

of basic logical validity may not involve the illative sense, and Aristotle saw no need to invoke any such faculty for premises he deemed self-evident or evident to the senses. But after the modern turn that McNerny laments at length in Part I, it now takes (at least for some) a conscious decision to trust those claims of common sense that earlier philosophers might take for granted. Wherever the will enters in, practical judgment comes into play about when and where and how enthusiastically to give one's assent.

McNerny closes with a rousing endorsement and defense of John Paul II's attitude toward faith and reason, presented in the papal encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. This approach insists both on the *autonomy* of philosophy in relying on reason for its conclusions and assessments, and on an attitude of openness to truth that is *beyond* human reason (and may in fact be reason's ultimate fulfillment). It is autonomy but not self-sufficiency that philosophy needs in order to flourish. As for the brand of modern philosophy that deliberately closes off the path from reason to faith, McNerny calls this "lapsed Christian philosophy" and its adherents "theologians manques." The atheological presuppositions that would *preclude* all discussion of God thus instantiate the very philosophical bigotry of which they so often accuse believing philosophers.

Worse still, mistrust of the Creator has led to a mistrust of the creature as well, so that it is up to believers to defend the capacity of the human mind to know the truth. In *Fides et Ratio* and in McNerny's book as well, Christianity emerges as the philosopher's best friend. For a spirited, intelligent, and deftly-written defense of these and other "preambles to the preambles" of faith, this book is an excellent place to begin.

Humour and Irony in Kierkegaard's Thought by John Lippitt. Macmillan Press/St Martin's Press, 2000. xii and 210 pp. Cloth. \$65.00

Kant and Kierkegaard on Religion, edited by D.Z. Phillips and T. Tessin. Macmillan Press/St Martin's Press, 2000. xxi and 303 pp. Cloth. \$65.00

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A well-established popular conception of Kierkegaard has it that he is a fideistic irrationalist, and that the dominant tone of his writings is one of melancholy and gloom. These perceptions are vigorously challenged in these two volumes.

As he admits in the first sentence ("Kierkegaard and humour? But isn't he so gloomy?") Lippitt's title is liable to surprise those who have acquired the simple image of Kierkegaard as "the melancholy Dane." Yet, as is apparent to readers of at any rate his pseudonymous works, Kierkegaard is, for all the undoubted bleakness of some of his writing, probably the most humorous of all major philosophical authors. Wit, satire and comedy are pervasive features of many of his works, and (moving from use to mention) he is as interested in analyzing the existential significance of irony and humour as he is in anxiety, guilt or despair. Commentators have,

though, shown far less interest in the former themes than the latter. This is not a minor omission, for as Lippitt convincingly demonstrates, Kierkegaard's understanding of the comic is inextricably entwined with his account of ethical and religious existence.

Lippitt's book has a scope that is both narrower and broader than the title might suggest. It does not attempt to discuss all of either the manifestations or the discussions of the comic in Kierkegaard's *oeuvre*, confining itself largely (though not exclusively) to the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. But Lippitt's account of the comic in the *Postscript* leads him to substantial discussions of indirect communication, the significance of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms, moral perfectionism, Socratic irony, imagination, the nature of the transitions between different existence spheres and the nature of philosophy itself. It is thus well worth the attention of anyone with an interest in Kierkegaard or, indeed, in the broader question of the significance that the comic might have for "serious" questions about the nature of ethical and religious existence.

The book's argument develops in a somewhat complex fashion. Lippitt starts by considering the way in which Climacus (the pseudonymous author of *Postscript*) uses satire and ridicule as much as argument in his polemic against Hegel. This raises fundamental questions about the nature of that polemic and, beyond that, about the nature of philosophy itself. The *Postscript's* objection to Hegel is not simply that he commits intellectual errors, but that there is something fundamentally perverse in his aspiration to System-building, or in his attempt to include such existential matters as ethics and religion in his System. And this perversity is not something that is addressed by demonstrations of the inadequacy of specific arguments or by simply making Hegel a target of our ridicule; it is, rather, by shocking us into seeing in ourselves tendencies similar to Hegel's. Climacus' satire, then, is not an abandonment of proper standards of philosophical rationality, but an attempt to address philosophical confusions at their deepest level, as confusions of sensibility.

Lippitt returns to this point in his later Chapters, where he tries to show how the comic can serve as a way of reorienting our sensibilities, and thus play a role in enabling transitions between radically different ways of understanding ourselves. Before that, in Chs 3 and 4, Lippitt relates Kierkegaard/Climacus to the tradition of ethical thought that Cavell has identified as "Moral perfectionism," and which is characterized by a concern for self-transformation or development, especially as this is effected by the relation of the self to an "exemplar" who suggests higher possibilities. Here Lippitt relates his work to that of James Conant, drawing at first on a discussion by Conant of Nietzsche for an account of exemplarity but then providing a highly effective critique of Conant's own readings of the *Postscript*. The difference here is that, while Lippitt takes Kierkegaard to be offering Climacus (a self-proclaimed "humourist") as an exemplar of intellectually rigorous but existentially responsible thinking, Conant has argued that Kierkegaard intends us to take Climacus as a negative exemplar, to see him as becoming entangled in the very errors he denounces. This reading has generated some controversy among Kierkegaard scholars; Lippitt's critique of it here seems to me definitive.

