

amusingly ambiguous in a sentence about 'the religious dimension of his person' and, differently, in two minds again in a reference to the 'Prinzregenten Theatre' in Munich where the first of these lectures was first given.

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**GOD, ETERNITY AND THE NATURE OF TIME** Alan G. Padgett. *St Martin's Press, London, 1992. pp. xii + 173. £35.00*

In this book, which started life as an Oxford D. Phil under Professor Swinburne, Padgett claims that on philosophical, biblical and scientific grounds the idea of timelessly eternal existence and a *fortiori* of God's timeless existence cannot be true (p 2). The book provides chapters on all these issues, and a final chapter setting forth the author's own distinctive view of God's relation to time, the idea that God is relatively timeless.

On a survey of relevant biblical passages the author argues plausibly that none of the writers gives a verbatim endorsement of God's timeless eternity. But do any of them endorse the opposite? If A teaches that S is P must not A be shown to possess a concept C which A knows or reasonably believes to be the denial of P? To teach that God is in time or relatively timeless (and therefore not timelessly eternal) must not A possess the concept of timelessly eternal? Rather implausibly Padgett rounds off his discussion with the claim that the biblical writers point in the direction of relative timelessness.

The heart of the book is in the two chapters in which the author attempts to rebut the claims made on scientific and philosophical grounds that tensed language is reducible to tenseless, and then sets forth his own view. He attempts the reduction because he thinks that the idea of God's timeless eternity entails that a B-series view of time is more fundamental than an A-series (p,81). Recently Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski has argued that since the A-series and B-series views are both theories of time they are irrelevant to divine timelessness. (*The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge*, Oxford University Press, 1991, Ch 2). If this view is correct the issue of the relation of tensed to tenseless discourse would be beside the point.

I am not qualified to comment on the scientific section, but much could be said about the author's philosophical treatment of time. Padgett's chief claims are that the reduction is not successful, and that there is a basic confusion between logical and physical reality embedded in what he calls the stasis view of time, the B-series account. There is room for only a few brief remarks on these claims.

Much ground is covered very rapidly, and there is evidence of some careless writing. It is crucial in such discussion for a clear distinction to be drawn between timeless and temporal bearers of truth, between (using one convention) propositions and utterances. But sometimes 'sentence' is written when 'utterance' ought to be, and sentence-types

are sometimes given inverted commas, suggesting utterance-types (expression (30) on p.117), sometimes not (expression (23) on p.104), without any explanation. These are not simply annoying niggles; they have the effect of obscuring the argument.

Padgett gives London's being to the south of Cambridge as an example of a fact that is a logical and not a physical fact (p 118). But of course the two classes of fact are not mutually exclusive, since a physical fact is also a fact from a logical point of view. And Padgett seems unsure whether physical facts are states of affairs, in one paragraph (p 118) claiming both that they are and that they are not. But if the distinction between the two sorts of fact is to play the leading role assigned to it, it needs to be clearer than this. The stasis theorist would surely not be committed to saying (as Padgett claims in the same paragraph) that it is now a physical state of affairs that the sun rises (tenselessly) on 4th July 1776, or that the event of the sun's rising exists (tenselessly) on 4th July 1776, but rather that the sun's rising (i.e. the sun's having a certain relationship to the earth) on 14th July 1776 is a physical state of affairs (or a series of such states) expressed tenselessly.

While these difficulties do not inspire confidence there is nonetheless some interesting material in this chapter which merits the attention of the atemporalist.

Padgett's preferred view is that God is Lord of time, transcending the temporalities of measurable change, dwelling in immeasurable time. Although God is in time, therefore, he is not in our time, but we are in his. He would have been absolutely timeless had he chosen to create an absolutely timeless world, and was timeless before the creation (p.122)

If the expression 'we are in God's time' has a definite meaning, and if God, in his time, acts in our time, then there must be a temporal relation between God's eternity and our time. That is, part of God's life is contemporaneous with the history of the universe and so, since the history of the universe is measured time, part of God's life is measured time. But then if part of his life is, isn't the other part as well? Padgett denies this, but I did not find his argument (pp.127-8) convincing, and it would appear that his view reduces to the usual sempiternal option.

One of the benefits of a novel theoretical construction such as Padgett offers is that it should enable better answers to be given to outstanding problems. It is a pity, therefore, that the author does not even hint at how his view might help over, say, the question of omniscience and human freedom.

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