinds of brain states) and the perceived objects that constitutes a direct appearing of the object. The main problem here, according to Smith, is that we cannot make a difference between those percepts that are veridical and those that are not. This is because in both cases we do have a causal connection: in the veridical case our belief is caused by the actual object of perception and in the non-veridical case something else – something that we are mistaken about. But since on naturalism our beliefs are nothing more than brain states under a certain description, we have no way of “leaping” to the beginning of the causal chain and verify whether the object actually has the properties that our belief ascribes to it.

For Smith, this points to a deeper problem in naturalistic theories of perception, namely, that on naturalism there cannot be intrinsically or essentially representational entities. That is to say, for the naturalist

only brute physical entities and their organisation exist. Physical things simply exist: they neither refer to anything nor are about something. Thus, if we maintain that our mental acts are ultimately physical states of the brain (multiply realised or not), then the fact that they are about something in the world is only second-order, that is, a conceptualisation as well (and also a brain state). Thus, Smith maintains that the naturalist is basically caught in a loop: all we have is conceptualisations and no way of matching them up with reality. This is why Smith thinks that naturalists have problems accounting for our experience of concept formation. In everyday life, we learn new concepts by linking certain perceptions with certain ideas through experience and practice. But this seems strange from the naturalist point of view because perceptions and experiences are already conceptualised; they are themselves brain states under certain description.

Smith's conclusion is that the naturalistic theories he examines collapse into *constructivism*: our thoughts and beliefs about the world and ourselves are constructions and we have no way knowing whether there is a veridical connection between our concepts and reality. In other words, on naturalism we have no way of knowing whether our concepts "match" with reality.

Constructivism is of course something that some thinkers do endorse: some philosophers have argued that all knowledge is socially and historically conditioned to such an extent that it is meaningless to talk about nature or reality in itself. Although there might be a reality out

there, there is nothing we can know about it that is not relative to our linguistic or conceptual framework. Indeed, Smith approvingly cites both Hilary Putnam and Jacques Derrida, because he thinks that both have drawn the correct conclusion from the naturalist ontology.

The problem is, however, that naturalists usually accept *scientific realism*, that is, the view that the theories of mature sciences at least approximate the truth about nature. This is because the naturalist wants to insist that the scientific way of knowing has priority over other ways of knowing. Thus, for the naturalist, the naturalistic (usually evolutionary) story of nature and humanity is ultimate as well as the most rational. There is scientific evidence for it. But if naturalism entails there is no genuine knowledge of nature and, thus, no rational means of coming to have knowledge about reality, then the naturalist story itself is left without justification. Or this is what Smith thinks.

Only in the last few chapters of the book Smith finally gets to his alternative view of knowledge. Using Edmund Husserl's *phenomenology* he argues that in order to avoid the problems that naturalism has with knowledge, we need to postulate entities that are essentially representational and intentional. This is to say, we need to postulate mental states that are essentially about something else. According to Smith, naturalism cannot postulate such entities because the aboutness-relation of intentionality is not a natural kind. According to naturalism things ultimately simply exist, because there is no inherent design or teleology in nature. This

precludes the possibility of entities that have aboutness as their essential property. Philosophers such as Dennett and Papineau try to introduce a kind of pseudo-teleology that is a product of natural selection, but Smith will have none of that. Instead, he goes on to postulate the existence of mental states whose essence is defined in terms of their aboutness: a mental act is distinct from another mental act by virtue of its being about some intentional object or another. Since such mental acts are not identical or reducible to any physical state, mental acts must be non-physical. Although human mental acts are embodied and depend on our brains and environment, the dependence must be contingent, not necessary.

Furthermore, Smith thinks that it is not enough to assume the existence of essentially intentional mental states, but we must also prescribe to the existence of unified epistemic subjects, that is, *selves*. Again, most naturalists that he criticises reject the notion of selves as agents. Selves (or persons) are simply collections of brain states as represented as something by other brain states. Philosophers like Dennett are very clear in this regard: there is nothing more to selves than a hodge-podge collection of representations. Thus, Smith concludes that if essentially intentional acts and selves is what we need, we need to reject the naturalist ontology and adopt one that allows for such entities. For Smith, such ontology would entail some form of *substance dualism*; indeed, substance dualism becomes a necessary precondition for having any knowledge whatsoever.

At this point, one of the major shortcomings of Smith's book emerges. After a couple of hundred pages of detailed critique of different naturalistic epistemologies, his exposition of his alternative theory seems much too brief and glosses over several thorny issues. First of all, he simply mentions that substance dualism of some kind is needed, but other than rejecting the Cartesian version of it he does not really give the reader any clue as to what substance dualism in his view amounts to. Of course, this might not be the aim of his book anyway. But still, even if Smith is able to convince his readers that there is something fishy about naturalism and knowledge, he has to do a lot more work to convince his readers that adopting substance dualism is the best way out.

From the well-known criticism of substance dualism, he briefly discusses only one, that is, the problem of interaction. His response is short: the causal interaction between the mind and the body is a problem only if naturalism is presupposed in the beginning of the inquiry. Smith's almost outright rejection of the interaction problem resembles that of Richard Swinburne. Both claim that since we can in our everyday life observe and experience this interaction (and even repeat it at will), to say that the lack of a detailed explanation as to how it is possible does not show that substance dualism is incoherent.

