

being led astray by images. Of course, he insists that we need images of God, lots of them, but we must learn not to take them in the wrong way.

Reading through this collection of sermons, I was surprised by the centrality of certain concerns: the mystery of God's love for us, sin and the cross. Traditionally these are fundamental themes of theology, but theologians are often rather nervous of addressing them too explicitly today. Of course God's love for us is the heart of Christianity, but it is hard to talk about without sounding trite or saccharine. I recently heard a gifted young preacher confess that he was almost embarrassed at telling the congregation that God loved them, and I understood exactly what he meant. Herbert succeeds in doing so without sentimentality, refreshing one's sense of the utter mystery of a love that embraces all that we are and gives us existence in every moment. As he says, God is besotted with us.

We may also shy away from talking too much about sin. Catholics often claim to have been crippled by neurotic guilt from having listened to sermons about hell fire and damnation. Time and again Herbert returns to the theme of sin, but in ways that have nothing to do with inducing a harmful guilt. Sin is 'always to construct an illusory self that we can admire, instead of the real self we can only love' (p. 18). It springs from 'the fear not just that one is playing a false part, wearing a disguise, but that one is nothing *but* the disguise' (p. 70). Facing one's sin is, for Herbert, part of the entry into true self-love, the knowledge that one is loved utterly, and therefore have no need of pompous self-images. Indeed, as his brethren well knew, and sometimes to our discomfort, he was quick to spot and demolish any hint of pretension or superiority. And finally he repeatedly writes of the cross, refusing to reduce it to a passing step on the way to glory. It is the moment of Jesus' complete failure, in which we glimpse the mystery of God.

Brian Davies OP has done the Church a profound service in editing these sermons. I hope that there are some more volumes to come.

TIMOTHY RADCLIFFE OP

THE TWO EYES OF SPINOZA AND OTHER ESSAYS ON PHILOSOPHY by Leszek Kolakowski, translated by Agnieszka Kolakowska and others, edited by Zbigniew Janowski, *St Augustine's Press, South Bend, Indiana, 2004*, Pp. vii + 311, \$32.00 hbk.

In this collection of sixteen of his early papers, mainly translated from Polish, German and French, Leszek Kolakowski discusses Luther, Spinoza, Pierre Bayle, Uriel de Costa, Pierre Gassendi, Hegel, Marx, Avenarius, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Althusser. In the foreword Kolakowski says there is no 'common theme' in the book (p. vii) but most of the essays are concerned *inter alia* with the possibility of theology. All are written in an accessible style and are full of human interest. His book is a pleasure to read.

Kolakowski is rather harsh on Spinoza. The Spinoza of the title 'miserably failed' (p. 14) in his philosophy because he did not avoid inconsistencies over, for example, freedom and determinism, the existence and non-existence of God, science and mysticism, toleration and stability in politics. Kolakowski diagnoses the bifurcation between a German 'metaphysical' interpretation of Spinoza and a French 'political radical' interpretation in these inconsistencies. However, many great philosophers must be grossly mistaken in their solutions to philosophical problems because they disagree with one another. (For example, at most one of Hobbes and Berkeley can be right about what there is.) If Spinoza's claims are not only false but contradictory he perhaps deserves special chastisement but the systems of, say, Plato, Kant or Hegel are difficult to interpret as entirely internally consistent.

Kolakowski is right to be sharply realist about solutions to philosophical problems: If I am free then it is within my power to not do what I do. If my actions are causally determined then I cannot but do what I do. If there is a God then it is false that there is no God and *vice versa*. If everything knowable is scientifically knowable then there is no knowledge accessible only through mysticism and *vice versa*, and so on.

In 'The Philosophical Role of the Reformation: Martin Luther and the Origins of Subjectivity' (pp. 143–160) Kolakowski calls subjectivity 'the embryo of modern philosophy' and says 'philosophy is constantly striving to return to a primary, unmediated human subjectivity' (pp. 159–160). I contest this. Although Husserl's doctrine of the transcendental ego admittedly falls under this description, it is an exception. For Kant, subjectivity is formally constituted by the transcendental unity of apperception. For Hegel, subjectivity is socially constituted at a profound level by the struggle of master and slave. In scientific and pseudo-scientific philosophy there is no subject, or only a reduction of the subject to a complex physical object. In poststructuralism the subject is deconstructed. If Kolakowski's embryo grew to be Cartesian it was aborted soon thereafter. It does not make much sense to speak of the 'origins' of subjectivity unless these are divine. One's own existence *qua* one's own is a metaphysical mystery that cannot be explained away, or even explained, philosophically.

Kolakowski rightly criticises Louis Althusser for a lack of analytical rigour in his *For Marx* (1969); grossly and tendentiously assimilating 'says' and 'proves' for example, and for huge historical blunders, such as ascribing a quasi-Aristotelian or Scholastic theory of abstraction to empiricists. It would be interesting to hear Kolakowski's judgement on Althusser's paper 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (1971). At the end of 'Karl Marx and the Classical Definition of Truth' (pp. 173–195) Kolakowski says Antonio Gramsci's interpretation of Marx's epistemology is 'roughly in line' with his own and arguably Althusser's allocation of causal efficacy to ideology in historical transitions is partly anticipated by Gramsci.

In 'Heresy' (pp. 263–288) Kolakowski claims 'A historian cannot accept the definition of heresy accepted in the Roman (or any other) Church, otherwise he would be assuming the viewpoint of a particular body, and the teaching of this body would be decisive in identifying the historical facts' (p. 266). Although there is such a thing as not assuming the viewpoint of a particular body there is no such thing as writing history without deploying some set of assumptions. History is more explanatory if methodologically self-conscious, so if the historian's assumptions are Catholic they should be made explicit as such. It is the responsibility of the historian to write the truth, to report what happened in the past as it happened. Suppose the Roman Catholic definition of 'heresy' is correct. It follows that those doctrines correctly identified as heretical by the Church really were heretical. If the historian should write the truth, he should write that truth. It is historically impossible for the historian to deploy a retrospective *epoche* which guarantees agnosticism about beliefs held in the past, because the historian is himself historically situated. History is a relationship between the present and the past, or one time and another.

It is not true that by eschewing a Catholic commitment the historian occupies some 'neutral' vantage point. There is no such thing as not being committed.

STEPHEN PRIEST

UNDERSTANDING OLD TESTAMENT ETHICS: APPROACHES AND EXPLORATIONS by John Barton, *Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville & London, 2003, Pp. xi + 212, \$ 24.95 pbk.*

It is a slightly odd task to review a book which itself amounts to an extended book review, and this is what John Barton has produced: a substantial work in its own