Critical Survey: Recent Texts in the Philosophy of Religion

by

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In the last few decades, a number of sub-fields of philosophy have enjoyed a renaissance of sorts, moving from a period of relatively dormant activity to a period of active research and lively discussion. Applied ethics comes to mind as one such sub-field. Less obviously, perhaps, but no less true, the philosophy of religion is another such sub-field. Indeed, there may even be a connection between the resurgence of applied ethics and the philosophy of religion, in the following way. Like the sub-field of applied ethics, which attempts to bring the abstract theorizing of ethics proper to bear on concrete questions of social and personal concern to many people, the sub-field of the philosophy of religion attempts to bring the abstract theorizing of metaphysical thought to bear on a question of personal and social concern to many people, namely, the question of whether God exists (and what God's nature is like, if God does exist). Indeed, one might even think of the philosophy of religion as a type of "applied metaphysics"!

This makes the philosophy of religion an exciting area in which to teach. For instance, in the course of studying religious claims philosophically, students are introduced to abstract ideas such as necessity and contingency, possible world semantics, free will and foreknowledge, the nature of infinity, the nature of causal explanation, Occam's razor, the nature of time, dualism versus materialism, the ideas of selfhood and personal identity, and so on. Rather than being some dry technical enterprise, students are shown that an exploration of these sophisticated ideas helps to illuminate important questions about beliefs that are held by billions of their fellow human beings around the globe. My experience as a teacher has been that this potential "pay-

off" motivates many students to make strides in understanding demanding philosophical concepts that they might not otherwise have made. In that sense, the philosophy of religion is a rewarding area in which to teach.

As a result of the increase in activity among researchers in this area, recent years have seen the publication of a number of new textbooks – both stand alone texts and anthologies – in the philosophy of religion. The aim of this review is to survey some of these recent titles in order to help instructors in this area choose their course material from among them. Toward that end I will review two stand alone texts and two new anthologies in the philosophy of religion. The two stand-alone texts under review are *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* by Michael J. Murray and Michael Rea, and *Dialogues About God* by Charles Taliaferro; the two anthologies are *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion* (2nd edition), edited by Kelly James Clarke, and *Arguing About Religion*, edited by Kevin Timpe. I will evaluate what I judge to be each text's strengths and weakness, as well as comment on the types of classes for which I believe each is best suited.

***An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, by Michael J. Murray and Michael Rea. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 291pp., $28.00, 9780521619554**

An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion, written by two "big names" in the field, Michael J. Murray and Michael Rea, is a welcome addition to the current range of introductory texts. It aims to be up-to-date, accessible, and wide-ranging. The back cover announces that the book "treats all of the central topics in the field… [and] addresses topics of significant importance that similar books often ignore." (I wonder, by contrast, what a topic of "insignificant importance" would be, but I will let that pass!) In these aims it largely – though not unqualifiedly – succeeds.

Like a lot of introductory texts, the book begins in Part I with an inquiry into the idea of God. What sort of qualities must a being have, in order plausibly to be thought to be God? The authors restrict themselves in their book to considering only the monotheistic notion of God as developed by the Western theistic tradition. This is fair enough – a single book cannot hope to be all things to all people – but it would have been nice to give students at least a thumbnail sketch (over a few paragraphs, say) of non-theistic religious alternatives, to make them aware that there are other traditions beyond the one with which they are presumably most familiar.

This first part of the book is broken into three chapters: the first on God's independence, goodness, and power; the second on God's eternity, knowledge, and providence; and the third (temporarily narrowing the book's focus specifically to Christianity) on the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation. In my judgment, these three chapters of Part I are the most difficult of the book. The first chapter explores in detail puzzles pertaining to necessary existence (e.g. can sense be made of this notion?) as well puzzles pertaining to omnipotence (e.g. the Paradox of the Stone and the puzzle of whether God, being necessarily good, has the power to sin). The second chapter takes up the question of God's relationship to time (is God eternal or everlasting, and how is this contrast best drawn?) as well as questions about the nature of God's foreknowledge (how is God's foreknowledge compatible with human freedom, and if limits are placed on foreknowledge to make room for freedom, how are these limits consistent with God's providential oversight of the world?). The third chapter considers challenges to the coherence of the doctrines of the Trinity (how can God be one yet at the same time three?) and the Incarnation (how can God become human without jettisoning traits essential to his being God?).

