

R.B. Braithwaite, she concludes by drawing on Iris Murdoch to claim some forms of analytical philosophy can be useful to transcendent reinterpretations of the Christian tradition.

Interesting similarities between Burns's essay and Cyril Barrett's that focus on the contribution of Wittgenstein to analytical philosophy will not escape the attentive reader. Barrett follows Wittgenstein in his anti-metaphysical functionalist theory of language which clearly overlaps with Burns's account. Yet, Barrett concludes his essay on a rather pessimistic note by suggesting that due to a flattening out of evidence to the scientifically verifiable, few in the future will follow Wittgenstein's silent assent to a non-rational account of faith.

In their essays Charles Taliaferro and Pamela Sue Anderson engage in a critical encounter with each other's positions. Taliaferro draws on the notion of an ideal observer to argue that a rational agent can approximate to this 'God's eye point of view' since there are real facts to be known and not simply points of view. In response, Anderson draws on her work in feminist epistemology to argue that all knowledge acquired by a rational agent is necessarily particular, embodied, and partial. She concludes by arguing for a model of collective discourse in which different perspectives are acknowledged as contributing to a greater whole.

Harriet Harris's essay considers the epistemic significance of the moral and spiritual development of a person as this is formed in their religious practice. Taking up themes present in feminist and reformed epistemology, Harris uses both realism and the situatedness of knowledge to argue that these perspectives help us to understand the nature and function of religious belief. Drawing on the work of Nicholas Wolterstorff, and to a lesser degree Alvin Plantinga, Harris finds that a more fully developed theological framework for religious epistemology would help to factor the process of spiritual discernment into epistemology, and so help to make clearer the trace of the *sensus divinitas* in human knowledge. A trace, Harris finds insufficiently developed in Wolterstorff and Plantinga.

Greg Kumara's essays shifts the focus from a broadly positive account of analytical philosophy to a prediction of its immanent demise. In reconstructing a

genealogy of Anglo-American philosophy he seeks to show that it reaches both before and after the 1930s-1950s tradition of analytical philosophy and encompasses British Romanticism, American transcendentalism and pragmatism and finds contemporary voice in thinkers such as Stanley Cavell and Hilary Putman. In so situating analytical philosophy as a minor blip on the royal road of Anglo-American philosophy Kumara sees the recovery of the question of God as the recuperation of a long tradition.

Anne Loades's essay seeks to build bridges between the various ways that philosophy of religion has drawn philosophy and theology together on both sides of the Atlantic. In Richard Swinburne's philosophical theology she finds a philosophical method that breaks new ground in relating philosophy, theology and biblical studies.

Giles Fraser situates analytical philosophy within the broader modernist movement. More particularly, he uses the art of Mark Rothko to argue that the aesthetic via negativa of a post-Nietzschean philosophy of life ends up in an emaciated spirituality shorn of its roots in a particular religious narrative. Free from this narrative grounding in a particular form of religious practice, analytical philosophy of religion analyses a concept of God that no one believes in and no religious practice embodies.

Christopher Insole's essay concludes the volume by a robust defence of analytical philosophy of religion. Insole argues that common to both analytical philosophy and political liberalism is a desire to bracket our substantive differences in order to attain a more transparent mutual comprehension and toleration of worldviews and religious traditions. Drawing on the work of John Locke, he argues that this liberal tradition finds its roots in the need after the early-modern wars of religion to discover ways to neutralise the violent potential latent in the substantive worldviews of religion traditions.

As an overview of contemporary approaches to analytical philosophy of religion this volume is to be commended for both presenting the great achievements of the subject and also the current difficulties which lie ahead for the future development and progress of analytical philosophy of religion.

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Experience Without Qualities. By Elizabeth Goodstein. Pp. 420, Stanford CA, Stanford University Press, 2005, \$58.00.

Goodstein provides a fascinating study of boredom as a phenomenon in the contemporary world and traces related concepts, such as malaise, ennui, melancholy, and acedia. She ties together threads from philosophy, history, religion, and the arts to absorb her audience in the problem of boredom. She argues that the 'rise of the discourse on boredom is a symptom of

the dissolution of the 'intact sensibility' in modernity' (p. 398). She believes that boredom is a form of reflective consciousness that is part of a distinctly modern rhetoric about subjective malaise (p. 399). Relying on a dialectical understanding of historical development to provide the structure of her analysis, she believes that boredom cannot be

identified with the older conditions of melancholy or acedia because the failures of the Enlightenment era have left modern humanity in a uniquely reflective position. Specifically, the traditional frameworks of meaning have failed and left a 'hollow emptiness of self' (p. 398). This cannot be equated with cynicism, but is related to a kind of skepticism that results from the failure of the Enlightenment claims about reason to produce meaning.

