

ABSTRACTS

John Hick, Religious Pluralism and the Divine: a Response to Paul Eddy.

In 'Religious Pluralism and the Divine: Another Look at John Hick's Neo-Kantian Proposal' (*Religious Studies*, xxx, 1994) Paul Eddy argues against the ultimate ineffability of the Real, and claims that a neo-Kantian epistemology leads to a Feuerbachian non-realism. In response I stress (a) the impossibility of attributing to the Real the range of incompatible characteristics of its phenomenal (i.e. experienceable) manifestations, so that it must lie beyond the range of our human religious categories, and (b) the distinction, which Eddy fails to observe, between grounds for believing in the Divine, and reasons for thinking that the Divine can be differently conceived and experienced.

Patrick Shaw, Might God Not Have Been God?

James Sennett has argued that Yahweh may possess the properties of divinity contingently; that it is an open question whether Yahweh is divine in all possible worlds, and that perfect goodness cannot belong essentially to anyone. In response to Sennett it is here argued that it does not make clear sense to suppose that properties apply to Yahweh contingently, and that Sennett fails to demonstrate that perfect goodness cannot apply essentially. There are problems with the notion of perfect goodness, but these would tend to suggest that the notion lacks application anywhere.

John P. Dourley, Jacob Boehme and Paul Tillich on Trinity and God: Similarities and Differences.

Paul Tillich borrows central motifs in his trinitarian theology from Jacob Boehme, the seventeenth-century German mystic. Tillich draws a picture of divine life as embroiled in a conflict of opposites between the abyss and the light of the *Logos*. Boehme also depicted divine life as engaged in inner turmoil. But, unlike Tillich, Boehme's experience and imagery suggest that the eternal divine self-contradiction could only be solved in human consciousness and history. The paper suggests that trinitarian thinkers such as Tillich cannot give to creation and its processes the same seriousness as does Boehme who implicates humanity in the redemption of divinity through the task imposed on it as the sole locus in which the divine opposites can be differentiated and consciously integrated.

D. Z. Phillips, Dislocating the Soul.

Many analyses of belief in the soul ignore the soul in the words. Dislocations of concepts occur when words are divorced from their normal implications. The 'soul' is sometimes the dislocated utterer of such words. Pictures, including pictures of the soul leaving the body, may mislead us by suggesting applications which they, in fact,

do not have. But pictures of the soul may enter people's lives as desires for a temporal eternity. Contrasting conceptions of immortality and eternal life depend on a willingness to say farewell to life. Atheistic denials of temporal eternities, do not appreciate these other possibilities.

Eric M. Cave, A Leibnizian Account of Why Belief in the Christian Mysteries Is Justified.

The Christian mysteries, which consist of such doctrines as the Incarnation and the Trinity, pose a problem for anyone who seeks to reconcile the tenets of Christianity with reason. As Leibniz puts it, the mysteries are incomprehensible, improbable, and against appearances. Why should a reasonable individual believe in such mysteries? By answering this question, one responds to the objection that Christianity requires individuals to embrace patent nonsense. Leibniz maintains that the mysteries, although incomprehensible, can be explained sufficiently to justify belief in them. But how can the mysteries be both incomprehensible and explicable? In this paper, I will develop a Leibnizian account of why belief in the mysteries is justified.

David Basinger, Petitionary Prayer: A Response to Murray and Meyers.

In a recent article in this journal, Michael Murray and Kurt Meyers offer us (among other things) two innovative and thought-provoking responses to the important question of why God would, even occasionally, refrain from giving us that which he can and would like to give us until we request that he do so: to help the believer learn more about God and thus become more like him and to help the believer realize she is dependent on God. I argue that neither explanation is adequate and thus that more work on this significant topic remains to be done.

Robin Le Poidevin, Internal and External Questions about God.

Characteristic of metaphysics are general questions of existence, such as 'Are there numbers?' This kind of question is the target of Carnap's argument for deflationism, to the effect that general existential questions, if taken at face value, are meaningless. This paper considers deflationism in a theological context, and argues that the question 'Does God exist?' can appropriately be grouped with the 'metaphysical' questions attacked by Carnap. Deflationism thus has the surprising consequence that the correct approach to theism is that of radical theology. The paper attempts to show why Carnap's argument fails, and why, nevertheless, enough remains of it for us to conclude that God cannot be outside time and space.

Mark D. Linville, Ockhamists and Molinists in Search of a Way Out.

If libertarianism is true, then there is a sense in which agents have it within their power to bring it about that some world is actual. Against recent arguments for the incompatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom, I offer an account of power over the past which takes this implication of libertarianism into consideration. I argue that the resulting account is available to Ockhamists and that it is immune to recent criticisms of the notion of counterfactual power over the past. But I contend that it is not an option for Molinists and that this fact leaves that position vulnerable to incompatibilist arguments.

Chris Slupik, A New Interpretation of Hume's 'Of Miracles'.

It has often been suggested (1) that according to Hume it is impossible in principle for testimony to prove a miracle, and (2) that an indispensable element in Hume's argument is the claim that a miracle is by definition a violation of the laws of nature. I argue that both (1) and (2) are mistaken, and that, once Hume's 'Of Miracles' is viewed in a proper historical context, it emerges that Hume's argument against miracles is considerably different from what is usually supposed.