These puzzles are explored at a level of detail that is surprising for an introductory text (the three chapters comprising Part I span 90 pages). Devotees of the philosophy of religion are

bound to find these to be fascinating chapters and be grateful to the authors for their ability to set competing answers to these puzzles side by side and judiciously contrast their strengths and weaknesses. I fear, however, that the total newcomer to the philosophy of religion (and even students with a little philosophy under their belts already) may feel overwhelmed by the intricacy of these debates.

The first two pages of the book, for instance, contrast the use of the word "God" as a *proper name* with the use of the word "God" as a *title*, while the next two pages distinguish between *a priori* and *a posteriori* ways of fleshing out the concept of God. These are familiar enough contrasts to professional philosophers, but they can be intimidating to students. Moreover, in the remainder of this chapter and the next two chapters, students are confronted with numerous subtle distinctions, such as those between moral impeccability and moral praiseworthiness, between divine concurrence and occasionalism, between four views of providence (openism, responsivism, Molinism, and Calvinism), and between seven different heretical views of the Incarnation (Arianism, Ebionism, Docetism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism, Appolinarianism, and Monothelitism).

I confess that as I read through Part I my initial impression was that this text was not suitable for my students, even though my course on the philosophy of religion is an upper level course. I worried my students would not have the patience and stamina to wade through such subtle distinctions, at least not in a way that would allow them to retain in their memories the key contrasts. Additionally, many of my students are religious skeptics (indeed, I myself am too) and will question the sense of going into such detail about a concept that they believe to have no real referent. I think it would have been a wiser approach instead to have had a briefer solitary chapter on the concept of God rather than the actual lengthy set of three chapters. This single

chapter could have outlined in much less detail the core attributes of the concept of God, in order simply to set the stage for Part II's much more dynamic exploration of the arguments for and against God's existence. Then the puzzles that the actual Part I explores in detail could have been presented later in Part II as atheistic arguments alleging the incoherence of the concept of God. Presented more explicitly as potential atheistic arguments, these puzzles would be more likely to engage the interests of both atheists and theists. Just as important, this alternative approach would have let the student cut his or her teeth on the more familiar arguments for and against God's existence before entering the less familiar terrain of subtle disputes over features essential to the concept of God..

Fortunately, however, the appeal of Murray and Rea's book in my judgment improves greatly as one moves from Part I into the remaining Parts II and III. Part II takes up the question of whether religious belief can be rational. Like Part I, it comprises three chapters: the first chapter considers the alleged tension between faith and reason, the second considers arguments in favor of God's existence, and the third considers arguments against God's existence. More specifically, the first chapter explores alternative definitions of faith, ultimately plumping for a definition according to which a person has faith in some proposition *p* when there is substantial, but not decisive, evidence for the truth of an alternative to *p*, so that the choice to believe *p* is underdetermined by the evidence. On this definition, believing *p* on faith is compatible with also possessing some evidence for the truth of *p*. Despite this evidence-friendly definition of faith, however, the chapter then turns to the contrast in epistemology between evidentialism and reliabilism, and ultimately takes a stand in favor of the latter. The chapter concludes with an examination of the phenomenon of religious disagreement and the implications of this fact for the choice between religious skepticism, religious pluralism, and religious exclusivism. On this

question the authors argue that the phenomenon of religious disagreement neither obviously entails nor obviously refutes any of these positions.

Finally, I should mention that in their discussion of faith and reason, the authors curiously omit to consider well-known pragmatic arguments for religious belief such as those of Blaise Pascal and William James. (This omission is true of the book as a whole, apart from a one sentence mention of Pascal's Wager on page 252, in a chapter on religion and morality.) That is a shame; in my experience, students are keenly interested in such arguments, and as a matter of sociological fact I suspect that pragmatic arguments do more to sustain people's religious beliefs than do all the traditional arguments for God's existence put together.

