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Pojman, RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND THE WILL

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foundationalism. The real issue between the Reformed epistemologists and the classical foundationalists whom they attack is not whether foundationalism is an adequate theory, but what sorts of propositions can be in the foundations of a rational noetic structure and what conditions for basicity shall be invoked. Points in Russman's piece for further discussion include his imputing to the Reformed epistemologists a doctrine of innate ideas and his claiming that they advocate an incontrovertible divine guarantee of our knowledge claims about God.

Thomistic Papers IV is rich and profitable reading. Given this reviewer's sympathy with the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, it was especially enjoyable to peruse what appears to be the first major collaborative statement of the Thomistic critique of Reformed epistemology. The reader will likely arrive at a mixed assessment of the book, finding it strong on some points and somewhat weak on others. For example, the Thomist authors succeed in casting doubt on the Reformed epistemologists' presentation of Aristotle and Aquinas, and in pressing for a discussion of what it means to have reasons for belief. However, the Thomist authors sometimes seem to misunderstand precisely what their Reformed counterparts are saying and thus risk unnecessary polarization. In conclusion, all of us should hope that the Thomist-Calvinist dialogue—carried one important step further by the present volume—will continue.

Religious Belief and The Will, by **Louis P. Pojman**. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986. Pp. xiii and 258. \$32.50 in cloth.

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Pojman's discussion is divided into two parts, of approximately equal length. The first is a survey of various positions taken in the history of Western philosophy on the relation of belief and the will, with special emphasis on religious belief. The second is a systematic discussion of the issues raised in the first part. To the best of my knowledge there is no other book-length discussion of this topic—this in spite of the fact that most major philosophers have taken up or assumed positions on the matter, and in spite of the fact that since the 19th century the relation of belief to the will has been the focus of sharp, and generally indecisive, debate.

Anyone who has studied closely what some figure from the history of philosophy had to say on the relation of the will to belief will, I think, find Pojman's discussion of the philosopher falling within his or her area of expertise not very satisfactory. This for two reasons. Pojman's overall interpretation of the philosophers he treats are, in all cases, conventional treat-

ments. And Pojman's discussion of what a philosopher had to say on the particular issue under discussion is seldom really penetrating. Pojman seldom digs beneath the surface of the philosopher's words to try to discover what he was trying to get at; nor, that done, to uncover why he was trying to get at it in his particular way. But of course anyone who attempts in some 120 pages to discuss the positions of more than twenty philosophers on the relation of belief to the will probably has to pay the price of relative conventionality of interpretation and relative lack of depth in analysis. The real contribution of the first part of Pojman's discussion consists, then, in his showing us where to look for the relevant discussions and telling us what it was that the philosophers said.

In the second part of his discussion Pojman first offers and defends what he calls "The Logic of Belief Argument," an argument which, he says, "rules out as logically odd (in the wider sense of the term) the possibility of acquiring a belief in full consciousness by a fiat of the will without regard to truth considerations" (176). He adds that "It does not rule out the possibility of obtaining the belief in less than full consciousness or indirectly" (176). From here he goes on to discuss the ethics of belief, and the proper role of reason in religious belief. On this latter point he defends the view that only if one holds a religious belief for good reasons is one entitled to hold it. Pojman is thus an evidentialist concerning religious beliefs—though what constitutes good reasons or evidence he does not say. In his final chapter of substance (before his brief summary chapter) Pojman argues that religious faith does not require belief; hope is sufficient. Apparently his way of putting together the content of this chapter with that of the preceding one is this: Though religious faith does not require religious beliefs, if one does have such beliefs, they must be held for good reasons.

In this second, systematic, part of his discussion, Pojman stakes out a good many controversial positions while, at several points, leaving his thought incomplete or obscure. Thus he provides plenty of material for philosophical discussion. I shall limit myself to making one observation and appraising one argument.

The observation is this: Though Pojman refers throughout his discussion to a person's *evidence* for some proposition, and to a person's *reasons* for (believing) some proposition—apparently equating these—it remains obscure what he has in mind by this. Does a person's evidence for some proposition consist of other propositions believed by that person? Or is evidence to be taken as a wider phenomenon, including evidence thus understood but more besides? In short, is evidence *per se* propositional, or is propositional evidence just one species of evidence? When Pojman says that religious beliefs must be held for reasons (held on evidence), does he or does he not mean to deny that religious beliefs which are held immediately are always impermissible?

