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Peter Harrison, John Milbank, Paul Tyson (eds.) ***After Science and Religion: Fresh Perspectives from Theology and Philosophy*** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022). xii + 355 pp. £120. ISBN 978-1-316-51792-5 (hdbk).

Reviewed by: Joanna Leidenhag, University of Leeds, U.K. J.leidenhag@leeds.ac.uk

This edited volume provides the strongest evidence yet that the field of science and religion is entering something of a golden age, as it matures from a niche sub-field of specialists largely engaged in apologetics, to include wide ranging discussions from the some of the world's leading historical and philosophical theologians. I predict that this volume will provide something of a touchstone for future work in science and religion, and I commend it to PhD students and researchers.

Rather than *After Science and Religion,* a more accurate (less catchy) title for this volume might have been *After 'The Territories of Science and Religion'.* Although it is never referred to as *festschrift* for the historian of science and religion, Peter Harrison, it is easy to imagine it as such. After Paul Tyson's introduction, Harrison contributes both the first main chapter, which functions almost a second introduction, and the conclusion, and every other contributor refers to his work, often as the opening springboard for their own reflections. In this way, this volume represents one of two recent movements which, disgruntled with much of what has gone in the field of 'science and religion', take Harrison's work as their launching pad for a new approach. The other movement is 'science-engaged theology,' which I (the reviewer) have been heavily involved in, and so will conclude this review with some reflections on what these two movements might have to say to one another.

Before summarizing various chapters independently, I want to note that I have never seen such rich engagement between contributors within an edited volume. While each chapter stands on its own, there is also deep and wide-ranging agreement, which (unusually for a collection) generates a genuinely unified vision. The following lines of argument emerge again and again throughout various chapters:

(1) Theological engagement with science is not about carving up knowledge into different territories of concern, but rather about theological interrogation of the arbitrary metaphysical basis (or the bad theology) upon which scientific culture currently stands.
(2) Contrary to historical narratives of progress that emphasise decisive changes in the seventeenth century (the 'scientific revolution'), modern science stands in stronger continuity with pre-modern thought that commonly supposed, and these pre-modern thinkers provide an inspiration for a new metaphysic of nature today.
(3) A better metaphysical basis for scientific culture will include teleological causes, a re-examination of the relationship between nature and artifact, the doctrine of analogy, a participatory understanding of beauty, truth, goodness, and creation, and a generally panpsychist or vitalist view of matter as in continuity with and communicative to humanity.
(4) When nature is seen as purposed and communicative, the intellectual practice of formation we currently call 'science' can regain their place within a larger theological framework as a path to wisdom and wonder, a form of contemplation, and a Christian vocation.

Chapter Summaries

Like all the contributions, Peter Harrison's opening chapter asks what follows from his own argument regarding the historical contingency of the categories of 'science' and 'religion' and their unequal relations. He offers two possibilities. The first possibility is a vision of 'science' and 'religion' as two alternative forms of spiritual and intellectual formation that train communities to give more or less attention to different questions and to different features of the world. This idea is also taken up in later chapters by Pui Him Ip, Rowan Williams, Tom McLeish, and Spike Bucklow. The second possibility is to problematize the role (analytic) philosophy of religion and philosophy of science has played in

making ‘science’ and ‘religion’ appear to be commensurable sets of propositions, rather than more incommensurable historical traditions as Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend argued.

The second contribution comes from another leading historian of science and religion, Benard Lightman. Lightman examines how theologians, from various denominations and sub-traditions, responded to the ‘scientific naturalists’ of Huxley and his allies—all of which ended up being intellectual “dead ends” (p. 41) for theology and society more widely. He concludes that as long as we conceive of science in a naturalistic or secularise way as a ‘territory’ or ‘magisteria’ (overlapping or not), then “Huxley and his allies still dictate the parameters of the debate” (p. 57). Lightman leaves it to others in this volume to suggest alternatives.

In characteristically poetic prose, David Bentley Hart’s chapter opens Part II by noting the positive role of nostalgia in science-and-religion; that “aboriginal summons” and “primordial vocation” to “existential amazement” and the “love of wisdom” without alienation or disciplinary boundaries (p. 61). Hart is then the first of many contributors to this volume to argue that we must “make the hidden metaphysical horizon of the modern sciences appear to view, and then perhaps to call it into question” (p. 64). Like many of the chapters to follow, Hart argues that contemporary (philosophy of) science needs to rethink the language of causality, abandon the “arbitrary metaphysical dogma” known as “the causal closure of the physical” (p. 67), and embrace a more panpsychist, vitalist, or in Hart’s case, idealist metaphysic.