In Ch 5 Lippitt offers a reading of Climacus' explicit discussions of irony and humour as they relate to the aesthetic, ethical and religious spheres of existence, before going on in Ch 6 to relate his ideas to Jamie Ferreira's important discussion of the possibility of transition between the spheres. Kierkegaard has often been taken as saying that such transitions must be arbitrary acts of will, criterionless choices. Ferreira has shown that they are better understood in terms of an imaginative re-envisioning of one's possibilities. Lippitt argues that like the *Gestalt* shifts and metaphors discussed by Ferreira, comedy too can be seen as a way in which we are able to see ourselves in a new light. In Ch 7 he develops the idea that the comic is able to contribute to "substantial changes of existential orientation that are of ethical and religious significance" (p119) showing that the "pathos" and even "terror" that Climacus certainly associates with such transitions are not incompatible with and even go naturally together with the comic. In the final Chapters, Lippitt offers rich and stimulating accounts of the ethical significance of irony (with constant reference to Socrates) and of the religious significance of humour.

Clearly and stylishly written, this book amply succeeds in showing the importance of the comic for a proper understanding of some of Kierkegaard's most fundamental philosophical ideas. As well as providing a very helpful commentary on important sections of the *Postscript*, it suggests ways in which we should read Kierkegaard's other works with more attention to their comic aspects. And it stands in its own right as a significant enquiry into the neglected subject of the ethical significance of the comic.

Kant and Kierkegaard on Religion is the latest in a series of collections, based on Conferences on the Philosophy of Religion held at Claremont Graduate University. D.Z. Phillips, in his introduction, mentions that there was some surprise at the pairing of Kant and Kierkegaard, the one supposedly an arch rationalist and moralist in religious matters, the other a proponent of belief in paradox, "the absurd" and the "teleological suspension of the ethical." A number of the contributions to this volume argue that one or both of these characterizations is really a caricature; that (in line with Lippitt's claims) Kierkegaard is by no means the wild irrationalist that some have supposed, and that Kant should not be seen as simply attempting to reduce religion to morality. Thus, as well as considering the contrasts between the two thinkers, contributors are able to point out significant commonalities. Kant and Kierkegaard can be seen as repudiating, on the one hand the skeptical empiricism of Hume and on the other the speculative metaphysical theology of either Leibniz or Hegel. Both are concerned to relate religion to "practical reason", to the sphere of the ethical, without intending this as a reduction of religion to ethics or to a non-realist adoption of an attitude. Despite their significant differences, Kant and Kierkegaard can be seen as standing within the same essential tradition in the philosophy of religion.

Though the contributors share a sense of the fruitfulness of comparing Kant and Kierkegaard, this volume is marked by plenty of - sometimes radical - disagreement. It is divided into six Parts. In the first Stephen Evans argues that a modest form of metaphysics is possible and was endorsed by both Kant and Kierkegaard, while Michael Weston takes a radically anti-metaphysical line, attributing this to Kierkegaard (but reading him through

what I would see as the distorting spectacles provided by James Conant), while barely mentioning Kant. In Part Two, Jerry Gill and Jamie Ferreira, agree on seeing Kant and Kierkegaard as both “making room for faith” without denying reason, but differ on exactly how they do so. In Part Three R.Z. Friedman and Hilary Bok agree on seeing Kant and Kierkegaard as sharing a common concern for the place of the individual in their ethics.

Part Four opens with an ingenious dialogue by Ronald Green in which a reanimated Kant and Kierkegaard meet in Denver Airport in 2027, and find themselves less far apart than one might have thought on the issue of the need for a historical faith. Jack Verheyden suggests that Green manages to bring the two thinkers together only by “over-Kantianising” Kierkegaard (see p154). In Part Five John Whittaker and Mario von der Ruhr discuss Eternal Life, agreeing (though without much in the way of good argument, that I could see) on the rejection of “temporal immortality,” while disagreeing on how else and better one could understand the notion of eternal life. In the final Part, rather than a debate, we have three different opinions on “Philosophy of Religion After Kant and Kierkegaard.” Stephen Palmquist gives a useful sketch of the post-KK options; John Hare argues for the attribution of a Divine Command theory of morality to Kant (while barely mentioning Kierkegaard) and Anselm Kyongsuk Min suggests ways in which both our philosophers could be taken up in the contemporary socio-political context. Each Part ends with a section, contributed by D.Z. Phillips, “Voices in Discussion,” based on but not an exact transcript of the debates that followed each session.

As one would expect with such an anthology, some of the papers are better than others, and different readers will find some topics of greater interest than others. But overall this collection demonstrates the value of discussing Kant and Kierkegaard together and there is much in it to stimulate anyone interested in either or both philosophers, or in the central questions of the philosophy of religion which they both address. And one hopes that it may persuade some Kantians to take more interest in Kierkegaard and some Kierkegaardians to take more interest in Kant. Both scholarship and contemporary thinking about the Philosophy of Religion could only benefit.

Utilitarians and Religion, by James E. Crimmins Bristol, England: Thommess Press, 1998. Pp. x and 502. \$84.00 (Cloth) \$35.00 (Paper)

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This book presents a valuable historical selection of the critical writings of nine utilitarians on religion as well as two very helpful introductory essays to the topic of utilitarianism and religion.

Noted Bentham scholar James E. Crimmins divides the book into two parts: religious utilitarians and secular utilitarians. Crimmins provides very helpful essays at the beginning of each of the two sections, which do a great deal to help illuminate the different opinions regarding the relation-