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Paul Draper and J. L. Schellenberg (Eds.) Renewing Philosophy of Religion: Exploratory Essays. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Pp. x + 245. £45.00 (Hbk). ISBN 9780198738909.

A number of philosophers of religion have been complaining over recent years about the limitations of much of what has gone on under the banner of philosophy of religion. Many, from John Hick and Ninian Smart onwards, have contended that philosophers of religion often presume to be studying religion in all its variety when in fact their inquiries remain constrained within the narrow confines of a Christian-centric 'theism'. More recently, figures such as Kevin Schilbrack and Thomas A. Lewis have bemoaned the infrequency with which philosophers of religion engage, whether sympathetically or critically, with other disciplines involved in the study of religion, especially the methodologically variegated field called religious studies. Each of these critics, and others, have also noted the tendency among philosophers to suppose that the most, or perhaps the only, philosophically important feature of religious life is its cognitive or doxastic or intellectual dimension, when there are so many other dimensions that not only deserve attention but provide the rich practical, ethical, ritual, emotional and experiential context within which the beliefs and doctrines have the sense that they do. In short, there has been a rising chorus of voices calling for philosophy of religion to be more adventurous in its choices of subject matter and more self-reflective about its methodological presuppositions. The edited volume here under review constitutes a valuable contribution to that chorus (or 'crescendo', as the editors put it on page 2).

In view of its main title – Renewing Philosophy of Religion – one might be forgiven for expecting some allusion, perhaps in its introductory chapter, to Hilary Putnam's well-known 1992 book, Renewing Philosophy, not least because Putnam's book contains a chapter specifically on religious belief (as understood by Wittgenstein). But since no such allusion is

made, it appears that the title was chosen with no awareness of how closely it echoes that of Putnam's book. What the editors do tell us in the introduction is that one of their 'concerns is that philosophy of religion has become increasingly theological in its methods, topics, and criteria of evaluation, and strikingly narrow in its focus' (1). They hope that the essays contained in the volume inspire 'new models of inquiry about religion that are philosophical instead of theological, and scientific (in the broadest sense) instead of confessional' (2). This way of distinguishing different orientations in philosophy of religion is itself striking, but its implications are far from clear. For a start, it glosses over the fact that there are different forms that the relationship between philosophy and theology can take. Often the problem is not so much that philosophers are framing their inquiry in theological terms, but rather that the philosophers are insufficiently acquainted with the diversity of theological positions and arguments, resulting in an inability to draw upon theology in a competent manner. In this regard, as someone such as the late Marilyn McCord Adams recognized, injecting a deeper knowledge of theology would be one means of enriching philosophical debates, as opposed to perpetuating a narrow focus.

And what, we might ask, does science – even when construed 'in the broadest sense' – have to do with philosophy of religion? Is the editors' vision of renewal one in which scientific methods are held to be the gold standard of intellectual investigation, thus encouraging a further drift away from the humanities – as has occurred across so much of contemporary analytic philosophy? There are plenty of ways of avoiding 'confessional' approaches without needing to presume that philosophy should become more 'scientific'. Fortunately, the volume as a whole avoids bolstering that presumption.

Following the introduction, there are thirteen essays, ranging from thirteen to twenty-one pages in length; their concision assists with their digestibility, amounting to a relatively accessible collection. The essays are clustered into two parts, Part 1 ('Focus') comprising

seven essays and Part 2 (‘Standpoint’) comprising six. The respective titles of these parts are intended to indicate that Part 1 is primarily concerned with the subject matter or range of issues dealt with by philosophers of religion and Part 2 is concerned with the position from which the issues are addressed. In practice, perhaps inevitably, the demarcation between the parts is less than sharp. Of the total of sixteen contributors to the volume, all of them are based at universities in the USA, Canada, UK, Australia or New Zealand. Fourteen are male; two are female. Nevertheless, the variety of perspectives and approaches represented is considerable, making this a vivifying sampler in the philosophy of religion. I cannot hope to do justice to even the majority of contributions here. Hence, in the remainder of this review, rather than discussing every chapter, I shall pull out some examples to provide a flavour of the variety.

Sonia Sikka gets the volume off to a provocative start with her chapter ‘Rescuing Religion from Faith’. Seconding the editors’ concern about the prevailing alignment between much philosophy of religion on the one hand and Christian theology on the other, Sikka observes that philosophers often seem out of touch with current sociocultural trends, such as the widespread replacement in modern western countries of established religion by less institutionalized forms of ‘spirituality’ and syncretistic innovations. She argues that religion needs rescuing from faith in the sense that, if philosophers are to attend adequately to religion in all its multicultural manifestations, they will have to break free of the preoccupation with faith, construed in terms of adherence to specific doctrinal propositions. This conception of faith, Sikka maintains, is largely inapplicable to many non-Christian religions, including those deriving from South and East Asia as well as smaller-scale new religious movements. Encompassing not only Anglo-American styles of philosophy of religion but also German figures such as Heidegger, Hegel and Habermas, Sikka’s critical appraisal is well taken. If philosophy of religion is to scrutinize religion in all its guises, then Christian-derived

presuppositions will indeed need to be questioned. To add further nuance to Sikka's critique, however, we should be careful not to treat 'faith' as a unitary and easily definable phenomenon. Without presuming at the outset that faith has little applicability in religions beyond Christianity, we would need to look and see whether cognate notions are or are not present in other religions (consider, for example, the importance of *śraddhā* in most Hindu, Buddhist and Jain communities).