John Milbank’s ‘Religion, Science, and Magic: Rewriting the Agenda’ contains many of his signature moves. An (over-)ambitious opening promise to ‘call into question an entire existing intellectual discourse and to try and forge a new one in its place’ (p. 75) is followed by a dense 70-page genealogical narrative of European intellectual history, where the decisive events were all made in the twelfth century and secularism “turns out to be simply bad theology” (p. 97). In this iteration, Milbank’s genealogy is told through the schema of how “the battle between the three different visions of nature never went away and has never been decisively resolved” (p. 121). The three visions are “disenchanted transcendence”, “enchanted immanence”, and his preferred “enchanted transcendence”, which is described as “analogical, participatory and hierarchical” (p. 86). Perhaps most ambitiously of all, this is also a story that seems to argue that mathematics is more theological, and natural science, with its fusion of the artificial and natural, is more akin to natural magic that previously supposed (p. 116).

Janet Soskice’s chapter on ‘Science, Beauty and the Creative Word’ opens with some reflections on how the supposed conflict between science and religion “is a weakly grounded empirical claim” (p. 145) that still passes quietly unchallenged even amongst the most erudite audiences. The “poor theology” (p. 147) that gives rise to the myth of conflict is any that identifies God as a being, agent, or ‘thing’ alongside other things, rather than the Source of all things, and as Being, Beauty, Truth and Goodness Itself. In dialogue with Nietzche, Ruskin, and Hopkins, it is the loss of beauty (and by extension goodness and truth) that Soskice her attention. She argues for a realist view of beauty as the givenness, the appearing, and even the ‘speaking’ of the universe, which is conceived simultaneously in scientific, pan-psychist and Johannine terms as a communicative gift of the Living Word, who was made incarnate (pp. 152-54).

The lament of Michael Handby’s chapter does not arise out of a nostalgia for the past, but from the “technocratic fate” (p. 164) that is upon us. He argues that the priority of epistemology, and in particular the view that knowing a thing is exhausted by knowing its function, has led to a loss of any concern or desire for truth. His solution is to recover the distinction between nature and art/artifice, such that there is a givenness, an actuality, and wholeness to nature that exceeds its function, use and even the creative potential of scientific success. Reminiscent of Soskice’s encouragement for science to “listen” to nature, for Hanby nature is only truly known by “a form of reason capable of contemplating once more what things are and of awaiting their answer to that question” (p. 170).

The theme of truth is taken up in the next two chapters by Catherine Pitstock and Rowan Williams. Rather can looking beyond to the pre-modern thinkers, Pitstock focuses on alternative voices from seventeenth-century England, namely Herbert of Cherbury, Robert Greville, and Anne Conway, to recover a participatory, habituated, and analogical theory of truth as "conformation" to the eternal, which she argues does greater justice to modern 'scientific' ambitions. This idea of truth as more than representation developed by Williams, who argues that truthful knowledge is "to be involved in a set of shared practices in which continued learning is possible" over time (pp. 202-203). Truth-telling is not "a recording procedure" but "a social practice" (p. 214). He tasks us to consider if our current shared practices of explanation, interpretation, imagination and contemplation enable an "effective and sustainable response to the (rest of the) world" (p. 207), and to maintain the primacy of questions of intrinsic workings of nature over secondary questions of practical utility (p. 209).

Part III contains chapters from Simon Oliver and D.C. Schindler. Oliver focuses on the shift from intrinsic to extrinsic teleology as "a key fault line between theology and the natural sciences" (p. 221). Adding not only to the wider discussion of final causes but also to the theme of panpsychism (broadly construed), Oliver draws on Thomas Aquinas and Félix Ravaisson to argue that habit mediates between intentional human agency and "the agency of basic material natures" (p. 227).

D.C. Schindler's rousing contribution can be summarized as making two provocative and interrelated arguments. First, he makes a plea for the recovery of natural philosophy, as the study of the nature of things in their depth and analogical relation to one another, over and against the study of "what can be predicted according to mathematically formalizable laws" (p. 251). It is the loss of the concept of nature, which resulted from a "confession of incompetence" (p. 246), not the loss of teleology (*contra* Oliver), magic (*contra* Milbank), or even God, that Schindler sees as at the heart of modernity's woes. Second, he argues that theologians have been wrong to insist on a difference between proper science, which limits is claims to the physical world, and scientism, which claims to know everything. The real fault line is between an arbitrary and authoritarian self-limitation and an openness to the givenness of reality and accepts limitations that are set by another, that come 'from above'. For Schindler, "diabolical" self-limitation is that the core not only of modern science but also the core principle of modern liberalism.

