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Watkins, THE DIVINE ORDER, THE HUMAN ORDER, AND THE ORDER OF NATURE: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Divine Order, the Human Order, and the Order of Nature: Historical Perspectives, edited by Eric Watkins. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 288 pages. \$74.00 (hardcover).

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In his introduction to this rich collection of essays, Eric Watkins notes that a growing dissatisfaction with the limits of the traditional rationalist/empiricist distinction has, in recent years, led a number of scholars to focus on other possible narrative structures for studying the evolution of thought throughout the modern period. Watkins suggests that the narrative of order is particularly promising because a philosopher's understanding of natural and moral laws, their justification, and their consequences, can unite the most central considerations of any philosophical system of the period: metaphysics, epistemology, science, and morality. In this way, the focus on order avoids the pitfalls of other narratives that focus on theoretical issues to the exclusion of practical ones or vice versa. Thus the aim of the volume is to "suggest an outline for an original account of the history of modern western European thought, one that is based on the centrality of, and relations among, different notions of order (the natural, moral, divine, and human)" (xxvi).

The volume begins with two essays on the medieval period from Marilyn McCord Adams and Steven Nadler. Adams provides a detailed discussion of Aquinas, Scotus, and Ockham on the connection between the natural and divine order. While causal powers explain natural phenomena for these medievals, Adams notes that these thinkers all thought that the natural order is ultimately subordinated to the divine order. This is because God determines which powers exist, the extent to which they are expressed, and the content of the laws decreed to voluntary agents according to His ends. Of particular interest is Adams's discussion of the fact that these authors accept the possibility that God may change the content of the laws according to the state of human beings (viz. pre- or post-lapsarian), thus highlighting the role of God's ends in the decree of positive and moral law.



In his chapter, Nadler defends an interpretation of Maimonides according to which the righteous person is literally protected from all manner of evil. Maimonides claims that through intellectual perfection, characterized as a turning towards God, human beings merit a kind of providence that is described as an “overflow” of knowledge from God. This knowledge, Nadler argues, contains the knowledge of natural laws, which provides insight into causal connections. This knowledge thus endows the righteous with the power to predict natural phenomena. So, knowing the divine order gives knowledge of natural laws, which in turn reduces or eliminates the chance of harm.

The early modern section contains six essays. In the first, Daniel Garber compares two systems that ground the order of nature in God—Descartes and Leibniz—with two that do not—Hobbes and Spinoza. After canvassing the arguments for grounding the order of nature in divine will (Descartes) and in divine reason (Leibniz) Garber uses the “order of geometry” to explain the ground of the order of nature for Hobbes and Spinoza. Importantly, Hobbes and Spinoza do not appeal to God to explain the nature of motion. Garber notes that, instead, Hobbes takes motion to be part of the domain of geometry and Spinoza seems to suggest that the laws of matter and motion have the same status as laws of geometry. Garber thus concludes that Hobbes and Spinoza agree that the order of nature is nothing more than a fact about the world that is no way subordinated to a higher order.

By contrast, everything about the natural order is subordinated to the divine order in Malebranche’s world, which is taken up by Robert Merrihew Adams in the next chapter. There, Adams takes on the difficult task of carefully delineating the many causal concepts at play in Malebranche’s occasionalist universe. Of particular note is Adams’s illuminating discussion of the difficult distinction between divine practical volitions and mere willings. The treatment of the various causal notions in Malebranche’s system is oriented towards an ultimate discussion of what falls outside the scope of these causal concepts, namely, the nature of created freedom. Adams suggests that while all “things” fall under the authority of the divine substance, free acts or “non-things” fall under the authority of created-mind substances. While Adams is surely right about this, the most vexed question in Malebranche scholarship remains: what is entailed by a conception of freedom that has “no-thing” as its expression? While this question is not answered by Adams, his work to decorticate the concepts involved in the discussion is essential for future studies.

The discussion of Malebranche continues in Tad Schmaltz’s chapter devoted to a comparison of the centrality of general laws in Malebranche, Berkeley, and Hume. He demonstrates that while all three see general laws as central to the natural and moral orders, for Hume they derive from primitive features of human nature (“custom” and “moral sentiments”) while Malebranche and Berkeley ground them in divine action. But while Berkeley’s God determines the content of these laws in terms of

His concern for the welfare of His creation, Malebranche's God only ever acts for His own glory. Thus, for Hume, the human order determines the natural and moral orders while for Malebranche and Berkeley they are determined by the divine order.

We then return to the Cartesian conception of laws in Peter Harrison's very engaging discussion of (1) the reaction of the Cambridge Platonists against Descartes's understanding of the order of nature and the way they attempted to improve upon it, and (2) the response of several Newtonians to this improvement. Harrison notes that the central problem for both groups is the "hypothetical" character of the laws of nature. The Cambridge Platonists thought that deriving the laws from the immutability of God's will, as Descartes did, amounts to appealing to a theoretical model to explain phenomena. Moreover, taking the laws to be immutable seemed to make them almost "brute facts," thus threatening the role of divine providence in nature. To reduce these tensions, they posited "plastick natures" — spiritual intermediaries that contain the laws of nature. While reinstating a role for divine providence, plastick natures were seen by the Newtonians as just another unexplained "hypothesis" or theoretical model. For their part, they emphasized the importance of observation and experimentation to discover and justify the laws of nature while at the same time holding that the laws are grounded in the will of God.

