

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

the continuity (to the extent that there is continuity) of the argument (to the extent that there is argument). What shall we readers do? Are we meant to stop and read each quotation when we come to it? If so, we lose the train of thought. Are we then to ignore them? Why, then, were they sprinkled so thickly across these pages? Are we to come back to them for pondering and follow-up? Then why were no references given to allow us to explore the context of the passages? Such journalistic silliness is below the dignity of a serious publisher.

Kolakowski's content is not quite consistently so light-minded, to match the journalistic appearance of his pages, but he is sufficiently often flippant (as signalled, perhaps, by the sub-title, above) so as to raise questions about his intended audience. On the dust-jacket we are told that the discussion is "wide-ranging" (which it is), but also that the book is a "useful introduction to the philosophy of religion" (which it is not). The off-handed way in which important arguments are portrayed and the general insouciance of the approach suggest an audience of bright undergraduates; but the "wide-ranging" references that are the hallmark of this style are offered without enough exposition to be intelligible to genuine beginners. Those who are in a position to catch the references, on the other hand, will want a more meaty presentation.

The topics covered are central enough: the problem of evil, the theistic arguments, mysticism, life after death, religious language, and the origins of religion. Each of these chapters, however, wanders and disappoints. The discussion of theodicy becomes a rather unfocussed treatment of the divine command theory of goodness, ending with an unexceptionable but thin conclusion that all depends on whether one trusts God or not. The chapter on the theistic arguments begins with a very sketchy survey of Thomas and Kant, wanders into a general discussion of skepticism, then back to a light once-over of the ontological argument invoking the names, at least, of Anselm and Hartshorne. Mysticism is treated largely in terms of the suspicions of the ecclesiastical authorities and of the epistemological similarities between mysticism and skepticism. Life after death, the shortest chapter, ends with the rather obvious point that the existence of God as guarantor of meaning is more closely related to the issue of life after death than the mere grammar of the two claims independently might indicate. The discussion of religious language makes easy points against John Hick's ideas on postmortem verification in favor of a theory in which any shared "feeling of understanding" (p.164) constitutes meaning; it also manages to reduce even Braithwaite's reductionist theory to near-unrecognizability.

Indeed, it was during the reading of this last chapter on religious language that doubts began to form in my mind as to whether the "wide-ranging" discussion that Kolakowski offers is grounded in actual first-hand acquaintance with the works he discusses. My suspicions were roused by Kolakowski's failure even to mention "*agapeistic* policies of life" in connection with Braithwaite, but to

describe his position in terms of (unspecified) “well-defined rules of conduct” (p. 172), which, after all, are not quite the same thing. But when I read that Kierkegaard was supposed to have supported the notion that “a religious myth (meaning not only the ‘narrative’ but the ‘metaphysical’ constituents of worship) can be understood only within, as it were, through real participation in a religious community” (p. 176), then I knew that something serious was amiss. Kolakowski writes: “This was indeed Kierkegaard’s claim: a non-Christian is unable to understand Christianity” (pp. 176-177). But this is all wrong! Kierkegaard had no use for “religious community” and detested the Danish Christians. The real Christian, the Knight of Faith, cannot even communicate with other Knights of Faith. The real Christian, trembling with the inward passion of paradox and absurdity, is beyond “the universal” which alone allows the securities of speech and understanding. The real Christian is unable even to “understand” himself. Kolakowski is so far from the thought-world of Kierkegaard that one must seriously wonder whether he has ever ventured into it directly.

Perhaps some of the off-handedness, the insouciance, the flippancy, and the thinness of this book can thus be interpreted. The readers of this journal will not, in any event, need to place it on their reading lists.