

Kant, Kierkegaard, James and Evans have four different accounts of belief which are never compared or carefully analyzed (i.e., an occurrent notion, a strong volitional notion wherein every belief is volitionally acquired, a behavioral notion and Price's dispositional notion). Until we are clear on what belief is it is difficult to know how it relates to action.

*The Concept of God: An Exploration of Contemporary Difficulties with the Attributes of God*, by **Ronald H. Nash**. Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1983. Pp. 127.

Reviewed by CLEMENT DORE, Vanderbilt University.

Professor Nash's book is, on the whole, a clearly written, helpful introduction to contemporary discussions of the nature of God. It will be of particular value for those who are not well acquainted with recent literature on the subject; but it will also be of use to those "analytic" religionists who have paid scant attention to process theology: Nash discusses the differences between process theologians and contemporary Thomists at length.

I have some reservations about the book, three of the most substantive of which I will now mention.

Nash appears to be presenting us on p. 17 with an actualist account of possible worlds, on which any individual in another possible world is identical with an individual in the actual world (though, of course, different in some respects). But surely, e.g., dragons exist in some possible worlds; and it looks as if it is in principle impossible adequately to specify individuals in the actual world who are identical with them. If the actualist chooses to claim that *every* individual in the actual world is a possible dragon, then the reply is that it is possible for there to be a *larger number* of dragons than there are individuals in the actual world. And similar considerations apply to the actualist claim that it is, e.g., actual reptiles (actual flame throwers, etc.) which might have been dragons.

A more fundamental problem is that actualism renders modal arguments for God's existence question-begging. If every individual which exists in a possible world is identical with an actual individual, then claiming that God exists in a possible world (or, borrowing from Plantinga, that there is a possible world in which maximality is exemplified) is *eo ipso* claiming that God exists in the actual world. So the possibility premiss, which is indispensable in all modal arguments for God's existence, would be, in those contexts, as good a candidate for being question-begging as any skeptic might desire, in the absence of a more extensive defense of it than modal arguers generally provide.

It is, of course, true that, in order to establish that God exists *in all his*

*supremacy* in the actual world, the modal arguer requires the further premiss that it is a necessary truth that if God exists, then he is maximally perfect in every world in which he exists. But that does not block the charge of question-begging against the actualist who claims that, since God exists in a possible world, he exists, in *some* fashion or other, in the actual world.

On pp. 65-66, Nash cites favorably Aquinas' approach to the problem of how human beings can do other than they do, even though God, in his omniscience, has known from all eternity what they would do. What Aquinas says in effect about this problem is that though the sentence, "If God knows that S will do A, then S will do A", expresses a necessary truth, it does not follow that the sentence, "If God knows that S will do A, then S will *necessarily* do A", also expresses a necessary truth or, indeed, that it expresses a truth of any kind.

Nash appears to think that people who are worried about the problem of God's foreknowledge and human freedom are simply misplacing a modal operator. ("Necessarily, if God knows that p, then p", which expresses a necessary truth, does not entail "If God knows that p, then necessarily p.") But in fact the problem is not so easily solved. For it can be formulated without the commission of any such fallacy. Suppose that God knew in 1930 that "Dore will write a review of Nash's book in May of 1984" expressed a true proposition. And suppose that it is now May of 1984 and I have it in my power to refrain from writing such a review. But now *if* I refrain, then not only did "Dore will write the review in May of 1984" express a truth in 1930 but "Dore will *not* write the review in May of 1984" did so as well. Hence, given God's foreknowledge, my having it in my power not to write the review is *eo ipso* my having it in my power to bring it about that two contradictory propositions are both true. (And, of course, we can generalize: For any action about which God knew that a person would do it, the latter has it in his power to refrain from doing it only if he has it in his power to make two contradictory propositions true.)

An alternative conclusion is that, even though it *was* true in 1930 that God knew then that I would not refrain from writing this review, I now have it in my power to bring it about that God did *not* know that in 1930. But this conclusion is surely as unpalatable as the former one.

I should point out here that I am not endorsing the envisaged argument for predestination, but rather maintaining that the problem of divine (and, indeed, human) foreknowledge and human freedom is more intractable than Nash appears to realize.

There are two further criticisms of Nash's approach to God's foreknowledge: (1) Nash says on p. 66 that "given that God is essentially omniscient", the sentence, "Whatever God knows is true", expresses a necessary truth. But God's being essentially omniscient is not a necessary condition of the envisaged sentence expressing a necessary truth. *I* am not essentially omniscient, but, in view of

the meaning of “knows”, “Whatever *Dore* knows is true” also expresses a necessary truth. (2) Nash nowhere indicates that *theological* fatalism is not the only kind of fatalism. Suppose that *no one* knew in 1930 that “Dore will write a review of Nash’s book in May of 1984” expressed a truth. Still, the proposition which it expresses was in fact *true*. And this provides the non-theological fatalist with as firm a foundation as the theological fatalist can lay claim to. My having it in my power to refrain from performing the envisaged action *looks* like my having it in my power either to make two contradictory propositions true or to render what was true in 1930 no longer true in 1930.

Finally, I do not think that Nash always succeeds in making clear just why there is a particular problem about God’s nature. For example, we find on p. 104 that “While human beings normally come to have knowledge about other persons in a passive way (by being acted upon causally), this avenue of knowledge is clearly out of the question (for Thomists).” And Nash subsequently accepts the Thomistic claim that God is absolutely causally independent of other beings. But, we are left in the dark as to why God would be less than a maximally perfect being if my writing this review now *caused* God to *know* (from all eternity) that I am doing so. It is far from clear that *every* kind of causal dependency is perfection-diminishing.

Also, we are introduced to the problem of God’s immutability (on p. 99) by the following argument, “.a perfect being must be incapable of change. After all, change must be for the better or the worse.” Nash in effect abandons this latter claim later in the chapter; but I submit that it is highly implausible on its face and, hence, not a genuine problem raiser.

*Religion: If there is no God... On God, the Devil, Sin and other Worries of the so-called Philosophy of Religion*, by **Leszek Kolakowski**. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982. \$19.95.

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This book also exists in a paperback edition available in Great Britain through Fontana Paperbacks, presumably for much less than the outrageous cost of the hardbound edition. Even at half—or one fourth—of the price, however, these contents are not worth recommending for purchase. I am surprised that Oxford University Press published the book at all.

I am particularly surprised that such a distinguished Press allowed the book’s text to be continually interrupted—sometimes in mid-sentence—with inserts of quotations, printed in bold-face type, that mar the appearance of the page (making each chapter look like an article in some Sunday Supplement magazine) and ruin