The early modern section concludes with two papers on Leibniz. In the first, Donald Rutherford argues that powers and laws are equally explanatorily basic for Leibniz. The laws of nature are chosen by God, Leibniz says, but only operate in virtue of being grounded in the powers of finite substances. These powers are, in their turn, governed by laws decreed by God. Rutherford offers a persuasive interpretation according to which the laws governing monadic change do so according to the next best state for the universe to be in and so "the laws that explain the evolution of a monad's perceptions could be the physical laws of nature" (171). Thus, to explain the laws of nature we appeal to the powers of finite substances which are in turn explained, at least in part, by these very laws.

In the second Leibniz chapter, Martha Brandt Bolton also considers the question of monadic change and argues that the laws governing such change are characterized by desire-like final causes. The central problem with this kind of position is most often expressed in terms of the problem of Bayle's dog: a dog is happily chewing a bone when he suddenly receives a blow. It seems that if all substantial change is explained by desire-like final causes, we have to conclude that the dog desires the blow, which seems absurd. Bolton defuses this tension by underlining the fact that the rational soul desires the harmony of regularity. Thus, the dog desires the harmony of which the blow is a part. This allows Bolton to conclude that nature is ordered in such a way that changes in the monad reflect the good in the created world because all such changes represent the desire for harmony.

The final two chapters in the collection address Kant. Andrew Chignell offers a very interesting argument in favour of a central role for hope in Kant's moral philosophy. The problem is that Kant seems simultaneously to hold that to be virtuous and thus happy, human beings must perform a revolution of will for which we are radically and ultimately responsible, and that such a revolution is impossible without divine assistance. Chignell notes that according to Kant, whether and if so how the combination of individual effort and divine assistance leads to happiness is something that is incomprehensible to us. But, importantly, Chignell suggests that "incomprehensible" does not mean "really impossible." While "assistance in the moral life may be unknowable and even inconceivable . . . that's not sufficient for being certain of its impossibility" because "inconceivability must not track real impossibility for Kant" (214). Chignell concludes that the "moral miracle" expressed by the divine concursus needed to perform the revolution of will is not something we can rationally expect (just as we cannot rationally expect miracles in the physical realm) but is something for which we can rationally hope.

The moral order in Kant is further explored by Eric Watkins. While the contributions from human beings to the moral and natural orders remain fundamental in Kant's system, Watkins suggests that the divine order has a foundational role in three ways: God is the most real being who grounds the possibility of all things (first *Critique*), God grounds the highest moral good by proportioning happiness to virtue (second *Critique*) and God proportions happiness to virtue by subordinating mechanical laws to teleological laws (third *Critique*). In this way, Watkins shows that despite Kant's break with the tradition of the early modern period, his system still shares an important feature with his predecessors: the importance of the divine order.

By structuring its discussions around conceptions of order, this volume takes its place alongside a small but growing group of works published in the last fifteen years that explore this narrative in the history of philosophy, among which the work of historian of science Lorraine Daston is central. This volume is a welcome addition to this group in particular for its treatment of the connections between divine, moral, and natural orders.

Where the volume is less successful is in the discussion of how to understand the role and scope of the "human order." Custom and moral sentiment for Hume and the concepts of the understanding for Kant are features of human nature and thus of the human order that are centrally involved in natural and moral orders. But aside from these thinkers, the discussion of human order seems always to collapse into the moral order. Conspicuously absent is a recognition of the human order as political order. Many early modern thinkers were influenced by the natural law theories of Suárez, Grotius, Hobbes, and Pufendorf. A more complete picture of the "human order" in early modern philosophy would need to involve an analysis of positive law and its justification. A discussion of political order would also facilitate the inclusion of thinkers outside

the canon. For instance, Margaret Cavendish's and Mary Astell's writings about social and metaphysical liberty provide important insight into the link between the human and moral order in early modern Europe.

But this criticism is by no means meant to indicate that the aim of the volume is not met. Watkins has done an excellent job of demonstrating the richness and promise of the narrative of order. The volume should serve as a call to specialists and advanced students in the field to develop and extend these themes within the systems discussed here and to other thinkers in the history of philosophy.

Solved by Sacrifice: Austin Farrer, Fideism, and the Evidence of Faith, by Robert MacSwain. Leuven: Peeters, 2013. xiii + 275 pages. \$88.74 (paper).

BRIAN HEBBLETHWAITE, Queens' College, Cambridge

This book is unquestionably a major contribution to the study of Austin Farrer's writings and to philosophical reflection on the topic of faith and reason. It still betrays its origin in a doctoral dissertation, but its thoroughness in knowledge of relevant sources and background, and of fascinating biographical detail about Farrer, is most impressive. One cannot resist a wry smile, however, at the presence of so many long footnotes in a book about an author who forswore footnotes altogether.

Austin Farrer, regarded by many as the leading Anglican philosophical theologian of the twentieth century, was for many years Fellow and Chaplain of Trinity College, Oxford. He ended his career as Warden of Keble. His many books include *Finite and Infinite*, *The Glass of Vision*, *The Freedom of the Will*, *Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited*, *Saving Belief*, *A Science of God?*, and *Faith and Speculation*. What has impressed his colleagues, pupils, hearers (he was a great preacher too), and readers was the way in which he combined philosophical skill, theological acumen, and profound spirituality. Readers of MacSwain's book will want to ask whether a sufficiently balanced picture of Farrer's many-sidedness is maintained.

The title of the book should first be explained. "Solved by Sacrifice—*solvitur immolando*" was Farrer's parody of the solution to Zeno's well-known paradox of Achilles and the Tortoise, which "*solvitur ambulando*," that is, is solved by carrying on walking and overtaking the tortoise, not by continuously stopping and thinking at fifty per cent segments of the distance behind. Similarly, Farrer urges (in a sermon, be it noted), Christian faith finds its justification, not in logic or argument, but in actually following the way of the cross and finding spiritual blessedness thereby. This is manifestly true of the saints and up to a point of the ordinary believer