

Book Reviews

Norbert Fischer and Jakub Sirovátka, eds. *Vernunftreligion und Offenbarungsglaube. Zur Erörterung einer seit Kant verschärften Problematik*. Forschungen zur europäischen Geistesgeschichte 16. Freiburg; Basel; Vienna: Herder, 2015.

This volume came into being as a consequence of an international symposium held under the auspices of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft on 13th–15th March, 2014, at the Diocesan Academy of Mainz. The title of that symposium was “Rational Religion and Faith in Revelation; A Discussion of Issues That Have Grown in Importance since the Time of Kant and Remain Unresolved (Vernunftreligion und Offenbarungsglaube. Zur Erörterung seit einer Kant verschärften und immer noch ungelösten Problematik).” The publication reviewed here was the fruit of a collaboration involving the publishers of the Department of Fundamental Questions of Philosophical Theology at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt: one that also developed in the context of other symposia and seminars—in Eichstätt, in the Weltenburg monastery, and in Mainz itself.

The central concern of the book is the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, and, in particular, the issue of philosophical conceptions of Revelation, together with the relationship between faith and reason. The presentation of these issues is supplemented by a treatment of precursor stages (involving pre-modern thinkers), and of the impact exerted subsequently by Kant’s sharpened treatment of issues pertaining to the relationship between Revelation and religion within the bounds of reason. Although the

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book is organized in the manner of a historical survey, the core issues receive systematic treatment. The main task of analysis centers on the philosophy of Kant, but philosophical positions antecedent to those of Kant himself, as well as those following in his wake, also find an essential place amongst the topics covered in the book.

For the reader's convenience, I am presenting here an English version of the complete list of papers published in the book. A detailed table of contents in German can be found at the publisher's website¹ and in the database of the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek.² The articles are grouped into five historically demarcated sections (marked with Roman numerals), preceded by an extensive introduction. The latter itself contains two articles written by Norbert Fischer: "Rational Religion and Faith in Revelation: An Introduction to the Topic" and "References to Faith and Reason in Augustine, Meister Eckhart and Immanuel Kant." Alongside these, we find a reprint of a primary-source text: Kant's "On Revelation" ("Section Four" from his *Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion*). The articles appearing in the subsequent five sections of the volume are as follows:

- "I. Antiquity": Maximilian Forschner, "Between Myth and Logos: On the Philosophical Theology of the School of the Stoics"; Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, "Biblical Hermeneutics and the Rationality of Christian Faith in Origen—with a Glimpse at Kant."
- "II. The Middle Ages": Günther Pöltner, "Thomas Aquinas on Reason and Revelation"; Martina Roesner, "One Truth Grasped in Many Ways: Revelation Theology, Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Nature in Meister Eckhart."
- "III. The Early Modern Period": Albert Raffelt, "Between 'Historicism' and 'Typology': History and Exegesis in Pascal"; Hartmut Rudolph, "Leibniz' 'Discours de la conformité de la foi avec la raison' and the Skepticism of Pierre Bayle."
- "IV. Research into the Problem as It Appears in Kant and in His Milieu": Friedo Ricken, "Revelation and Rational Religion in the Philosophy of Kant: The Multiply Folded Relation of Means to Ends"; Thomas Brose, "Georg Hamann's Critique of Metaphysics and Faith in Revelation"; Bernd Dörflinger, "The Kantian Critique of Religious Feeling"; Rudolf Langthaler, Immanuel Kant on Christianity as 'Miracu-

1. Herder, accessed December 1, 2016, <https://www.herder.de/religion-theologie-shop/vernunftreligion-und-offenbarungsglaube-gebundene-ausgabe/c-25/p-2962/>.

2. Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, accessed December 1, 2016, <http://d-nb.info/1063204887>.

lous Religion' and 'Practical Reason Enlightened by Science from beyond Its Boundaries'; Thomas Hanke, Kantian philosophy of Revelation. "A Religio-philosophical and Rational-theoretical Guide to the Aesthetically Reflective Power of Judgment"; Ruben Schneider, "Negative Theology and Analogical Knowledge of God in Kant's Theoretical Philosophy: A Comparison of Kant and Aquinas on Analogy"; Ludmila Kryshstop, "The Ideal of Holiness in the Practical Philosophy of Kant"; Andrej K. Sudakow, "Between the Heart's Faith and the Piety of Reason: How It Is that Kant Did Not Become a Philosopher Of Revelation"; Norbert Fischer, "Kant as 'Pastor': 'Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion' and 'The End of Creation'"; Alexei Krouglov, "The Initial Reception of 'Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason' in Russia: The Case of J. W. L. Mellmann (1795)"; Laura Anna Macor, "'In This Way, Any Activity Serving Improvement and Belonging to Christianity Is the True Work of God': Rational Religion and Faith in Revelation as Construed by Johann Joachim Spalding."