In the concluding chapter of his book, Smith discusses the implications of his results for different domains of knowledge. Unsurprisingly, he defends the

possibility of genuine moral knowledge understood as knowledge about non-natural and universal moral truths. Similarly, he defends the possibility of religious knowledge and suggests that the best ontological framework for substance dualism is a theistic one. Like Plantinga, Smith suggests that the ontology of naturalism (given that it denies knowledge) is bad for science. We should therefore reject methodological naturalism that underpins our scientific endeavours. Finally, we should also reject naturalism as a neutral measuring stick of education and present naturalism as one world-view among many.

All these implications (that are terrifying to the naturalist, no doubt) depend on whether Smith's argument actually goes through. So does it? A few critical points need to suffice here. To be honest, I am not sure what to think about Smith's main argument. On the one hand, he seems to be right in pointing out that on standard naturalistic theories of perception and representation there can be no intrinsically intentional or representational entities. This has led some scientists and philosophers to abandon the notion of truth as correspondence and adopt some sort of *naturalistic pragmatism* in which truth collapses into pragmatic utility. By making such a move, the naturalist could simply bite the bullet and admit that any direct, non-conceptualised knowledge is a pipe dream and that all we have is utility. As we have seen, Smith tries to block this move by claiming that if naturalistic pragmatism is true, then we have no epistemic reason to accept science as the best

story. But this might miss the point: the pragmatic naturalist could maintain that utility (among some other criteria such as simplicity and coherence) are all we have got anyway. To this Smith responds that because we could have various and mutually incompatible theories with roughly the same utility, we end up in radical pluralism – a view that seems to be at odds with standard naturalism. I can almost hear some naturalists saying “so be it”.

I also wonder whether Smith simply asks too much when he insists we need some sort of *direct perception*. A standard *critical scientific realist* (a position that many naturalists endorse) thinks that there is no non-conceptual perception and that our theoretical framework, observation and reasoning work together to establish what theories work best given the evidence we now have. Those theories are then taken as best approximations of what nature is like. For Smith, such a position is clearly not enough, but I am unsure as to why it is not enough. Smith’s case would have been more plausible if he had engaged with this literature more.

Finally, I have some doubts about Smith’s argumentative strategy. Smith seems to think that if we refute a set of contemporary naturalist theories of perception, we get the conclusion that no naturalistic epistemology is workable. But this does not follow. What Smith needs to establish is not only that current naturalistic theories fail but also that a naturalistic theory of knowledge is *inconceivable*. He attempts to do this by adopting Husserl’s analysis of our phenomenology of

perception that entails, as we have seen, that mental acts are essentially about something else. But why should we accept Husserl's analysis here? Smith gives very little in terms of argument here. If I were a naturalist, I would probably think that some other analysis of our phenomenology is better and a workable naturalistic theory of knowledge will emerge in the future.

To conclude, I am much more convinced about Smith's criticisms of the reductive naturalist views of Dretske, Dennett and others than I am about his claims that naturalism entails constructivism and we need substance dualism to avoid this. Nevertheless, despite its occasionally heavy and technical language, Smith's book raises interesting questions about the way in which contemporary naturalists deal with our knowledge of the world.

## REVIEWS

**Nancy Morvillo**, *Science and Religion: Understanding the Issues*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010; pp. 342, £24.99, Pbk, ISBN 978-1-4051-8965-1.

REVIEWED BY PHILIP H. BLIGH

This is a well presented and interesting book written in a clear and economic style. The author says she is not a philosopher nor a theologian but her reflections on science in these regards are well informed and challenging. Each chapter has an opening overview and closes with questions to consider, key literature, with supplementary reading lists to be found at the end of the book. Interspersed throughout the text are helpful summaries. It makes an excellent reference text for an introductory course on the subject.

The book is divided into four parts: Systems of Thought, Cosmology, Evolution and Ethics.

*Part 1* takes an historical approach as to how human knowledge has evolved, starting with the Greeks through to the Enlightenment with a look at the philosophers Bacon, Hume and Kant - and then on to modern science. A comparison of scientific methodology with that of theological inquiry, highlighting the approaches of Barth and Tillich, is followed by a search for common ground where science and faith can meet - thus addressing the challenge of Gould and his understanding of science and religion as 'non-overlapping magisteria'. Throughout the

book Morvillo is concerned to show how a theology of nature attempts to bridge this gap. She warms to a theology of nature which 'starts from the life of the religious community' (Barbour, 2000) rather than to natural theology which is more concerned with finding evidence for God from nature (Anselm, Aquinas, etc.). She reviews the thinking of those who have recently sought to find God in evolution and develops a theology of evolution compatible with the Christian understanding of God. We would refer also to those such as McGrath (e.g. *The Open Secret* 2008) and Polkinghorne who (*contra* Paley) have developed a revised and revisited 'Natural Theology' based on a Christian understanding of nature. She deals briefly too with the historical context of gender in our culture and the development of a feminist theology (35-39).