Tom McLeish uses the short treatise *De colore* (On colour) by medieval scientist and Franciscan Bishop of Lincoln, Robert Grosseteste, to make three points. First, medieval science stands in sophisticated continuity with modern science in its use of observation and mathematical modelling. Second, the falsity of the claim that the medieval church systematic supressed scientific work. Third, McLeish argues that Grosseteste provides an example of a thinker who maintained a distinction between their scientific and theological work, but saw the two as "mutually dependent," (p. 268). The purpose and vocation of science is provided by theology, whereas science sanctifies the intellect and illuminates Scripture and doctrine. Particularly valuable for readers who might worry that this volume is too historical or abstract to connect with the lived experience of scientific practice today, McLeish ends with an extended evaluation of how far each of the preceding chapters resonates with his experience of being a scientist in the twenty-first century, to which most are warmly commended.

Pui Him Ip's chapter, 'Physics as a Spiritual Exercise' argues that the modern self-limitation of physics as separate from ethical and spiritual learning is "arbitrary" and "damaging for the integrity and rigour of physics' perennial search of unification in nature" (p. 284). He uses Origen of Alexander to argue that physics has an "ability to transform our sense of wonder into one that aligns our lives to the purpose of the Creator." (p. 292). But is this unification of physics with ethics and spirituality desirable? Ip wisely concludes that "the vision of physics as spiritual exercise is no less dangerous than the modern vision" (p. 296) of separation. Physics in the ancient, unified vision is vulnerable to being co-opted into unjustifiable ideological projects (e.g., Aristotle's defence of

slavery), whereas physics in the modern detachment is prone is complacent disregard for the consequences of one's research (e.g., ecological devastation, nuclear weapons).

Spike Bucklow, Professor of Material Culture at the University of Cambridge, opens his essay recalling the deskilling of haute court seamstresses and hairdressers after the French Revolution into human computers (pp. 299-201). What has that got to do with science and religion? This historical transition becomes emblematic of the shift between how, on the one hand, pre-modern science and lived experience related to one another through embodied habit of working with materials first-hand to gain a contemplative skill, and how on the other hand, modern science and lived experience relate to each other today.

After Science and Religion and Science-Engaged Theology

As promised, I'll conclude with some thoughts on how the vision for a theology of science put forward in this volume relates to the movement of science-engaged theology, which also takes the cultural contingency of 'science' and 'religion' as argued for in Peter Harrison's work as its launching pad (see Perry & Leidenhag, *Science-Engaged Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023). I'll make three brief points. First, there is a great deal of agreement between science-engaged theology and *After Science and Religion*. Both are clear that the sciences rely on implicit metaphysical assumptions, but that metaphysics cannot simply read off science results. Both prefer to see the sciences as a collection of practices that can, in theory, lead on a path not just to utility but spiritual wisdom.

Second, I advise theologians (and philosophers) wishing to engage the tools, methods, theories of the empirical disciplines as a source for theological reflection to heed some of the warnings this volume provides. Science-engaged theology might look very like the most egregious "dead ends" of Lightman's chapter, if we do not thoroughly internalize the dismantling of the idea of 'science' and 'religion' as bodies of knowledge or areas of concern ('territories'). Perhaps the most challenging comment comes from Schindler when he writes that "To come to a critical philosophical and theological engagement with the sciences only after science has done its work is therefore to have arrived too late" (p. 163). This is perhaps too strict. Whether engaging with scientific work after it is published is too late will depend upon what the theologian is wishing to take from this engagement. However, the principle stands true as an ideal; it is preferable for theologians to be part of interdisciplinary teams contributing to (but, not dictating) hypothesis creation, methodology design, and result analysis.

Third, this theology of science serves as a foundation, not a synonym, alternative, nor goal, for science-engaged theology. Quite the reverse, I think that science-engaged theology is the telos for a theology of science. The contributors of *After Science and Religion* each uses standard theological sources of history and philosophy to provide a theological re-examination scientific culture. Science-engaged theology is doing something quite different, and altogether more radical than this. It is asking theologians to engage new sources, or at least sources that under the condition of modernity have been neglected and forgotten, and alongside the natural-philosopher-scientists envisioned in this volume, to be listening to creation as means of gaining theological insight.