"V. Post-Kantian Treatments of the Topic": Giusi Strummiello, "'An Absolute Miracle': Philosophy and Revelation in the Later Philosophy of Schelling"; Pedro Jesús Teruel, "On the Roots of Evil: Original Sin as an Issue between Revealed Religion and Reason, from Kant and Schelling to Freud; A Proposal for a Reconciliation"; Peter Reifenberg, "'Reason and Revelation': A Sketch of Maurice Blondel's Immanent Apologetics"; Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, "Faith in Revelation and the Rational Ontology of Dasein"; Svetlana Konacheva, "Holiness as a Dimension of Divinity: Heidegger's Poetic Theology in between Onto-theological Metaphysics and Faith in Christian Revelation"; René Dausner, "From Ethics to Exegesis: The Contribution of Fundamental Theology to Biblical Hermeneutics, Considered in Relation to Emmanuel Levinas"; Jakub Sirovátka, "Philosophy of Religion as Hermeneutics."

The volume closes with a supplementary section containing a list of abbreviations (with abbreviated references to the works of Kant presented separately from those referring to other authors), a bibliography (listing source texts separately from other literature cited), and an index of names.

The goal of the editors of the volume was to foster a consideration of the issue of faith and reason, as seen through the prism of the philosophy of Kant, from two different perspectives: those of earlier (pre-Kantian) and later (post-Kantian) attempts to explain the relationship between rational religion and faith in Revelation, respectively (1).

The articles dealing with philosophy as it developed prior to Kant could be read as having the following intention: that taking into account the thought of Kant while referring at the same time to the present day, it is easier to see just how far Kant's answer would be considered acceptable and appropriate now. In addition, there are articles in the volume devoted to authors from the pre-modern period themselves, examining their answers to the question presented in the title of the book. Hence there are texts on Origen, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart. Meanwhile, the articles dealing with philosophy as it developed *after* Kant tend to seek to answer the question of how far Kant's view of the issue was appropriate, and to what extent subsequent contributions have gone beyond him and could lead to a resolution of the challenges involved—challenges which have certainly not become any easier to address since then (1–2).

As an example of such challenges, we may mention the endeavor in which Norbert Fischer has been involved for many years: namely, that of spelling out the significance of Kant's philosophy for the Christian religion and theology. This is also what he aims to do in the volume under consideration. Fischer presents Kant as a specific type of "pastor," engaged in shedding philosophical light upon the great life-questions that confront us (348–64). Christian Göbel even went so far as to entitle the English translation of Kant's lecture on the philosophy of religion "Kant as Pastor" (348).

Norbert Fischer, during a public presentation of the book under review that took place on the 3rd of November, 2015, in Mainz (in the so-called "Cathedral House" of the Diocesan Academy of Mainz), quoted the opinion of the Jesuit and philosopher of religion Friedo Ricken, who confessed: "What we did with Kant was a sin." Meanwhile, Sam Fischer, a Catholic scholar of Kant, has said: "The thesis that, for a long while, I have been engaged in presenting and trying to develop in its many shades, is this: that it was a great mistake on the part of the Church—especially the Catholic Church—to vilify Kant." Fischer's attempts to rehabilitate the philosophy of Kant within Christian theology met with an enthusiastic reception from Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who went on to become Pope Benedict XVI. This is highly significant, in that as Ratzinger well knew, Kant's philosophy has not always been read by theologians in terms that could be deemed inspiring.

All the same, the volume's publishers acknowledge that the topic they have brought into focus here has not been exhausted, but rather serves to broaden our horizons in preparation for the emergence of a new supporting construal of that which pertains to the being and meaning of mankind

and the world (2–3). As part and parcel of this, they hold that the transcendental perspective that is part of Kant’s legacy matters greatly here because, in the words of Kant himself, reason (*Vernunft*) cannot be satisfied with the information coming from just the bare understanding (*Verstand*), in that “the understanding occupied merely with its empirical use, which does not reflect on the sources of its own cognition, may get along very well, but cannot accomplish one thing, namely, determining for itself the boundaries of its use and knowing what may lie within and what without its whole sphere; for to this end the deep inquiries that we have undertaken are requisite.”³

In addition, the publishers of the volume consider that “rational religion and faith in Revelation” is a topic that requires one to accept and acknowledge that the time for monolithic and dogmatic philosophical approaches is over (3). In their view, we must abandon any unilateral Augustinism of the sort that could sustain completely opposing positions: on the one hand, for example, emphasizing the freedom of the will, and on the other, the doctrine of predestination. We should also relinquish a certain sort of overseeing Thomism, which at times has little in common with Thomas Aquinas himself. After Kant, philosophy leads to religion being construed as our “comportment towards God” (*Verhalten gegen Gott*), where this constitutes a life-issue for everyone—one that is then to be investigated and rationally illuminated by Christian theology.

