

of his ideas about use and enjoyment between the *de doctrina* and the *de trinitate*). As it is, this is a most impressive monograph; it is written with clarity and elegance (the signs that English is not the author's first language are astonishingly few) and with a wide acquaintance with the secondary literature. Occasionally, there are passages where the use of Hill's generally serviceable translation in the text causes some passing confusion (the second quotation on p. 203 is one of several cases in point where Hill's version is not the best or clearest rendering of the Latin). But in general this is a pleasure to read and a very significant and authoritative contribution to the renewal of Augustinian studies.

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**Concluding Unscientific Postscript**, Soren Kierkegaard, trans. Alastair Hannay, Cambridge University Press, 2009 (ISBN 978-0-521-70910-1531), v + 539 pp., pb \$39.99

**Kierkegaard: Thinking Christianly in an Existential Context**, Sylvia Walsh, Oxford University Press, 2009 (ISBN 978-0-19-920836-4), viii + 232 pp., pb \$35

The combination of these books made for an insightful study of Kierkegaard's growth as a philosopher, his writing style, and how he has been understood by subsequent thinkers. Alastair Hannay's introduction, and Sylvia Walsh's astute volume, together put Kierkegaard into context as a response to State Christianity and its stagnating affect on individual religiosity, as well as to non-Christian philosophy attempting to offer a systematic rationalism that incorporated some Christian terms while emptying them of meaning. My own interest in Kierkegaard was increased and deepened as I came to understand more of his intellectual and personal development as well as the challenges to which he was attempting to respond. For instance, it was helpful to see that the 'leap of faith' for which Kierkegaard is so well known has been misunderstood and misused by many subsequent thinkers.

The *Postscript* is written in a pseudonymous voice named Johannes Climacus. The work is a follow-up to *Philosophical Crumbs*, which had considered the question of how eternal happiness could be based on something that is simply historical (Hannay, x). This is a question that

had been posed by Gotthold Lessing. Climacus says that he provides a sequel to the *Crumbs* in Part One of the *Postscript*. Hannay suggests some reasons as to why it is called *Unscientific*, and this seems to best be explained in that it is written for the simple-minded meaning what Americans might call 'common sense'. Here he argues against the view that the way to approach Christianity is through some form of objective State Church. He also considers and rejects approaches such as finding the truth of Christianity in the repetition of worship or in assimilating Hegelian philosophy.

Part Two, which forms the bulk of the *Postscript*, has two main sections: the first is about how to relate to Christianity once the idea of subjectivity is understood, and the second about what must be true of subjectivity for the goal to be reached. This second part has five chapters. The first of these deals with how to become 'subjective'; the second proposes the famous claim that truth is subjectivity; the third proposes what might be taken as an ontology in a reversal of Aristotle's 'possibility' and 'actuality', and why subjectivity is preferred; the longest is the fourth which has two main sections one of which studies the question of how to achieve eternal happiness, and the other the role of pathos and dialectic in eternal happiness. The fifth and concluding chapter studies what is important to the simple-minded and the intellectual.

In my own case, I can say that I would not have benefited as much as possible by reading the *Postscript* if I had not also read Sylvia Walsh's work on Kierkegaard. She begins her book with a chapter that is titled 'That Single Individual', and which starts by saying 'Kierkegaard found in Christianity the truth that would give meaning and purpose to his life and the idea for which he was willing to live and die'. To become a single individual one must become whole and unified before God, which is a possibility for every human being (p. 2).

Nevertheless, Kierkegaard struggled with his own belief. During his university years, he began having doubt. Christianity seemed to contain so many contradictions that a clear view of it was impossible (p. 7). It was specifically the Lutheran branch of Christianity that began to totter under these doubts, 'this colossus was built upon the Bible as the absolute standard and sole authority for all Christian teaching, the confessional writings of the early church (the Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian creeds), the Augsburg Confession (a comprehensive statement of the articles of the Lutheran faith adopted in 1530), and Luther's *Small Catechism* (1529), which together constituted the official writings and tenets (dogma) of the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church as prescribed by Danish law' (p. 7).

We can understand Kierkegaard's development as he works to overcome these doubts in relation to responding to challenges from other thinkers including the Hegelians. Where Hegel subordinated the individual to the universal, Kierkegaard argues the opposite. This is

essential to the solution he seeks for the dead Christianity of the State Church. The individual cannot consider himself a Christian simply because this is the universal claim of the State. Rather, the individual must make their own subjective leap to make Christianity meaningful.