Three of the chapters in Part 1 conceive of philosophy's task as going beyond the study of religion to either the devising of new forms of religion or, in one case, abolishing religion and replacing it with philosophy. Eric Steinhart (Ch. 4) affirms that 'philosophers can become actively involved in designing new religions' (75) and Mark Wynn (Ch. 5) suggests that 'the renewed philosopher of religion will be open to the possibility not only of studying the spiritual life, but of contributing to its further development' (93). The abolitionist proposal comes from Stephen Maitzen (Ch. 3), who argues that the notion of ultimacy with regard to reality, value and purpose is incoherent and hence that philosophers who try to comprehend it are seeking a chimera. Instead, philosophers should be pursuing wisdom by means of 'careful reasoning' (60). Regrettably, in the course of his discussion Maitzen inserts some gratuitously derogatory remarks about so-called 'pre-Axial' religions. According to Maitzen, 'Intellectually mature human beings don't need the jumble of minor deities that their pre-Axial ancestors invented in a vain but understandable attempt to explain and control an unpredictable, dangerous world' (59). In response to comments such as this, we might wonder whether Maitzen considers it to be a mark of intellectual maturity to subscribe to a simplistic division between pre- and post-Axial peoples and to dismiss in condescending tones the forms of religiosity of the first of these groups without demonstrating any of the 'careful reasoning' that philosophy is supposed to exhibit.

Part 2 covers a broad range of themes within its six chapters. Wesley Wildman and David Rohr (Ch. 8) discuss the results of a study of how fifty-one philosophers of religion responded to an open invitation to post blog entries on a website under the title 'What is philosophy of religion?' Among other trends, they discern a 'fault line' between Christian-focused philosophers of religion and those who study 'religion as such'. Meanwhile, Aaron Simmons (Ch. 9) adapts the notion of kenosis, as articulated in Philippians, to contend, against those who have proclaimed the 'end' of philosophy of religion, that philosophers ought instead to countenance alternative views and methods – whether from 'analytic' or from 'continental' philosophy – 'even to the point of dying to themselves' (170). Graham Oppy (Ch. 10) recommends that philosophers undertake the comparative evaluation of worldviews, treating them as, in effect, world theories. Such evaluation, Oppy opines, demands 'imaginative engagement' with the worldviews of others, and hence 'we should particularly value philosophers of religion who are able to make serious contributions to the advancement of worldviews other than their own' (186). The style of argument in Oppy's chapter will appeal especially to those readers with a penchant for formal abstractions (such as talk of 'the $(p\&r)_B$-worldview and the $(p\&\text{not-}r)_B$-worldview') rather than fleshed out descriptions. Clare Carlisle (Ch. 12) treats Spinoza as an exemplar of a philosophical approach that transcends the dichotomy between religious 'insiders' and 'outsiders' by affording 'a middle path' between the two. While Carlisle's exposition of Spinoza's religious vision is illuminating, it remained unclear to me how, beyond offering particular recommendations for how to live a religious life, Spinoza is supposed to provide a model for the future development of philosophy of religion in general.

A high point in the volume is the final essay, by Wes Morriston (Ch. 13), which takes as its focus the Book of Job in order to illustrate the contention that philosophers' religious presuppositions sometimes distort their readings of traditional texts. Targeting 'skeptical

theists' and, at greater length, Eleonore Stump, Morriston analyses key passages in the Job story. He argues that, far from supporting the idea of God's maintaining a moral order by means that outstrip our capacity for understanding (à la sceptical theism) or of God's authorizing Job's sufferings to bring him to realize that God is really a loving parent (à la Stump), the message of the narrative is more radical and subversive – indeed, heretical. It is that, upon being confronted by God, Job appreciates that the hope for an ultimately just universe in which the virtuous are rewarded and the vicious are punished is really 'mad and senseless': 'There is no court of appeal, and no law requiring justice of God' (240). Although Morriston's spotlight is on a text with particular salience in the Abrahamic traditions, the same approach is applicable to other religions. The crucial lesson is not that the Book of Job, when interpreted insightfully, tells us everything we need to know about the nature of God and the life of faith. Rather, it is that traditional sources can serve to unsettle the assumption that, qua philosophers, we already know these things; but the sources can do this only if philosophers remove their dogmatic earmuffs and listen heedfully to the possibilities of meaning within the text itself.

All in all, then, the book fulfils the editors' ambition of showcasing 'a crescendo of diverse voices, all calling for change of one sort or another' (2). The majority of the contributions are largely promissory, offering prescriptions for how to go on in philosophy of religion while exemplifying the advocated methods only to a limited extent. The principal exception to this is, as I have noted, Morriston's extensive exemplification of how close attention to a text can disrupt certain philosophical or theological presuppositions. In other instances, the essays function as helpfully concise prompts that may point the interested reader towards further work in which these and other authors put the recommended methods into practice. The book is a stimulating addition to the ongoing debate over the possible future directions for philosophy of religion.

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