As noted earlier, the second and third chapters of Part II take up arguments for and against God's existence. By way of the former, the authors explore the Ontological Argument (both the Anselmian version and the more recent modal version), the Cosmological Argument (both the Kalam argument and arguments based on the distinction between dependent and self-existent beings), and the Argument from Design (both the traditional argument and the more recent "fine-tuning" argument alleging that the physical constants of the universe have been fine-tuned to permit life). The authors' presentation of these arguments is admirably clear and, to my mind, pitched at just the right level of detail for an upper level student. Each of these arguments is mapped out in premise-conclusion form, which makes their structure transparent and facilitates the exploration of objections, since these can be presented as objections to specific premises. Their discussion of the rather forbidding (and to the student, unfamiliar) Ontological Argument in particular is the best short discussion of which I am aware.

The chapter devoted to anti-theistic arguments explores both the Argument from Evil (in both its logical and evidential forms) and, to its great credit, the Argument from Divine

Hiddenness, an important recent atheistic argument that too often gets passed over in textbooks. (In brief, the Argument from Divine Hiddenness alleges that a perfectly loving God would, rather than hiding himself, make his existence more clearly known to his creatures than now is the case.) The authors end this chapter by asking whether the arguments against God's existence are powerful enough to undermine the arguments for God's existence. Their answer: "Some think so. However, as we have seen, these arguments rely on assumptions that are open to some serious challenges. How serious those challenges are is a matter for each of us to decide" (pp. 188-89). They then compare the decision facing the student to a decision regarding which politician to vote for and a decision regarding which car to buy—contexts in which one must weigh up a multitude of competing considerations in some non-algorithmic fashion.

Admittedly, this answer can appear somewhat coy, since the authors' own sympathies clearly lie with theism. Despite my own skeptical leanings, I do not regard this evident sympathy as a fault of the book. A norm requiring authors of philosophical textbooks to disguise their own views would too often produce works that are sterile and spiritless (excuse the pun). Indeed, I am inclined, in a Millean fashion, to regard the authors' theistic leanings as an attractive feature for my own purposes, since my Northeastern students on average tilt to the skeptical side of the spectrum. Hence, a pro-theistic text would challenge them in ways that an anti-theistic text would not. Moreover, it is clear that Murray and Rea have striven to be fair-minded and present both sides of disputed issues charitably and accurately.

That said, in my view there are times when the authors judge an argument, objection, or reply to an objection to be stronger than it really is. Given my limited space, one example of this will unfortunately have to suffice. This example occurs in the context of Murray and Rea's discussion of religious disagreement. There the authors ask whether this disagreement makes it

irrational to be a religious exclusivist, that is, to be a person who insists that only one of the world's religions (Christianity, say) is true. They state their final position thusly: "So, in sum, whether disagreement casts doubt upon human faculties for religious judgment depends quite a lot on our background beliefs, many of which might well come from religious theories themselves" (p. 119). The example that leads them to this conclusion is this:

> Some Christians, for example, believe that apart from divine revelation and special grace, it is literally impossible for someone to acquire true beliefs about God, and that such revelation and grace has not been distributed universally, or even, necessarily, widely. For such a person, widespread disagreement is precisely what we ought to expect (p. 118).

Well, yes, but to observe that each person possesses a network of beliefs, the items of which can mutually support each other, only pushes the rationality question back a level, to whether that set of beliefs itself is rational. That there is the need to ask this further question is shown by any number of conspiracy theorists, who are especially skilled at citing background details of their theory to explain away recalcitrant data that seem on the face of things to disprove their view. ("Of course my neighbor who wishes to murder me always acts friendly towards me! His fake friendliness is a key part of his diabolically devious plan!") The conspiracy theorist's appeal to further elements of his belief set, however, by no means acquits him of the charge of irrationality. The same is surely true regarding the Christians described in the above example.

In seeming recognition of this limitation of their argument, Murray and Rea concede that "[w]hat we have said in this section does not constitute an all-out defense of exclusivism" (p. 119). They go on to state, though, that their argument "does, however, address the concern that widespread religious disagreement might, *by itself*, somehow count against exclusivism" (ibid.; emphasis added). True enough, but what atheistic philosopher thinks that disagreement alone, without the need for other premises, straightaway entails the conclusion that the exclusivist is

irrational? Surely what a competent atheist has in mind instead is an inference to the best explanation: taking religious disagreements as the data in need of explanation, the atheist considers (i) a naturalistic explanation according to which religious beliefs stem from some wholly psychological source; and (ii) a supernaturalistic explanation invoking a battery of religious claims such as those in the example above involving revelation and "special grace." The atheist then uses widely accepted criteria of good explanations (parsimony, fecundity, etc.) to judge (i) to be the superior explanation.

