

am worried that in considering practical reason, Finnis slips from a discussion of “knowing and doing” to just “knowing” alone as an intellectual “grasping”. He writes: “What I do assert is that our primary grasp of what is good for us is a practical grasp” (p.12) This grasping, although about an end to be attained, might be reducible, in Aristotelian eyes, to a “knowing” rather than a “doing”. Readers interested in these problems might consult recent issues of *The American Journal of Jurisprudence* (formerly, *The Natural Law Forum*) in which criticisms of Finnis’s revision of natural law theory have been raised and where he has responded. The remarks of Professor Henry Veatch are, I believe, particularly informative. (Vol. 26 — 1981 — pp. 247—259).

Furthermore, while Finnis’s account of the basic goods is enlightening and interesting normatively, nonetheless it is unclear how he arrived at the particular list noted above. Given his rejection of a philosophical anthropology, what grounds this list as opposed to another list? At times, I wondered if Finnis had not dusted off Ross’s method of determining the “*prima facie* duties” — a practical grasp, yes, but ultimately a kind of intuition. Finnis explicitly denies that his position is reducible to intuitionism. (p.51) But it is not clear how his particular list is obtained and how it might differ from other lists. My last remarks are just questions in the continuing dialogue over the possibility of working out a consistent theory of natural law ethics, a project with which I am in total agreement. And Dr. Finnis has undoubtedly assisted all of us to think more clearly about these possibilities. He has done a quite commendable job. Like his earlier work, the footnotes are a goldmine of scholarly information ranging over the history of philosophy, natural law, contemporary ethical theory and moral theology. Whether or not one agrees with Dr. Finnis on every point of the argument, one can learn much from this thoughtful and careful work.

This is not an easy book—nor should one expect it to be, given the scope and nature of the philosophical issues Dr. Finnis raises, elucidates, argues and defends. For anyone worried about the theoretical bankruptcy of non-cognitivism and the pit-falls of consequentialism, Dr. Finnis’s work will be a philosophical joy to work through.

A highly recommended book.

ANTHONY J. LISSKA

**AESTHETIC THEORY** by T.W. Adorno, translated by C. Lenhardt; London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. x + 526, £26.50

This to me is a strange book, appearing to come from a totally different philosophical world from that in which I have lived. Thus Adorno wrote in the first paragraph of his draft introduction that ‘for several decades publications dealing with aesthetics have been few and far between’ (p.456); but I have on my own shelves a couple of dozen publications on aesthetics of the past few decades and have recently received another four to be added to them. In the same period new journals of aesthetics have been founded and discussion has been frequent and intense. If asked to name important writers in this period I should mention Collingwood, Gombrich, Beardsley, Goodman, Wollheim before pausing to think; but none of these is mentioned in this book. Sixty-six references to Hegel and thirty-four to W. Benjamin are given in the index, but none to Hutcheson or to Hume, though Adorno lived for about twenty years in Britain and the United States and so could presumably read English with ease. Again, Adorno’s explanation of the alleged lack of concern for aesthetic questions is breath-taking for he says that it is ‘because there is a general institutionalized avoidance of uncertainty and controversy among academics’ (p. 458); my experience of academic life has been one of unending controversy.

The book is wide ranging, but there is a central and recurring issue. Art is said to have once had its place as an adjunct to religious and other rituals, but has ceased to be so; what then is now the place and function of art, or has art no longer a place and shall we be faced with the death of art? Adorno is convinced that the function of art is not to

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afford pleasure or enjoyment; 'the employment of art as a dispenser of solace' is a 'perverse bourgeois practice' (p. 2) and 'a compensation for everyday life under capitalism' (p. 461), which is a prostitution of art. We are told that 'people enjoy works of art the less, the more they know about them, and vice versa', and that 'if you ask a musician if he enjoys playing his instrument, he will probably reply: "I hate it"' (p. 19). This again is breath-taking; I have by me just two books on instrumental technique and each in its chapter on 'Practice' makes the same point: 'You may, even when playing quite by yourself, be too carried away by the musical pleasure of what you are doing to listen critically enough to small technical points' (Evelyn Rothwell in *Oboe Technique*); 'Many players spend time simply playing through one piece of music after another: enjoyable though this may be it is less profitable ... than systematic practice' (Rowland-Jones in *Recorder Technique*). But it is not only the pleasure which is a mistaken function of art; Kant's disinterested delight is also too subjective, for the justification of art must be 'objective'. All subjective considerations are unimportant, including the feelings of the artist: 'the manifestation of subjectivity in the result, i.e. the work of art, tends to be immaterial' (p. 85).

I do not find Adorno's book 'objective' justification of art easy to understand; it seems that the essential thing about works of art is their truth; 'works of art do not lie; what they say is literally true' (p. 8) and it is this truth that (rather irrelevantly) gains the subjective admiration of the observer. I do not doubt that Adorno means something by this, but what it is I do not know, I cannot imagine what could be meant by saying that a sonata or an abstract painting was literally true. David Pole once wrote: "to be sure I can imagine that a critic of a certain sort who, looking at a porcelain vase, should exclaim 'How true!' or 'What moral insight!'. But I fear I should not wait to hear how he would go on". But I do not think that we can dismiss Adorno quite so easily for he is clearly a sensitive man, an intelligent man and a learned man. From time to time he allows himself to speak in a simple way and to say, nonetheless, something profound. Certainly the reader of this book will find much to enlighten and interest him; and quite possibly he may make more of the grandiloquent theses than I.

It should be added that Adorno died before he had made a definitive version of this work. It was edited by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, who have published as appendices those fragments which had not been incorporated into the text by the author himself. Judging from the evidence of the published English text alone, both they and the translator, C. Lenhardt, have performed what must have been a very demanding task thoroughly and well.

J.O. URMSON

**CHRISTIANS AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM (Patterns in the Christian theology of religions) by Alan Race. S.C.M. 1983 £5.95.**

The appearance of a book on this subject is long overdue. It is more welcome because it presents a large amount of complex material in a lucid and comprehensible way. The first four chapters set out the problem which faces Christianity as a result of modern advances in the knowledge of other religions. In the face of an increasing awareness of similarities, as well as differences, between the major world religions, this is a problem which cannot be shelved but must be tackled. Christian theology has traditionally made an absolutist claim over against other religions. This absolutist claim is closely related to the understanding of the doctrine of the Incarnation. Race outlines the various approaches to the Incarnation that have been developed in recent years and discusses their significance in relation to a possible Christian theology of religions. Recognising that "what is at stake is the 'finality' of Christ, a notion that is linked with, though distinguishable from, the Incarnation", Race finds the most satisfactory approach to other religions is the pluralist one.

He develops three typological approaches to the Christian theology of