*Part 2* is primarily concerned with the Cosmos - once again starting with an historical approach from the Greeks onwards through to Galileo and Newton. This is followed by a chapter on creation myths then one which takes an interesting approach to eschatology which is considered both from a scientific and a theological point of view - including an important discussion on the 'notion of time'. (Note John Haught's 'call from the future', 182.)

*Part 3* is all to do with Evolution. It occupies about one third (~120 pages) of the book - beautifully expounded with so much detailed knowledge and understanding. These five chapters (out of a total of 15) are primarily to do with biological evolution focusing on

the empirical evidence, with a particular interest in the origin of life and human evolution.

*Part 4* (the closing three chapters) is on Ethics. We consider what it means to be human, look at some of the 'modern day marvels' in biotechnology and medicine and conclude with a chapter on stewardship and the environment.

As a physicist I found the section on evolution most interesting, well written and full of fascinating details by one who describes herself as a geneticist and is obviously excited by her subject. Here she is on home territory. In fact I found myself reading this section together with much of part 4 of book as an excellent introduction to modern biological science from an evolutionary/genetic point of view. She quotes Dobzansky (184) 'Nothing makes sense except in the light of evolution', and this may explain her interest in the evolution of ideas (back to the Greeks) and in the cosmos and how science has evolved throughout history. She appreciates the way Arthur Peacocke develops Christian theology to incorporate evolution, biological and cosmic, with his emphasis on how both chance and natural law are at work in the evolutionary process (207f).

It becomes clear why her detailed exposition of evolution is so important in the US context when we get to chapter 11 which deals with the whole issue of Creationism in the States (23 pages). She observes that creationists often argue that 'we have never seen evolution happen' (209): they need to read this book for a lively exposition of the evidence! She is non

confrontational and fair in her presentation of the case made for creationism and intelligent design and follows this with a summary of 'other' theistic interpretations of evolution proposed during the second half of the 20th Century.

In the chapter on human evolution, there is a particular sensitivity in the way she approaches a consideration of the ethical aspects in modern medicine and human reproduction as well as her understanding of what it means to be human.

My concern, as a physicist, is that the physical sciences are dealt with so briefly (some 17 pages or so). Page 112 for example needs to be expanded with more careful consideration of the exciting concepts presented there regarding relativity and quantum physics. Along with biotechnology there are equally challenging developments in physical technology - nanotechnology and computer science (modelling of the weather and the brain, AI, simulation and communication systems). Our modern understanding of energy and novel ways to obtain it - nuclear, solar and other forms of renewables - so fundamental to human survival which are not without their own ethical challenges.

If the book is to find a market on this side of the water should it not be more directly involved in the current lively debate between science and religion thanks to the forceful challenges by the new atheists whose best sellers fill our bookshops? Throughout the book Morvillo addresses the difference between the rational basis of science and the personal one for religion. Here may lie

the key as to why belief in a personal God proves so difficult for many scientists not a few of whom do not totally reject a belief in God - such as the Astronomer Royal, Martin Rees, Einstein himself ('I believe in Spinoza's God') or, more recently Paul Davies and even Crick's colleague Christof Koch (2012) who holds that 'some deep and elemental organising principle, created the universe and set it in motion'. 'Only if God is revealed in the rising of the sun in the sky can He be revealed in the rising of the son of man from the dead.' (William Temple, Gifford Lectures 1932/4, *Nature Man and God.*'). I am expecting too much of one book. These suggestions are made in the hope that this excellent work could become essential reading for courses in this country on science and religion.

**John Hedley Brooke and Ronald L. Numbers (eds.),** *Science and Religion Around the World.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 384, £18.99, Pbk, ISBN 978-0-19-532820-2.

REVIEWED BY PETER COLYER

The editors of this volume are eminent historians of the relationship between science and religion, and the contents are therefore strongly historical in their orientation. Chapters by a range of authors deal with the historical relationships between science and early and modern Judaism, early and modern Christianity, early and modern Islam, Chinese, Indic and African religions,

Buddhism and Unbelief. Brooke and Numbers have contributed an illuminating introduction, and David Livingstone a concluding chapter. The boundary between “early” and “modern” is generally taken to be around the year 1600. Where attempts are made to describe the “up-to-date” position the historical perspective is maintained by a concentration on the early to mid-twentieth century.

I begin at Livingstone’s final chapter entitled “Which Science? Whose Religion?” The significance of this title is clear – the relationship between science and religion is fragmented and complex, both over historical time and in the wide range of religious cultures. Simplistic summaries are to be avoided. Livingstone catches well the atmosphere of the whole book, which demonstrates that the religions examined have responded differently at different times to their encounter with “science”. And the science to which they have reacted has also varied.

But here enters an important question. In asking “Which Science? Whose Religion?” Livingstone implies that these two partners display equal shares of variability, and that the relationship is doubly complex because both sides are difficult to define. Is this really the case? In my view, the world of science displays much more consistency than the world’s religions. Even in the historical periods covered by this book, many natural philosophers were in communication with each other, eager to learn from each other’s work and not to be out of step without strong reason. This process of harmonisation among the world’s scientists has of course

increased steadily, though the most recent developments are outside the scope of this book.