This failure to consider a more robust argument for the irrationality of exclusivism strikes me as case of the authors putting their thumbs on the scale in favor of religious belief. However, although there were to my judgment several other similar such occasions beyond this one example, all-things-considered these cases are exceptions to the authors' much more usual fair-minded and judicious presentations of competing views. Hence, I do not regard these occasional instances of thumbs-on-the-scale to be "deal-breakers"; as I said above, in some ways the authors' favorable view of theism is attractive to me as potential source of challenge to my skeptical students. Moreover, the authors' departures from strict neutrality do not always run in one direction. In their discussion of recent work by believers in "intelligent design" (ID), for instance, Murray and Rea articulate strong objections to ID and let these objections stand, without feeling the need to give ID-proponents the final word.

So concludes my discussion of Part II. I will be brief with Part III. Like the other parts, this comprises three chapters: one on the relationship between science and religion (including a discussion of miracles); a second on the relationship between religion and morality and religion and politics (in particular, the question of religious toleration); and one on immortality and the

relationship between mind and body. I found these chapters to be accessible, up-to-date, and consistently interesting.

On the whole, despite the reservations I have voiced, I judge Murray and Rea's *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* very favorably. For students who have already had some significant exposure to philosophy (preferably advanced undergraduates), it can serve as thorough, up-to-date, and thought-provoking guide to the field. The next time I teach the philosophy of religion, I plan on taking a break from my long-time text, William L. Rowe's *Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction*, 4th edition (Wadsworth, 2006), and giving this text a try.

***Dialogues About God*, by Charles Taliaferro. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009. 124pp., $16.95, 9780742559639**

Charles Taliaferro's *Dialogues About God* is a stand-alone text (that is, it is not an anthology of essays by others), but it is not a textbook in the usual sense. Instead, it is (as its title suggests) a series of dialogues (five in total) between believers and non-believers. Those who are familiar with John Perry's well-known *Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (Hackett, 1978) will understand the goal of Taliaferro's book, namely, to use the dynamism of the dialogue form to involve the reader in an exploration of what otherwise might forbiddingly abstruse ideas, and to exploit the point-counterpoint form of the dialogue to teach students the skills of posing philosophical objections and constructing replies. Unlike Perry's text, however, *Dialogues About God* is not aimed at the true beginner in philosophy. It is a challenging text that can be read with profit by students with a fair amount of prior exposure to philosophy. I would not recommend including the book as part of, say, a "101-style" general introduction to philosophy. (By contrast, another dialogue by John Perry entitled *Dialogue on Good, Evil, and*

the Existence of God [Hackett, 1999] *would* be suitable for introductory students. It is primarily focused on the argument from evil, though, and as a result, it is much less comprehensive in scope that Taliaferro's dialogue.)

In its aim of using dialogue to teach important ideas and arguments within the philosophy of religion, Taliaferro's book largely succeeds. It must be said that Taliaferro's text lacks the playful charm of Perry's text; characters often speak in lengthy paragraphs, and the tone is uniformly serious throughout. In fact, I am tempted to say that the feel of Taliaferro's dialogue resides somewhere between Perry's dialogue, on the one hand, and the objection-and-reply format of Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*, on the other hand! More accurately yet, I suppose Taliaferro's dialogue can best be understood as an attempted updating of Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. Indeed, the three main characters in the dialogue – Chris (a theist who claims reason can show God to exist), Pat (an atheist), and Liz (a theist who believes God is completely beyond human understanding) – in many ways resemble Hume's own characters of Cleanthes, Philo, and Demea, respectively.