Famously, Kierkegaard considers Abraham as an example of the individual and faith. 'Much of the inner distress and anxiety associated with the passion and paradox of faith as exemplified by Abraham derives from the fact that he is utterly unable to make himself intelligible to anyone, including his own family, inasmuch as he stands outside the universal in an absolute relation to God that commands him in a particular instance to do what ethics would forbid' (p. 154).

It is here that one might find Kierkegaard's account to fall short of his methodology. While he wants to emphasize the individuality of Abraham and Abraham's faith, he isolates the event of offering Isaac from the rest of Abraham's life and thus it becomes a kind of absurdity. However, if one considers this event in terms of Abraham's worldview and development up until that time one can conclude, with the author of Hebrews, that Abraham *reasoned* that God could raise the dead (Heb. 11:19). Kierkegaard draws almost the opposite conclusion in asserting that Abraham had to suspect his understanding. Yet, Abraham begins his journey by responding to the promise that through him all families of the earth would be blessed. This indicates that Abraham had an understanding of sin, in that Ur needed to be blessed, and this blessing must come from God, and yet Ur was in a state of apostasy in worshipping idols. Upon leaving Abraham demonstrates his understanding of the necessity of vicarious atonement in offering a sacrifice. He also submits to the sign of circumcision, which is more than an outward sign but is an indication of the need for a new heart in regeneration (as Moses states in Deut. 10:16 and 30:6).

Abraham also knew of the power of God in bringing life from death. Although he had tried to get an heir apart from Sarah, it was through Sarah that the promise would be fulfilled. Thus, when Abraham was 100 and Sarah ninety, God brought life from the dead womb and Isaac was born. Just as God had imposed death in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:19), God could remove death and restore life. Furthermore, Abraham's knowledge of the need for vicarious atonement and the fact that Isaac needed a new heart (bore the sign of circumcision) meant that Isaac could not be the atoning sacrifice. And yet it would be through Isaac that Abraham's seed would become a great nation. Therefore, if Isaac were sacrificed and killed he must then be raised from the dead for the promise to be kept. This was power that Abraham had already seen God demonstrate in the very birth of Isaac. Thus, it would be natural for him to reason that God could raise the dead.

This consideration of Kierkegaard's presentation of Abraham is meant to indicate that while Kierkegaard struggled with important

and meaningful challenges that remain to this day, his methods require further thought. Furthermore, since his time new challenges have arose, specifically the reality of the world's religions has become more prominent. It is not sufficient to suggest that one must be a singular individual because one must first know which religion in which one is to become a singular individual. Kierkegaard's own context allowed him to take Christianity for granted, indeed belief in God for granted. The contemporary world requires us to ask how we can know if God exists in order to make further progress. This is especially true since Christianity's message of redemption begins by asserting the reality of sin and unbelief, realities that cannot be merely asserted but must be proven.

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**Arendt, Augustine, and the New Beginning: The Action Theory and Moral Thought of Hannah Arendt in the Light of Her Dissertation on St. Augustine**, Stephan Kampowski, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008 (ISBN 978-0-8028-2724-1), xx + 364 pp., pb \$50.00

Throughout her career, Hannah Arendt drew upon the Augustinian notions of love, human willing, and the possibility of a 'new beginning'. Kampowski's aim is to show that these seminal ideas, first planted in her doctoral dissertation *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin – Versuch einer philosophischen Interpretation* ('The Concept of Love in Augustine – An Attempt at a Philosophical Interpretation'), germinated throughout her mature work, especially *The Human Condition* (1958) and her unfinished *The Life of the Mind* (published posthumously in 1978). The driving question in the *Liebesbegriff* is if and how Augustine was able to reconcile the love for God and the love for neighbor without diminishing the importance of hope in heaven or a commitment to the world. The way in which Arendt approached the problem in her doctoral dissertation had an enormous impact upon her later theories of action and morality. In short, for Arendt, ethics cannot be restricted to moral norms; it is *thinking* that prevents us from committing evil. She was increasingly committed to the idea that thinking, understood as a habit of examining and reflecting upon all that comes to pass, is an activity capable of conditioning the human agent to shun wrongdoing.

Kampowski begins the book with a biographical and bibliographical portrait of Arendt, paying special attention to *The Human Condition*