Phrases such as “Islamic science”, “Hindu science” or “Western science” should therefore be questioned. Livingstone even offers us a “Calvinist science”. For several reasons the scientific *topics* studied in these cultures were varied. Some themes, such as astronomy, medicine and agricultural practice, were historically of almost universal interest while others, such as navigation or metallurgy, depended strongly upon the resources and location of the region concerned. Also, the *approaches* adopted by investigators were not uniform. This was itself part of the cultural/religious response to the natural world. But the natural phenomena under investigation remain broadly the same, even when regional differences in climate, disease, and plant and animal life are recognised. The sciences are a universalising phenomenon, and in this respect are a more uniform partner in relation to the world’s religions. It may be that concepts such as “Islamic science” or “Hindu science” are accepted by several of the authors because they are writing from a sociological or historical point of view, and have less direct experience of the real content of scientific work.

Livingstone’s recommended mantra is “pluralise, localise, hybridise, politicise”. While this approach will reveal the large variety of relationships between religions and the sciences, it is, I believe, a mistake to regard the variety as equally distributed on both sides. Science is not

monolithic, but it is far more uniform than the world's religions.

Turning now to the introductory chapter, Brooke and Numbers are more cautious in their treatment of plurality. They emphasise the diversity of religions: whether a religion is monotheistic, polytheistic or non-theistic has an implication for "how the natural world is classified and understood". A monotheistic religion will have more affinity with the idea of "laws" in nature which might encourage the scientific search for consistency and explanation. Different religions will also develop varying explanations of "natural" and "moral" causes of events, particularly illnesses. But even the polytheistic religions were able to pursue regularity in the natural world, for example the methodical study of eclipses in India. Conversely, the Judaeo-Christian heritage in the Hebrew Bible encourages a dual attitude of regarding the natural world as both given for human benefit and also remaining ultimately inscrutable and belonging to God.

Having been warned about the danger of simplistic summaries I must be careful not to generalise about the wealth of historical and religious data in this book. However, one common feature deserves attention: the religions discussed appear to have experienced both a "there-is-no-problem" strand in relation to science, and also a "there-is-certainly-a-problem" strand. In some cases these strands may have fluctuated chronologically, as the antipathy towards science either grew or

decreased; in other cases the two strands have co-existed continuously.

The material on Judaism, Christianity and Islam is likely to be more familiar to most readers. From these chapters I isolate only the problem of determining exactly how much of a cultural relationship with science is due to specifically *religious* factors. This is particularly the case in relation to Judaism, where the term “Jewish” may be a poor indicator of religious views, at least in more recent times. The example of Albert Einstein, raised under Jewish, Protestant and Catholic influences but later adopting a depersonalised, universal form of spirituality, demonstrates that religious views cannot always be attributed to a single religion.

The chapters on Early Chinese, Indic and African religions enter very different worlds. Leading factors in the early Chinese relations with science were the traditional values of harmony with ancestors and spirits, the importance of natural cycles and the balance between opposing forces, and a positive understanding of the natural world. The existence in China of three religious traditions – Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism – led to many compromises and numerous factions. An important historical aspect of the Indian scene was the encounter between traditional activities such as astronomy, mathematics and music and the introduction under colonial rule of botany, zoology, geology and meteorology, and the creation of universities with scientific courses. The absence of specific divine claims in most forms of Buddhism may render its relationship with

science more straightforward than is the case with other religions. However, against this apparent advantage must be set the strongly materialistic nature of science in relation to a religion aiming to diminish material influences.

The most striking chapter relates to central and southern Africa, where fields as diverse as medicine and iron smelting were regarded as both moral and religious. In cases of illness a distinction was made between “illnesses of God” (i.e. unexplained) and “illnesses of man” (caused by known human processes, often violations of the natural order). The authors criticise missionaries for desacralising African practices and then resacralising medicine with Christian theology. But are the authors engaged in nostalgia for a disappearing past? As they point out, educated Africans regard illnesses of God as those that happen “naturally”, and African governments are determinedly introducing “western” medicine.

This book is to be welcomed as it widens the scope of science and religion studies from their usual focus on the situation between the sciences and Christianity in Europe and North America. The historical data available here would be valuably complemented by further studies on the present day relationships in the world’s various cultural and religious settings.

**William A. Dembski**, *The End of Christianity: Finding a good God in a fallen world*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009, pp. 254, £8.99, ISBN 978-0805427431.

REVIEWED BY CHRISTOPHER SOUTHGATE

This is a deeply troubling book. It is written by a scholar trained in mathematical statistics, who teaches philosophy at Southwestern Baptist Seminary. Dembski has previously written extensively on intelligent design. His declared agenda is to find a theodicy that will take seriously three propositions: God is creator by wisdom out of nothing, God is providentially active, and all evil in the world is traceable back to human sin.

