

first, in which Meynell explores criticisms that Christian faith has either been superfluous to discussions of morality or a negative influence, given the inevitably heteronomy of a "divine-command" ethics. Meynell deals with the objections directly, and then turns the tables to ask whether ethics can survive without a transcendent ground and inspiration. His phenomenology of collective and personal self-deception as the normal context for human actions, inevitably turning ends into interests, presents a persuasive case. Readers familiar with Bernard Lonergan's *Insight* will recognize the scaffolding of this treatment.

The chapters outlining a constructive Christian theology of incarnation and atonement, divine triunity, and the historicity of the gospels, strike one as adequate if not groundbreaking. Those on "Christianity and the religions" and "life after death" appeal to factors which offer a less than analytic grasp of the difficulties involved. In the latter Meynell moves from his relatively firm philosophical ground to explore "near-death" experiences, without clearly assessing how such data are to be employed: "It appears that there is a great deal of empirical evidence which, when taken together rather than criticized piecemeal, can hardly be understood otherwise than as giving rather strong support for the thesis that, whether we like it or not ..., we are to expect some form of life after death"(125). Perhaps so, perhaps not; but what has this to do with the resurrection promised in Christian faith? The treatment of other religions in relation to Christian claims could have profited from a sensible use of the philosophical distinction of *sense* and *reference*, for example, to help us negotiate the fact that we and Muslims may face different directions in worshipping God, yet the One whom we worship cannot but be the same—unless one is to insist that Muslim claims to be worshipping God are *prima facie* false. However one may assess that mini-argument, there is little in Meynell's treatment to indicate how one might approach such claims and counter-claims from diverse religious perspectives. We have reason to have hoped for more from a philosopher of religion who has already demonstrated considerable acumen in using philosophy to illuminate issues of faith; there are signs that these were earlier topical pieces which, perhaps, an erstwhile friend persuaded him to publish.

Duns Scotus, Metaphysician, by William A Frank and Allan B. Wolter. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1995. Pp. 224. \$28.95.

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The work of John Duns Scotus (1265-1308) enjoys something of a renaissance of interest today. In addition to the recent special issue of *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* (1993), Allan B. Wolter's articles have been collected and edited by Marilyn McCord Adams in *The Philosophical Theology of John Duns Scotus* (Cornell 1990). For those interested in a more direct study of the work of the "Subtle Doctor", the pre-

sent volume offers an excellent place to begin.

The volume is part of a series which "presents the fundamental ideas of great thinkers" (vii), usually through the close study of one representative text. In the case of Scotus, however, this is very difficult. Because of his death at age 42, Scotus leaves no systematic metaphysical "question" which would lend itself to this sort of study. Frank and Wolter have gathered excerpts from various texts and present them in a way that enables the reader to grasp the overall metaphysical insights of Scotist thought. These texts range from the earliest days of Scotus's career as a teacher and are drawn from his theological and philosophical works. After an initial chapter on the life and works of Scotus, the subsequent chapters present texts in Latin and English followed by a commentary.

Scotus was primarily a metaphysician, and "his metaphysics was ordered finally toward the rational knowledge of the first being... there can be no more direct access to his basic thought than through a critical study of his philosophical treatment of God." (Preface, p. vii). The questions of God's existence and the capacity of human knowledge of God form the contours of Scotist "moderate Realism" and offer the structural organization for the present volume. Frank and Wolter proceed from the object of metaphysics to the human capacity for knowledge of the first being. In this way, they faithfully represent the foundational Scotist insight: that all being can be known and that the power of human intellection reveals something about the reality which is its object.

The organization of the chapters follows a pedagogical format: from the basic metaphysical question of being and the nature of the science of metaphysics (chapter 2), to the Parisian proof for God's existence (chapter 3), the nature of human knowledge of God (chapter 4), and the primacy of contingent reality and willing (chapter 5). Chapters three and four are clearly the central point of the volume. The first two chapters form the biographical and philosophical background. The fifth chapter completes the study with the moral dimensions of contingency and freedom. The five chapters offer a remarkable summary of the central metaphysical insights of Scotus and provide an excellent initial study of the Franciscan's thought.

The commentaries for each chapter are excellent as well. They offer both historical and philosophical background for Scotist thought and highlight his innovative contributions to both epistemological issues (intuition, for example) in chapter 4 and the significance of his approach to the question of God's existence in chapter 3.

A minor error appears on page 9, where the dates of his recognition and beatification are presented in a confusing way. The text should read: "His cult from time immemorial and his reputation for heroic virtue were officially recognized by the Roman Catholic Church on 6 July 1991. Pope John Paul II confirmed his status as blessed by conferring liturgical honors in a solemn vespers service in the Basilica of St. Peter on 20 March 1993."

This volume offers an excellent introduction to the thought of John Duns Scotus, suitable for advanced undergraduates and graduate students. With its dense commentary, it is also a valuable introduction to medieval philosophy.