It is this dialectical methodology that makes the book engaging. Goodstein demonstrates her scholarly ability in bringing to her audience's attention important thinkers and constructs of boredom, as well as her analytic abilities by offering criticisms of these. I was especially interested in her analysis and critique of Critical Theory. Although rejecting religious interpretations of the world that posit fixed notions of the self, Critical Theory relies on an anachronistic vision of human existence as fixed, and therefore unintentionally perpetuates an idea that it claims to reject.

The modern phenomenon of boredom arises from the collapse of the meta-narratives that are the legacy of the Enlightenment (p. 400). This began with the Romantic shift away from the Enlightenment's view of self and reason, to a subjectivity and intuition that reject earlier traditions. Goodstein argues that where religious ideas of boredom, such as acedia, indicate a problem with the *self*, modernity's boredom is located as a problem with the *world* and its failure to excite through experience. In this sense, boredom came to be a sign of spiritual distinction, of metaphysical despair. As the nineteenth century became increasingly democratic, this experience was no longer limited to an artistic elite but trickled down to the public as well: 'the bored poet was Parisian; Emma represents the arrival of ennui in the provinces' (p. 173). Boredom became a sign that one has 'seen through' the affectations of society, has identified the problems that others cannot see.

Relying on Hegel's dialectical methodology to understand the historical movement from traditional religion to Enlightenment rationalism, to Romanticism and then to modernity helps her audience appreciate the flow of history in relation to ideas and the human need for meaning. As the need for meaning challenges a worldview narrative (thesis vs. antithesis), the synthesis is a new narrative that relies on the previous stages, and yet through critical self-reflection seeks to respond more adequately to the

goal of making sense of the world. The suggestion that in modernity we are at the end-point of this interaction is, I believe, correct, but perhaps for reasons different than what Goodstein suggests. It is not that the modern world is past understanding due to its complexity, but that the fracturing of metanarratives indicates a significant misunderstanding of the role of reason in finding meaning that must be challenged and then moved past through critical reflection.

Contemporary boredom represents a kind of terminal point to this series; it is a skepticism that attempts to see through all metanarratives. Goodstein thus concludes by noting that today the problem is to live meaningfully in a world which surpasses understanding (p. 420). Quite the opposite of Hegel's end point of full self-knowledge and rational expression, this represents an existential contradiction in human being, one that Kant described through both our desire to find meaning and our inability to have comprehensive understanding (Goodstein indicates her departure from Hegel here in a footnote on p. 404). The inadequate explanation is supposed to give rise to the next synthesis - yet there is none. This is in fact what gives rise to modernity's boredom.

Interestingly, an alternative explanation is that Kant and Hegel themselves constitute a thesis that must be challenged and then surpassed. The posing of the problem by Kant and Hegel, that humans cannot know anything comprehensively, is a pseudo-problem on which their systems depend. Of course humans cannot know anything comprehensively, but it does not follow that we cannot know some things sufficiently. Specifically, it seems we must be able to know basic things sufficiently in order to know anything else. Basic things include distinctions between God and man, good and evil, meaningful and meaningless. Indeed, the very conclusion of her book requires that humans can distinguish between what is and is not meaningful. The complexity of the modern world should not be thought of as a threat to understanding, but instead as a deepening of the richness possible for human understanding: we know some basic things sufficiently, and the complexity of the world guarantees that if we so desire we can be absorbed in meaning as we seek to grow in understanding without limit - in this pursuit there is no room for boredom.

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Wittgensteinian Fideism? By Kai Nielsen and D. Z. Phillips. Pp. 383, SCM Press, 2003, \$55.00.

Kai Nielsen and D. Z. Phillips do not seem to like each other very much, nor do they seem to understand each other well. That, at least, is the distinct impression one comes away with after reading *Wittgensteinian Fideism?*, the results of a nearly forty-year long exchange between these two significant philosophers.

On one level, that is not at all surprising, given that Nielsen has been one of the pre-eminent critics of religion in the West and Phillips, a strong philosophical supporter. On the other hand, one would think that after forty years, two reasonable people in dialogue could find the points at which they both