Dembski is one of the last remaining thinkers who want to defend this third thesis, in the light of the understanding of natural evil – including the effects of earthquakes and tsunamis, as well as predation and disease – offered by the natural sciences. He does so by defending a process of retro-active causation, whereby God's response to human disobedience included the causing, or permitting, of natural evils arising before humans were creatures in the image of God.

That God's relation to time is a highly complex one is familiar. In particular the classical assertion that Christ's death atones for sin committed after the Crucifixion should warn us against too simplistic a view of the divine economy.

Why then was I so perturbed? Not because Dembski's theodicy simply does not defend the

benevolence of God, as he hopes it may. The God who inflicts myriad sufferings on myriad creatures because up in the future their 'covenant head' (human beings) is tempted into sin seems an arbitrary deity indeed. Nor because his model is psychologically incoherent – why should the first humans, emerging from the Garden, have understood pre-existing predation and disease as the (retro-active) 'result' of their sin?

No, what is deeply saddening about this book is that it finds its grounding in two aspects of (some) North American theology that raise concerns for the future flourishing both of Christian faith and of the biosphere as a whole. First, Dembski's real agenda appears (judging from Part II of the book) to be to reassure old-earth creationists that they can retain as strong a commitment to a traditional interpretation of the Fall as young-earth creationists. His commitment to a literalist reading of the Garden of Eden (as inherited through Paul and Augustine, rather than either through Jewish exegetes or those willing to see that great story in existential terms) cuts him off from the great scientific narrative of evolution – about which he admits to huge skepticism. The reluctance to take science seriously at this point does huge damage to Christian apologetics.

Second, Dembski's theodicy is marked by an anthropocentrism that is breathtaking to anyone who has followed contemporary debates in ecotheology. His only concern is with humans and human sin. There is no sign of recognition of the divine care for non-human creatures, which is widespread in the Scriptures and supported also

by rational reflection on divine benevolence. In turn this omission is consonant with the slowness of much American Protestantism to engage with ecological concerns. When this is allied with the suspicion of science noted above, resistance to the vital measures required to combat climate change and ecological deterioration follows all too naturally.

There are some interesting interludes in the book – on information and divine action in particular. But they are nested within a hermeneutic that will concern – if not repel – most readers of this journal.

I conclude by noting that there are one or two respects in which Dembski does make contact with better-trodden ground in theodicy. His supposition that God allows natural evil to make us aware of the full consequences of human sin has something in common with vale-of-soul-making theodicies. Dembski himself notes this, but goes on to say that this world is not so much a ‘school’ for virtue but an ‘insane asylum’ in which we might recognise our need to be healed from our madness. Also, his sense that this was the only way that God could bring us to an awareness of our need for redemption has echoes of the argument made by a number of scholars that evolution was the only way that God could give rise to the diversity of creaturely values now present on the planet. I end by noting that therefore Dembski’s attempted theodicy safeguards neither divine benevolence, nor come to that the absolute sovereignty of God.

**Mary Midgley, *The Solitary Self: Darwin and the Selfish Gene*.** Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2010, pp. 154, £12.99, Pbk, ISBN 978-1844-65253-2.

REVIEWED BY SJOERD L. BONTING

In this book philosopher Mary Midgley discusses individualism in the thinking of Charles Darwin over against that of reductionists such as Richard Dawkins.

I was amused when I read in the Introduction that she had wondered whether to write a long book or a short one about the subject and had chosen for a short book out of laziness (9). Actually, I think she could have fitted her message in a journal article. But this is the view of one who is primarily a scientist, for whom an economy of words in describing his experiments, results and conclusion is a virtue. For a philosopher language is the vehicle for all three, which easily leads to verbosity.

In the first two chapters Midgley defends what Darwin actually wrote about the importance of human sociability over against current neo-Darwinist separatist doctrines. Darwin emphasised how the development of human intelligence did not displace our highly complex range of social feelings but led to the development of morality. He explicitly rejected 'selfishness' as an explanation of that morality. In contrast, Dawkins, E.O. Wilson and the like use a very simple concept of selfishness not derived from Darwin but from the social atomism of Thomas Hobbes.

In chapters 3 and 4 Midgley describes how Darwin's approach provides a useful change from the traditional

philosophical debates in which Feeling and Reason have been treated as opponents between which we have to choose. In Darwin's model rationality appears not as opposing feeling, but as the technique by which we bring our different kinds of feeling together. Darwin points out how much friendly order and cooperation – what we call humanity – there is already in the lives of other social animals.

In the last two chapters Midgley considers a range of problems raised by the discussion so far: metaphysical, biological and psychological. Metaphysical: reductionists claim that the universe is meaningless, a lottery (Jacques Monod), hostile and pointless (Steven Weinberg). Darwin, however, was deeply impressed by cosmic order, an order akin to mind. The transcendent was to him not meaningless, but mysterious. Biological: Simon Conway Morris and others have pointed out that the return of similar structures (e.g., bones of fins, wings and hands) is independent of natural selection. Self-organization accounts for the occurrence of such phenomena in evolution. Darwin thought that natural selection is the main cause of evolution but not the sole cause. Psychological: Here Midgley considers the topic of human motives. She concludes that egoism cannot be supported by theories of evolution. Egoism or individualism as defended by Hobbes and Nietzsche cannot give the universal guidance expected from a moral prophet. Their views were invented to guard against the excesses and abuses of a particular period in

history. Both views are elements in present-day individualism.