It is impossible, in a review such as this, to do full and proper justice to the wealth of content collected in this volume devoted to the issues raised by the mutual interconnectedness of rational religion and faith in Revelation. However, we may take a closer look at the systematic framework currently sustaining philosophical debates over religion. This is the approach proposed, for instance, by Martina Roesner (136–9).

Roesner stresses that for several years now, in our contemporary philosophical discourse, the idea has been taking root that religion *per se* is not at all a cognitive dysfunction in the sense of some preliminary stage that must be got past if we are ever to attain rationally definitive knowledge of the world. At the very least, religion must be regarded as an essentially separate and distinctive form of rationality, which should be taken seriously in its own right. At the same time, though, contemporary philosophy is marked by a confrontation (a dispute) with the phenomenon of

3. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), B 297.

revealed religion generally, and with Christianity in particular. The terms of this confrontation were established in the 18th and 19th centuries and, for systematic reasons, are still viewed as issues of principle. They include, first and foremost, the postulate of principled heterogeneity between the sphere of conceptual universality and that of historical facticity. This postulate requires that we accept the existence of a basic difference between the paradigms of knowledge and faith, where this entails a further postulate that demands that we accept the notion of a more or less profound historical chasm between the past construed as constitutive for religion (meaning, in the case of Christianity, Jesus and the events bound up with Him), and the actuality of religious life as it manifests itself in the present.

Roesner notes that some of the assumptions just pointed to are, to a greater or lesser degree, reliant on the systematic coordinates that defined philosophical thinking as it developed in the wake of Kant's critique of reason. What takes on special importance here is the relationship between universality and subjectivity: one which, in relation to religion, is then able to constitute "an ideal humanity, pleasing to God," but also some possible relation obtaining between the "prototype of a moral disposition" and "what can be mapped out" in respect of the ethical conduct of mankind. This prompts the question of whether, and to what extent, the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth, defined in Christianity as the "Son of God," counts as important just as a concrete, sensuously real embodiment of the practical-rational idea of perfect morality, or whether, speaking philosophically, everything that matters about such an embodiment is in fact also conditioned by a qualifying "as if"—one that is granted to religion for instructional purposes, but which has no binding force for pure rational thought itself. Given the premises of Kant's critique of reason, there can never be any question of some sort of determinate human individual showing up in the form of such a theoretical judgment. The judgment represents only a direct visualization of some rational idea, while its sensuously real manifestation serves only to furnish a principle for judging our own moral disposition.

Roesner's article is just one of the texts collected in the volume, all of which offer a grasp of both old and new philosophies that is as fresh as it is scrupulous in its attention to detail. The collection testifies to the fact that religion and philosophy themselves remain in need of one another. Philosophy can, and should, bring systematical precision and order to religion, which has a natural tendency to degenerate intellectually (into superstition, intolerance and fanaticism), while religion can, and should, prevent the pathologies of reason, drawing attention to its limits and its

moral obligations. Finally, it should be noted that the volume reviewed here has an import that extends beyond the world of philosophy, as is evidenced by the enthusiastic review of it published in a theological journal, written by Christof Müller from Würzburg.⁴

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4. Christof Müller, review of *Vernunftreligion und Offenbarungsglaube: Zur Erörterung einer seit Kant verschärften Problematik*, ed. Norbert Fischer and Jakub Sirovátka, *Theologische Revue* 112, no. 2 (2016): col. 135–137.

Marcin Dolecki. *Philosopher's Crystal: The Treacherous Terrain of Tassatarius*. Translated by Paulina Trudzik. Oakland: Montag Press, 2016.

This review concerns a fantasy novel written by Marcin Dolecki, entitled *Philosopher's Crystal: The Treacherous Terrain of Tassatarius*. The book tells about the vicissitudes experienced by two young people living in a totalitarian state who, by coincidence, find a time machine and travel backwards to the past. The text is written in a light prose style with science-fiction elements (e.g., the time machine), somewhat reminiscent of authors such as Jacek Dukaj or (in a more academic vein) Roger Penrose.

The structure of the book consists of seven chapters and an epilogue. However, the form of the book allows for various interpretative approaches in respect of its content. In my opinion, the main reason for its being written is that the author wishes to acquaint readers—by default, young ones—with the philosophical figures selected by him. The unsophisticated language, uncomplicated action, and dynamic plot of the novel all help to make the book accessible. In the content of the text we are introduced to the main character, Philip. From the perspective of today's students, the protagonist is a man to whom fortune has given, in a very extraordinary way, the chance of fulfilling his wildest dreams:

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