The bulk (around 95%, I would estimate) of the five dialogues takes place between Chris the defender of natural religion and Pat the atheist. Liz typically pipes up at end of a dialogue to scold Chris and Pat for thinking that God, who is wholly ineffable, can be understood or discussed in human language. She is thus a minor character, but I found her interesting, if only because her viewpoint is one frequently expressed by students. In effect this viewpoint questions the legitimacy of any philosophical thinking about God's nature or existence, and I have never quite felt confident as a teacher about how to respond to these challenges to the legitimacy of my course's subject. Hence, I found it interesting to see how Taliaferro has Chris the theist respond to Liz's challenges. (A fourth character, Tony, is an agnostic who makes a two page cameo

appearance near the end of the book. By contrast with the character of Liz, Tony didn't seem to me to add much to the dialogue, and I think it would have been better somehow to incorporate a discussion of agnosticism into the dialogue between the other three characters.)

One of the main virtues of the text is its fair-mindedness. Both of the main characters Chris and Pat are portrayed as intelligent and reasonable, and Taliaferro does a good job of having each character present the strongest points for his or her side (I say "his or her" side, because Taliaferro explicitly tells us that he has chosen the names "Chris" and "Pat" on account of their gender-neutrality). A student who is not familiar with Taliaferro's other writings (and who skips the book's introduction, in which Taliaferro mentions that though once an atheist, he is now a theist) will have a hard time figuring which "side" the author of the characters Chris and Pat himself is on.

Turning now to the five dialogues themselves, I must say that I found the first of the five dialogues to be the weakest. On page 3, for example, the atheist Pat launches into an extended argument against the coherence of theism on the grounds that the idea of a disembodied mind is self-contradictory. This strikes me as one of the weakest arguments in the atheist's arsenal, and Taliaferro's discussion of it requires plunging the student straightaway into a discussion of competing theories of the mind's relation to the body, complete with references to such tropes as Chalmers-style "zombies" (the idea of which our horror-movie-saturated students are likely to misunderstand, given Taliaferro's extremely brief explication). The dialogue next shifts to contrasting necessary and contingent existence as well as intentional and non-intentional frameworks. This is rather heavy-going for the first dialogue, and I found myself having a similar reaction to Taliaferro's text that I had to Murray and Rea's text: I wish the author had found a gentler, or at least more engaging way, of drawing the reader into the subject.

Fortunately, and again like Murray and Rea's book, Taliaferro's book improves with the second part, that is, the second dialogue. This dialogue explores the "classical understanding" of God in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and (Taliaferro adds, in a brief nod to non-Western religions) "the theistic traditions in Hinduism" (p. 25). Topics explored include the ideas of omnipotence (and the related question of whether God can sin), the tension between divine foreknowledge and human freedom, and the distinction between eternity and everlastingness. This is challenging material for the student, but the level of detail in which the material is presented is not so overwhelming as to the alienate the student, in my judgment.

The third and fourth dialogues are devoted, respectively, to considering arguments for God's existence and against God's existence. The three traditional theistic arguments – the ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments -- are covered (though only the modal version of the ontological argument is presented), as well as the argument from religious experience. (Like Murray and Rea, Taliaferro curiously and unfortunately omits any discussion of pragmatic arguments for theism such as those of Pascal and James.) Arguments against God's existence include the argument from evil, the argument from divine hiddenness (very briefly presented), and arguments against the coherence of notions of the afterlife. These third and fourth dialogues were far and away my favorite dialogues in the book.

The fifth and final dialogue explores a bric-a-brac of remaining issues, including the ideas of miracles, the Incarnation, and the Atonement, as well as the epistemological implications of religious diversity. In this dialogue, Chris the theist identifies himself or herself as a religious pluralist rather than as a person who holds particularly Christian beliefs (though this does not stop him or her from defending the coherence of the Christian notions of

Incarnation and Atonement!). The dialogue, and the book, ends with the characters vowing to continue their discussion and expand it to encompass non-theistic conceptions of the divine.

All things considered, the book is impressive. What reservations I have concern the question of how to use it in a course. On the plus side, it does have the nice pedagogical feature of appending "questions for further inquiry" to the end of each chapter. However, as I earlier said, the book is not really appropriate for introductory students, so it cannot serve as the main text for a unit on God's existence in an introductory survey of philosophical issues. That makes it most fitting as a text in an upper level philosophy of religion course. If, though, the instructor in that course already includes an anthology and a standard stand-alone text (such as Rowe's or Murray and Rea's), then adding *Dialogues About God* to the mix would seem like overkill.