The main value of this book is the defence of Darwin's thinking over against that of the reductionists. As such it is worth reading, although it takes some persistence to go through it to the end.

**J. Wentzel van Huyssteen and Erik P. Wiebe (eds.)** *In Search of Self: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Personhood*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William. B. Eerdmans, 2011, pp.387, £29.99, Pbk, ISBN 978-0-8028-6386-7.

REVIEWED BY TING GUO

This extremely rich volume attempts to engage with the classic and the latest debates regarding concepts of the human self, encompassing emerging research fields and theories from sciences as well as humanities. As the editors have claimed, they wish to find a place for theology which has been struggling "in the middle of the most salient interdisciplinary academic discussions of our time, namely, the search for the self". In itself by encompassing such a wide range of intellectual spheres, this volume already demonstrates the complex nature of human self in the *making* in the postmodern - even "posthuman" - world (see Part Three, The Self and Identity, Posthuman Selves: Bodies, Cognitive Processes, and Technologies by Jennifer Thweatt-Bates, 256-272). Entangled with various intellectual ideologies and newly-emerging scientific perspectives, the existing

notion of human self is constantly challenged in such making, which brings us to the essential question for Christian theology, as the editors ask themselves: what does it mean to be a human, who or what exactly bears the image of God? If identities are transitory and fragmented, who and what is burdened by sin, and who is finally redeemed by Christ? (10)

They have certainly done a great job testifying the answers in order to “find a place for theology” with a great many interdisciplinary essays. There is no single orientation that dictates the discussion. Exciting neuroscience, psychology and cognitive science which challenge the existing concepts of what constitutes human nature, are allocated different sections, defending/ challenging theories of the relationality, singularity, multiplicity and emergency of human self.

Part One explores the origins of the human sense of self from the perspectives of sciences. Tracing back to the human fossil record (40-44), Ian Tattersall explores the origin of *'homo sapiens'*. For Tattersall, being *Homo sapiens* implies the capacity to abstract as an anatomical entity. In this sense, symbolic capacity is the root which enables us to objectify ourselves as it were from the outside. Ian Hodder's essay is essentially about material history, the “entanglement between people and made things” (60-69). The archaeological evidence suggests that the human sense of individual selves was increased in our interaction with and practice of material objects in everyday life.

Part Two, *The Self and Multiplicity*, is particularly interesting, and is opposed to the idea of us having a "core self" (125). As Leon Turner claims, throughout the human sciences, self-multiplicity is now commonly lauded as a positive cognitive and social adaption to the constant fluctuations, novelty and uncertainty of human life. This view, as Turner admits, contrasts Christian theologians' standpoints regarding the unity of the self. "They have typically assumed that the loss of the sense of self-unity that characterises contemporary psychological life represents an overtly pathological condition" - this is the key point that Turner wants to refute; "self-multiplicity ... can be understood in a variety of different ways, not all of which can be considered pathological" (ibid). However a concrete theoretical support for this statement is missing: how is theology opposed to the multiplicity theory of self? What exactly is this argument based on?

Part Three, *The Self and Identity*, introduces approaches to the question of self identity. Schrag explores the intellectual and cultural history of the pursuit for selfhood and personhood. Human history seems to show us that the quest for self-understanding, "know thyself" as the ancient Greeks famously imprinted, is the foundation and inspiration for self-constitution (223). Revisiting the lineage of the Kantian transcendental ego and the embodied ego discussed by William James and Descartes (224-230), Schrag draws our attention to what he calls the change in vocabularies of selfhood and personhood. During such change, the idea

of self descended from its transcendental status into the “thick of embodied lived-through experiences” (25). The praxis-oriented and life-experiencing self, implicated in its discourse and action, appears on the scene of experience as emergent from the history of communicative praxis rather than an impermeable foundation of it. Jennifer Thweatt-Bates explores the notion of postmodern self (243), drawing on Hayles’ roboticist dream, Donna Haraway’s feminist cyborg and Andy Clark’s extended mind. Human mind in Clark’s theory, is not merely a disembodied organ of control, but *promiscuously* body-and-world exploiting, forever testing and exploring the possibilities for incorporating new resources and structures deep into its problem-solving regimes. Eventually Thweatt-Bates wishes to incorporate the posthuman self for theological anthropology. A relational anthropology that identifies the *imago Dei* as constituted in the divinely initiated relationship of God with humans is the first step (251), but the concept of relational self, as Schrag rightly points out, must be refigured in the light of posthuman literature.

In this regard, works such as *From Chance to Choice* (2000), *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (2002) and *Human enhancement* (2009), emphasise that it is our rational choice and drive to reflect on our own human nature. In a posthuman context, human enhancement technologies are products of our own intelligence, therefore it is essentially a manifesto of rational self-transformation.

