

as well as dream it' (p 229).

Ultimately Lovin is concerned with the distinctive contribution of the Christian faith to public discourse in America, and *Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Realism* is an important work in this regard. It is written in a gentle style with the quiet confidence of knowing that, despite every threat to meaning, the source of meaning of life and experience has been revealed in Christ. It is not an exhaustive study of Niebuhr but it is indispensable as an assessment of Niebuhr's continuing relevance, and for establishing Christian Realism as a theological method. We are not given the Niebuhr warning the nations that the total human enterprise is opposed to God, and exhorting America to mediate grace to the world rather than judgment, and we can't hear Niebuhr's incredible voice, but we are made aware of his intellectual power. It is an essential text for moral theology, political theology, and moral philosophy and leaves the reader eagerly anticipating Lovin's next book.

KENNETH DURKIN

THE NATURE OF GOD by Gerard Hughes, *Routledge, London and New York, 1995. £37.50 Hb. £12.99. Pb, Pp ix + 218.*

This book, which deals with the various terms that have been traditionally applied to God, has an interesting format. For each term the author first presents his interpretation of how various philosophers/theologians have understood it along with what he sees to be the problems inherent in those interpretations. Then Hughes tells us what the term means to him, including what he believes we can borrow from the chosen authors. So the student and, frequently, the formed philosopher, will grow in understanding of the history of natural theology as well as of the discipline itself.

One meets the following authors: Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Leibniz, Molina and William of Ockham. The terms that are dealt with are Existence (about which more later), Simplicity, Omniscience, Omnipotence, and Goodness.

I want to pay some attention in this review to the chapters on Existence and Omniscience. One of the surprising omissions is the way Aquinas deals with existence in the *De Ente et Essentia*. What Thomas says there was never explicitly repudiated. It looks very much as if he regards existence as an attribute which is added on to the essence and something which can be lost, leaving behind an intact essence. The same impression is given when he appears to say that what God causes is the actuality of a thing as distinct from what is actualized: it is as if we could talk about one thing's being the cause of, for example, motion and another thing's being the cause of its actuality.

Hughes, himself, sees that there cannot be a common subject of existence and non-existence. As Kant says, to deny that King Arthur exists is not to say that Arthur lacks existence in the sense in which he

lacks the holy grail. To deny that Arthur exists, we must deny both existence and Arthur. We have to say: 'It is not the case that Arthur exists'. But Hughes is not happy with the Fregean interpretation of existence. I think he would say that if you wanted to explain 'Some things are tame tigers', you would have to say 'Some tame tigers exist'. It is more simple, he believes, to say that existence is an attribute (but not non-existence). What then is it for King Arthur to be actual? It is to claim that an individual satisfying that description was capable of entering into causal relations with other things (p.25). But why wasn't this true of Hercules? Saying that having causal powers is a primitive notion (p.29) does not clear this up for me. Can I do any better? No, I cannot.

According to Hughes, God cannot know such propositions as 'It is now raining' or 'It will be raining tomorrow' where 'now' and 'tomorrow' contrast something intrinsic to God. This, of course, is true. But the question is why that is true. I would say that he does not know these things because these propositions thus understood are not true. There is no 'now' or 'tomorrow' in God because as our author has Aquinas saying, 'no event in time is prior or subsequent to eternity'. It is only when 'now' and 'tomorrow' are referring to events 'down here' that God can be said to know that is or will be happening. But the 'now' and the 'then' are relative to our present and to our future. Surely, God can know that the War of the Roses is over relative to 1995? But there is no event in God to which this event is temporally relative.

Is it necessarily the case that God knew that I should choose to write this review? Clearly, it is necessarily the case that God knew whether I should write this review. It is necessarily the case that if an object is out there then God knew it but it is not necessary that the object is there and it is not necessary that he knows it. As Hughes says, God's knowledge could have been other than what it is. But that is because the object known could have been other than it is. Why cannot the act of knowing be intrinsically the same regardless of what the object is? Hughes says rightly that there is a sense in which God's knowing is epistemically dependent on its object. But does it follow that it is ontologically dependent on the object? Is the Sun ontologically different because it shines now on this object and now on that object? It depends on the object only in the sense that the object must be there for it to shine upon it. Knowing is something that God does and not something that happens to God.

I do not think that this book is suitable for beginners in the way that such books as Brian Davies' *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* are. Advanced students, however, will find it profitable. Trained philosophers will likewise find it challenging.

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