The most obvious way in which to include the text, then, would be *in place of* a standard stand-along text. That might indeed work, but I find myself reluctant to deprive my students of the assistance offered by the more straightforward presentation of issues that standard texts contain. On the other hand, if the instructor has already found a place in his or her syllabus for one of the recent debate-style books on the market (such as *Knowledge of God* by Alvin Plantinga and Michale Tooley [Blackwell, 2008] or *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist* by William Lane Craig and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong [Oxford, 2004]), then I would strongly urge that instructor to consider using *Dialogues About God* instead. Students are likely to find its back-and-forth dialogue format more engaging than a chapter-based debate format, and they are more likely to have a better sense of which points from one view are responses to which points from the opposing view, since these responses come in the very next paragraph rather in the next chapter.

***Readings in the Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd edition, ed. Kelly James Clark. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2008. 514pp., $64.95, 9781551118031**

Kelly James Clark's *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion* is an anthology intended for use in a philosophy of religion course. It is divided into five parts. The first part is titled "Arguments for the Existence of God" and it covers the tradition ontological, cosmological, and design arguments (including Robin Collin's cosmological fine-tuning version of the design argument); to this it adds moral arguments for God's existence and Alvin Plantinga's recent critique of naturalism. The second part is titled "Reason and Belief in God" and explores debates over evidentialism, "Reformed epistemology," Wittgensteinian Fideism, and pragmatic justifications for religious belief, including (hooray!) excerpts from James and Pascal. The third part is titled "Critiques of God" and includes well-chosen excerpts from Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, and a very interesting theistic response to these by Merold Westphal. The fourth part is entitled "God and Human Suffering" and includes treatments of this topic by, among others, David Hume, John Hick, Marilyn McCord Adams, Daniel Howard-Snyder, and William Rowe. The fifth and final part is titled "Divine Language and Attributes" and includes discussions of whether language about God is literal or metaphorical, as well as discussions of divine passability, petitionary prayer, universalistic salvation, religious pluralism, and feminist theology. The anthology's editorial apparatus includes brief but effective introductions to each of the five parts, suggestions for further reading, and well-written discussion questions after each selection.

One feature that stands out to me about the selection of the articles is the overall tilt in favor of theism. Of the 57 selections included, by my count only 14 (around ¼ of the total) defend a skeptical viewpoint. Page-number-wise, matters are even worse, since most of the skeptical selections are significantly shorter than their theistic counterparts; by my count they

total a mere 63 pages out of 500+ pages (thus, not much more than 10% of the total). It is true that a few of the selections by theists might themselves count as skeptical in a way; for instance, Daniel Howard-Synder's discussion of theodicies, and Nicholas Wolterstorff's (well-written and quite moving) piece on the same subject, *reject* all extant theodicies and instead opt for the view that whatever the divinely-sought greater goods come from evil are, they are beyond human ken. Counting these two article as "skeptical" would add 27 pages to the skeptical total and somewhat address the "global" imbalance between theistic and atheistic articles. However, even this cannot make up for more "localized" imbalances. For instance, on the argument for design, Richard Dawkins is given a scant two and a half page excerpt in which to present the evolutionary rebuttal, whereas Michael Denton is given nine pages in which to argue against the explanatory adequacy of evolution. Moreover, the choice of the Denton piece is somewhat curious, since this is an excerpt from a 1985 work, and much has happened in the debate over intelligent design since then.

Finally, one change between the first and second editions of the anthology is Clark's addition, at the end of each of the five parts, of "reflection pieces." (Another change is the elimination of the first edition's unit on non-Western religions.) In his preface, Clark explains the purpose of these reflection pieces as follows:

> These reflection pieces are by philosophers who have thought long and hard about the issues in the section… These were added because of the argument-counterargument arrangement of the text. The danger of this method is that students might be tempted toward skepticism, thinking that no one should make up his or her mind about philosophical issues. But people do and in some cases must make up their minds on some of these issues. The reflection pieces show how at least one thinker has done this. This gives the student a road map for one way of finding their way through the maze of point-counterpoint essays (p. xi).

These reflections pieces are without exception written by theists. Of course, Clarke is squarely within his rights as editor to choose to include only this type of reflection piece. However, it

does mean that this anthology is really aimed at an audience of committed Christian students (such as Clarke's students at Calvin College, I presume). As such, I cannot recommend this anthology for use in non-Christian-affiliated colleges or universities.