Part Four, The Self and Emergence, completes the

whole volume with a heart-warming and full-of-hope essay by Philip A. Rolnick: in human endeavours and relationships (at least in good ones) we desire to experience something more than mere exchange, tit-for-tat (374). I couldn't help wondering: what do "good" endeavours and relationships mean? This statement seems somewhat, abruptly judgemental and therefore appears as a surprise. Moreover, the praise for "human love and enjoyment" slips into a normative generalisation of "human spirit". Overall, I find the themes of this volume can be characterised into three.

First of all, the science of anthropology and how it can be related to/ interacts with Christian theology. As mentioned at the beginning, the editors are determined to find a place for theology in the accumulating discussion in search of self approached by psychology, neuroscience and cognitive science. The idea of a fixed core self is problematised by ideas of erotic self, multiple self, and posthuman technological self. Yet since the perception of ourselves is the foundation for positing perceptions of God, our multiplicity, fluidity, creativity, and relationality actually allow us to experience God at a more wholesome level with open directions.

Second, human self as a relational concept. Whether it is human relationship with material things (Hodder), or with other animals (Barbara King), or interpersonal neurobiology (Bergemann, Siegel, Eichentein and Streit), the enrichment of self always comes as a result of enrichment of the other (9). A self-transcendence that entails empathy creates an openness for divine ontology.

Third, the multiplicity of the human self. Last but not least, the importance of self-understanding in terms of conceptualising our personhood. The desire for understanding oneself grounds our identity. To find out how we think conceptualises how we relate to ourselves and the world. Self-understanding as constantly redefining and reconceptualising ourselves, constitutes creatively engaging with lived experience.

The human self in this sense, emerges, in Andy Clark's words, as a "soft self", a constantly negotiable collection of resources easily able to straddle and criss-cross the boundaries between biology and artefact. This hybrid vision of our own humanity is grounded in our potentials for repair, empowerment, and growth - accordingly, our true self lies in the potentials as such. In this sense, our self-image merges with what we ourselves create; in a vision of machinery, we are designed to be self-transformed. In this sense, we are provided the opportunity to think about what it means to be human constantly. The changing conceptualisation of who and what we are may as well harness our diligence and human flourishing. In realising the emergence of "soft selves", we could as well open to new forms of life and new dimensions of experiencing and understanding God.

**Sjoerd L. Bonting**, *Is There Life After Death? A Novel View*. Guildford: White Crow Books, 2012, pp. 136 £12.99 ISBN 978-1-908733-12-2.

REVIEWED BY THE EDITOR

Bonting's answer is a resounding yes: near-death experiences cannot be explained as a neurophysiological phenomenon resulting from cardiac arrest and so they can be taken as evidence for life after death envisaged as an interim period of self-judgement followed by the resurrection of a spiritual body in what Bonting calls eternity life (the term eternity being preferred because of the limitations of time associated with the term eternal). Bonting's short book lists the various Biblical passages that point towards the possibility of life after death and it briefly summarises the views of various contemporary theologian-scientists who have discussed the possibility of postmortem existence. The relevant Bible passages together with near-death experiences, he suggests, provide evidence for the validity of Christian belief in life after death.

Bonting accepts Van Lommel's findings about the reality of near-death experiences but rejects his theory of quantum entanglement because it makes the connection between mind and brain too fragile. For Bonting, human beings are very much a unity of brain and mind until death when the mind leaves the body and either reanimates it (in the case of those who report near-death

experiences) or enters into an interim state (in the case of unsuccessful reanimation).

Bonting's book is short and so discussion, particularly of central theological ideas, is inevitably brief. A longer book would perhaps have provided the space for more engagement with Hindu and Buddhist theologians and for more argument to support his theory of the mind's relationship to the brain. The idea of resurrection, he asserts, comes from the doctrine of creation not from Jesus' resurrection (because humans, unlike Jesus, are not divine and immortal). There is much, therefore, that his approach might say about a theology of salvation and about Christology: it would be interesting to hear more about Bonting's theology here. The ideas of purgatory that he dismisses, for example, often arose as a result of distaste for the doctrine of eternal damnation. When placed in their historical and political context these theologies often seem slightly less morally problematic and, in this case, Bonting's own 'interim' state is not that far from some historical accounts of purgatory as it allows some sort of moral development after death (and potentially avoids the theodicy problems of an eternal hell). It would therefore be insightful to have some exploration of how that learning process might relate to some important and influential contemporary accounts; for example, the theology of John Hick. How might after-death spiritual growth relate to the idea of universal salvation? Bonting mentions that theologians such as Keith Ward and Harmen de Vries commit to life after death but do not

touch on near-death experiences: it would be worthwhile to know how Bonting's own theology might develop their accounts or maybe disagree with them.

## REVIEWS REPRODUCED FROM ELSEWHERE

**John F. Haught**, *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God and the Drama of Life*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010, pp. 163, £12.99, Pbk. ISBN 978-0-664-23285-6.

REVIEWED BY CELIA DEANE-DRUMMOND. REPRODUCED WITH KIND PERMISSION FROM *SCIENCE AND CHRISTIAN BELIEF*.