Pojman's obscurity on this issue is surprising. For at the conclusion of his

discussion in Part I of Plantinga's work he says that "Plantinga's work is, at present, the central focus of debate" (138). And what Plantinga's work, along of course with that of others, constantly presses on us is the distinction between immediate and mediate beliefs—or as Plantinga calls them, basic and non-basic beliefs. But perhaps Pojman has simply misunderstood Plantinga's central point. Some evidence in favor of this construal is his saying at one point that "For many of these people God's existence is not self-evident, nor is it properly basic for them. They are troubled by the lack of evidence for God's existence and believe that the move made by some philosophers to set it into the foundations of one's noetic structure is not acceptable for them" (213). But Plantinga is not proposing that one "set into the foundations" of one's noetic structure the proposition that God exists. Instead he is claiming that the proposition that God exists *is* in the foundation of some people's noetic structure—or at least, is basic in that structure—and properly so.

In one passage Pojman says that "My assumption is that unless there is good reason to have a different method for evaluating religious claims, there is a presumption in favor of using the rational methods employed here as elsewhere" (196). And in another passage he says that "A post-critical rationalist of the soft-perspectivist variety [among whom he numbers himself] is one who seeks to support all his beliefs...with good reasons" (198). Apparently then Pojman is not just an evidentialist concerning religious beliefs but concerning all beliefs. But once again the question presses: What does he take a reason, or evidence, to be? If what Pojman means by a reason is a believed proposition, then what he says falls prey to the classic claim of the foundationalist that one who holds such a view is either committed to there being an infinite regress of propositional reasons, or to affirming that circular reasoning confers justification. Possibly—though here I speculate—Pojman regards the following passage as giving his way out: "with regard to any proposition p , and for any person, S ,...if S finds himself believing p , the belief that p is *prima facie* evidence for p itself relative to S , that is, S is *prima facie* justified in believing p . It may not be very strong justification, and S may be forced to weaken his hold on p when he cannot defend p , but it is some evidence, enough to start with" (187). Perhaps Pojman's view is that even in cases of non-inferred, immediate, basic beliefs, one has evidence for the proposition believed—namely, one's believing the proposition is evidence for the truth of the proposition. But of course it doesn't follow from this that one believes the proposition *for* reasons, *on* evidence. Furthermore, everyone then always perforce satisfies Pojman's prescription. And lastly, though Plantinga would not hold the principle that, for any proposition p and any person S , S 's believing p is evidence for the truth of p , it is nonetheless entirely compatible with his central thesis that some people hold some of their religious beliefs immediately, and properly so.

And now for “The Logic of Belief Argument” against the possibility of, with full consciousness, believing something at will. Here is Pojman’s argument, as he gives it:

1. If A believes that p , A believes that p is true (by analysis of the concept of belief).
2. In standard cases of belief, the truth of p is wholly dependent on the state of affairs, S , which either corresponds to p (and makes p true) or fails to correspond to p (and makes p false).
3. In standard cases of belief, whether or not the appropriate state of affairs S that corresponds to p obtains is a matter that is independent of A’s actions and volitions.
4. In standard cases of belief, A subconsciously or consciously believes or presupposes premise 3 (i.e., we recognize intuitively that wishing doesn’t make it so).
5. Therefore, in standard cases of belief, A cannot both believe that p and that A’s belief is presently caused by his willing to believe that p . Rather A must believe that what makes his belief true (if it is true) is state of affairs S , which obtains independently of his will. (171)

The conclusion, though, is just a non-sequitur. The argument does nothing to show that there is incoherence in A’s both believing that p and believing that his belief that p is presently caused by his willing to believe that p . At most what it shows is that there is incoherence in his beliefs if he believes that *and* believes that what makes his belief that p is true is his believing it or his willing to believe it. But why would he do that? Why not instead believe that what makes his belief true, if it is true, is the state of affairs S ? Perhaps Pojman was thinking that if one believes that one believes p at will, one must also believe that the truth of the proposition believed is determined by one’s believing or one’s willing to believe. But why think that? Where is the incoherence in believing that what makes p true is an objective state of affairs and also believing p at will and believing that one does so? If there is some sort of logical incoherence in the notion that it is possible to believe at will—and I am myself inclined to think there is—Pojman has not located it.

Let me say lastly—this is meant more for the publisher than the author—that this is a very unsatisfactory specimen of the art of bookmaking. Both the paper and the binding are unattractive. But worse, the text is filled with typographical errors, mistaken words, and gaps in the English sentences. It reads as if the proofreader had never before met up with philosophical English—or indeed, with English. Here is just one of many examples of what I mean: “Irrationality would occur if Abraham was neglecting counter fully evidence at his disposal” (210-1). I had thought that the point of the new technology of bookmaking was to give us better books at lower cost. So far it seems to have given us worse books at higher cost.