***Arguing About Religion*, ed. Kevin Timpe. New York: Routledge, 2009. 633pp., $50.00, 978-0415988629**

By contrast with Clarke's *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion,* Kevin Timpe's anthology *Arguing About Religion* is suitable for use in a wide range of institutions, not just Christian ones. The skeptical pieces, for instance, are typically of roughly the same length as their theistic counterparts, and there is no analogue of the "reflection pieces" included in the Clark anthology. Timpe's anthology, however, contains less editorial apparatus than Clarke's. Like Clark, Timpe includes a brief introduction to each part of his anthology; however, unlike Clark, Timpe include neither any discussion questions following selections, nor any suggestions for further reading. (There is, though, a brief but useful glossary of terms at the end of Timpe's anthology.)

The anthology comprises six parts. Part 1 is titled "Methodological Issues in Philosophy of Religion" and takes up the contrast between faith and reason as well as the issue of religious pluralism. Part 2 is titled "God's Existence and Nature" and covers the ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments (including the fine-tuning argument) as well as the arguments from morality and from religious experience. Only one article is included for each argument type; of the seven articles in total in Part 2, four are theistically-inclined and three are skeptically-inclined. Pragmatic arguments for religious belief, such as those of Pascal and James, are unfortunately ignored. Part 3 is titled "Evil and Divine Hiddenness" and it covers those two topics, with five articles devoted to the former and three to the latter. The inclusion of

interesting readings on the divine hiddenness argument (by Peter Van Inwagen, Michael J. Murray, and Robert P. Lovering) is to my mind one of the anthology's strengths.

Part 4 is titled "Providence and Interaction" and covers such issues as the tension between freedom and foreknowledge, and the understanding of petitionary prayer. To my mind this part was longer than was really necessary. I would prefer it to have been shorter, which would have freed up space to include readings on pragmatic arguments for theistic belief, on miracles, and on the Euthyphro challenge to divine command ethics; none of these topics are included in the anthology. (It does, though, include two readings on Asian religious thought, namely, on the idea of Karma and on Daoist conceptions of death. For those who want an anthology that includes much more substantial selections from non-Western religious thought, I recommend *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: East Meets West,* edited by Andrew Eshleman [Blackwell, 2008].)

Part 5 is titled "The Afterlife" and takes up issues of dualism versus materialism, the metaphysics of resurrection, and conceptions of salvation. I found the readings in this part to be very interesting. For me, the highlights were David Lewis's bracing attack on notions of eternal punishment in his article "Divine Evil," and James F. Sennett's interesting exploration of some puzzles related to the idea of heaven in his article "Is There Freedom in Heaven?" Part 6 is titled "Religion and Contemporary Life." It includes selections from "New Atheists" such as Daniel Dennett and Richard Dawkins, an extended selection (four articles in total) on the debate over creationism and evolution, and a concluding article by Paul Weithman examining the question of what role religion properly ought to play in a religiously diverse polity. The articles in this part struck me as admirably up-to-date and well-chosen.

Does this favorable view of the text mean that I plan on using it in my next philosophy of religion course? Alas, no. My long-time anthology has been *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology,* edited by Louis P. Pojman and Michael Rea (Thomson-Wadsworth, 2008), and I still prefer this anthology, chiefly on account of its larger number of selections on a wider-range of topics: 70 selections compared to Timpe's 45. (However, one topic omitted by Pojman and Rea but covered by Timpe is the divine hiddenness argument I mentioned earlier. In this regard, the Timpe anthology scores higher. I do hope that the next edition of Pojman and Rea's anthology will include readings on this topic.)

In summary, Michael J. Murray and Michael Rea's *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* and Charles Taliaferro's *Dialogues About God* are very welcome additions to the range of stand-alone texts on the philosophy of religion. Kelly James Clarke's anthology *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion* is a text that teachers in Christian schools may wish to consider. Kevin Timpe's *Arguing About Religion* is an up-to-date anthology with a number of interesting selections not found elsewhere, but it is less wide-ranging than many instructors perhaps desire. Still, instructors themselves are likely to find the selections in Timpe's anthology to be interesting and thought-provoking.