This is the latest book from an author who is well known for his highly readable explorations interweaving theology with evolutionary thought, drawing particular inspiration from the process philosophy of A. N. Whitehead. This volume weaves in some new elements, while revisiting others that he has addressed in earlier books. As one might expect from the title, his target audience is those captivated by the atheistic mantra of authors such as Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett. His stated intention, at least, is to weave in new scientific insights into theological reflection. But this is not so much a theology according to particular key classical Christian doctrines such as creation, Christology or eschatology, as one that draws in elements of all these around key themes that arise in the evolutionary account in order to

construct a theology of evolution. A book of this type would not be complete without some discussion of Darwin's biography and theories, but, published in the wake of the flurry of activity around Darwin's anniversary year in 2009, some of this discussion is perhaps a little tired. Each chapter is, however, a remarkably short vignette on themes all beginning with the same letter for maximum rhetorical impact; that is, Darwin, Design, Diversity, Descent, Drama, Direction, Depth, Death, Duty, Devotion and Deity. This might create the impression of a ladder of ascent, from the created world through to humanity and God, and later in the book it is clear that this is precisely what Haught wants to do, as he resists any total flattening of reality or lack of distinctions between creatures.

However, he detects implicit theological themes of design, diversity and descent in Darwin's original work; how far this is a justifiable hermeneutic through which to read Darwin's work is at least plausible. Yet in claiming that Dawkins and Dennett are also crypto-theologians in a negative sense one wonders if the same accusation could be levelled at Darwin, except in his case Haught sees Darwin's theology as rather more benign, rather than deliberately substituting religious belief in the manner of the New Atheists. The layered understanding of reality that Haught advocates in relation to design is similar to Arthur Peacocke's top down approach to levels of reality except that the explanatory levels in Haught's case do not seem to intersect. But there are problems in claiming, as Haught does at the start of the book, that this

amounts to a way of integrating or assimilating theology and science, since if theology works at a different level, then it seems to be disengaged from the scientific view and it would be entirely possible to have views from one layer of explanation that were incongruent with views in another layer. What Haught seems to be objecting to here is the scientific layer aping a form of metaphysics that should be occupied by theology, not least in Darwin's account that he believes works to replace theology's role of explaining ultimate existence. Of course, the advantage in separation into layered reality in the manner that Haught attempts is that there is no possibility of conflict between two levels of explanation. The difficulty is whether reality can be so neatly divided in this way, even if crude versions of science becoming scientific or theology claiming to act as science amount to gross distortions of the respective disciplines.

Haught does not seem to want science to be completely untouched by theological reflection in arguing for an inter- weaving of the two through taking up the thread of drama. But in spite of the book title, this theme seems to be more of a rhetorical device through which to understand a grand narrative as portrayed in process thought. There is, therefore, disappointingly rather little here on precisely what drama might add to the discussion theologically, apart from the more obvious examples of how to consider life itself as a form of drama. The drama here is therefore one that is subsumed under a grand narrative characteristic of process thought, and it is a theme that Haught has developed on repeated

occasions elsewhere, namely, a vision of the universe open to being infused with 'being, goodness and beauty as it is drawn towards its Absolute Future' (52). But when Haught argues that the drama of evolution in its 'tedious scientific detail' is part of the drama that we find in God (53) is he not fusing the two levels of explanation that he has argued in the first part of the book need to be kept separate? Further, he is ready to admit that this drama is actually 'a great epic', but does not this take away something of the particularity that is the essence of what drama brings? The theme of drama/narrative then takes on a life of its own through the rest of the work, becoming at times almost lyrical in its expression.

Overall Haught has done us a service in writing this book. It is bound to annoy academic specialists by a certain lack of precision and at times leaving ideas undeveloped or undefended. But its lively style, its analysis of problems in popular debate, and its determination to engage those who might find themselves confused by media coverage of the issues makes this a commendable book for students of theology, science or the general reader.

## **BOOKS RECEIVED FOR REVIEW**

**Russell A. Butkus and Steven A. Kolmes**, *Environmental Science and Theology in Dialogue*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2011.

**Stephen R. L. Clark**, *Philosophical Futures*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2011.

**Ernst M. Conradie** (ed.) *Creation and Salvation Vol. 2: A Companion on Recent Theological Movements*. Münster: LIT Verlag, 2012.

**Jonathan B. Edelman**, *Hindu Theology and Biology: The Bhāgavata Purāṇa and Contemporary Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

**Alister E. McGrath**, *Darwinism and the Divine: Evolutionary Thought and Natural Theology*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

**James A. Van Slyke**, *The Cognitive Science of Religion*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011.

**Wesley J. Wildman**, *Science and Religious Anthropology: A Spiritually Evocative Naturalist Interpretation of Human Life*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009.

## **PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE FORUM**

**Michael Meredith**, *The House of Truth: Living and Dying in a Quantum Universe*. Crickhowell, Powys: World of Dragon Publishers, 2011.

**Andrew Robinson (ed.)**, *Darwinism and Natural Theology: Evolving Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012.

The Editor welcomes offers to review these publications. Please contact her on [L.Hickman@newman.ac.uk](mailto:L.Hickman@newman.ac.uk)

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