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rigor and conceptual coherence to his overall argument. Occasionally he cites Aquinas and more frequently Karl Rahner. But his main recourse is to a broadly conceived metaphysics of intersubjectivity with emphasis on relationality rather than substantiality as the first category of Being. That mixture of metaphysical systems is perhaps most obvious in a chapter on neuroscience and belief in the creation of the human soul by God.

While neuroscience would claim that the human life-principle or soul emerges out of enhanced neuronal activity in the human brain, E. argues for the immediate creation of the soul by God in one divine creative act that spans human history (126). This avoids the constant intervention by God into the cosmic process to which natural scientists take exception. But the proposal of a single divine creative act is presumably based on the classical Aristotelian-Thomistic understanding of cause and effect in which the cause unilaterally brings about the existence of the effect. Yet unilateral, divine causal agency undermines any appeal to a genuinely intersubjective relation between God and creation, since intersubjectivity is based on what might be called simultaneous mutual causality. The "I" and the "Thou" simultaneously cocreate their intersubjective "We" relation. One possible way out of this clash of theoretical presuppositions would be to distinguish between the soul as a naturally emergent life principle subject to scientific analysis and the spiritual reality of human personhood that is a gift (grace) from God to which a response on the part of the creature is the work of a lifetime. In any event I am less sanguine than E. that one can comfortably "hold both a neuroscientific view of the brain and a theological view of the human soul, including the idea of immediate creation" (129) without serious challenge from both theologians and natural scientists. As I see it, only a revised philosophical cosmology with new terminology and a corresponding set of explanatory concepts that are intelligible to both sides can hope to bridge the methodological gap between the approaches proper to theology and natural science. And that is a work in progress.

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The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss. By David Bentley Hart. New Haven: Yale University, 2013. Pp. ix + 365. $25.

As long as the debate about the existence of God rages on, especially across distinct fields of inquiry, the task of clarifying key concepts will always be of paramount importance. This is especially the case with the meaning and use of the variously (mis) understood concept of God. Hart has written a book for just this problem, one that overflows with dazzling insights relevant to widely disparate fields of study, passages of such deep passion and artistry as to evoke comparisons with the poetic mystics he reveres, and, of course, his characteristic wit—biting, sometimes rather uncharitable, but always effective in its service to the main point.

The "definition of God" that H. elucidates in accord with the book's main aim is an offering to the new atheist movement—"a clear concept of what it is they claim not to believe" (2). The clearest and least inadequate formulation of the concept comes from the classical foundations of the world's great religions, among which H. presupposes a vast accord on this issue (4). Absolutely transcendent, utterly simple, eternal, impassible, immutable, and necessary, God, as classically conceived, "is the source of being, the well-spring of consciousness, but also the final cause of all creation" (286). The demiurgic god rejected by modern atheists and (unhelpfully) embraced by some fundamentalist believers is an irrelevant distraction.

As the title suggests, the book is not just a lexicographical exercise; it also aims to ground the concept of God in the phenomenology of ordinary human experience, in which the great religious and metaphysical traditions have tended to find their main clues: the experiences of being, consciousness, and bliss. The at-once obvious and mysterious encounter with the being of things, including especially one's own being, elicits what H. calls "ontological surprise" (87), a startling strangeness by which one is able to appreciate the evident contingency and, therefore, total gratuity of existence. Similar insights into the contingency and gratuity of the conditions of human experience attend the subject's discovery of the intellect's unrestricted drive to know the truth and of the will's transcendental orientation to love beauty and goodness. Our experience of the world, then, is always also an experience of the being of the world, an experience that depends on the luminous medium of intentional and unified consciousness and manifests an appetitive orientation toward the absolute in pursuit of final bliss. Classical traditions have tended to extrapolate from these fundamental dimensions of human experience to a conception of God as their source, order, and end. While H. gathers many texts from various religious traditions to illustrate the point, the conception most clearly resembles the Christian notion of the Trinity: "Infinite being knows itself in infinite consciousness, and therefore rejoices" (287).

H. credits the modern rejection and oversight of this notion to a fundamental divergence of worldviews. It is not a contest between faith and reason but between theist and naturalist "pictures of the world" (chap. 2). Philosophical naturalism (sometimes called physicalism or materialism) does not simply misunderstand the concept of God; it also fails to grasp the reality and significance of those dimensions of human experience that most obviously point beyond the limits of nature. The experiences of being, consciousness, and bliss are *super naturam* in the sense of defying explanation in merely naturalist terms (226). Perhaps the book's greatest strength and most significant contribution to the controversy is its lucid demonstration of the inability of both empirical science and philosophical naturalism to account for each of these experiences, especially that of existence, a point rather insufficiently attended to in the literature on the topic. A mere description of the material history or physical origins of any given thing (including especially the universe as a whole) is not an exhaustive explanation of that reality, least of all of its being; to believe otherwise is to fall prey to the genetic fallacy (68). The common failure to even appreciate the nature of this problem is due to a forgetfulness of being—an "ontological obliviousness" that has long since

translated the currently popular "mechanistic approach to the world . . . into a living tradition" (314).

H. insists that the trend toward these reductionist conceptions of reality is no reason to despair, for intellectual fashions change every bit as much as other fashions do. Still, they predominate in accord with the strength of the emotional and ideological appeals made by their adherents, which is H.'s explanation for the success of the modern atheist movement. For his own part, H. employs his rhetorical talent in the manner of an Augustine or a Cicero—not to cloak a lack of understanding or judgment, but to spur his readers toward further investigation of the truth of things. This book greatly enriches an otherwise impoverished literature on the topic.

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Upward: Faith, Church, and the Ascension of Christ. By Anthony J. Kelly, C.S.S.R. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2014. Pp. x + 176. $19.95.

Toward the end of his monumental study, *A Secular Age* (2007), Charles Taylor counsels how Christians might proceed amid the challenges secularity poses: "We have to struggle to recover a sense of what the Incarnation can mean" (753). His words came to mind as I pondered Kelly's rich and pathbreaking new book. K.'s book focuses on Christ's ascension as the *telos* of the incarnation—not its termination, but its goal and extension. He writes, "The ascension means that [Christ] is now present in the fullness of his humanity . . . because of his ascension, the whole concreteness of his life and mission, along with the mysteries of his life and death, come together within the divine universal act of transformation" (131–32).

K. draws on Jean-Luc Marion's notion of the "saturated phenomenon" to display and explore the multidimensional originality of Christ's ascension in the experience of faith. And, though K. carefully examines the relevant New Testament texts, he contends that "it is not so much a question of finding the ascension in the writings of the New Testament, but more a matter of interpreting those inspired writings in the light of the ascension as the exaltation and ever-present activity of Christ" (16). Indeed, one can affirm that the ascension is the presupposition of the gospel and the very condition of the church's liturgical worship of God through the risen and ascended Lord.

Christian faith holds in dynamic and indissoluble tension both the particularity of the crucified and risen Jesus and the universality of the ascended Lord, who is "at the right hand of the Father." Thus the ascension grounds the real presence of Jesus Christ in word and sacrament. But his is a new mode of presence; it is indeed a presence that does not preclude a sense of real absence, not through any deficiency in Christ, but because we are not fully apt to recognize and embrace him. In a striking assertion, K. insists that "it is not Christ who has become disembodied, but we human beings are not yet fully embodied in him as we are destined to be" (94).