

The “God” chapter proceeds with a list of conceptual tools that are important in understanding religion, including some particularly interesting remarks on the nature of revelation and its relationship to love. It ends with a proposal about the nature of the relationship between science and religion that is constructed around the distinction between metaphysics and metaphor. The proposal is roughly that, at the level of metaphysics, science and religion are referring to the same thing when they talk respectively about the singularity and God. However, at the level of metaphor, they remain distinct. This was one of the most helpful parts of the book, and there I sensed that I was reading an author who at last was doing what he knew how to do best. Yet it was done relatively briefly, and I would like to have seen a much fuller and more rigorous treatment that explored more fully this distinction between metaphor and metaphysics—and perhaps related it to other somewhat similar distinctions such as Gottlob Frege’s between sense and reference, and that made by contemporary philosophers of science such as Rom Harre between referential realism and theory realism. One key issue is surely whether God and the singularity have anything more in common than being beyond human knowledge. Is the point just that everything that is beyond human knowledge is in some sense identical? Also, just how separate can metaphysics be from metaphor, and if science and religion are radically distinct at the level of metaphor, in what sense can there be metaphysical identity?

There is much of interest and value in this book. However, I found the style an obstacle. I admire the author’s thoughtfulness, integrity, and commitment but wish that these had been more fully combined with the traditional virtues of rigorous thought and clear expression.

FRASER WATTS

Starbridge Lecturer in Theology and Natural Science
Faculty of Divinity
University of Cambridge, CB2 1TW
England

God without the Supernatural: A Defense of Scientific Theism. By PETER FORREST. Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion. Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1996. xiv + 256 pages. \$39.95.

Philosophers of religion sometimes indulge in thought experiments, taking license from the way the world is seen through the natural sciences; a similar tendency can be found in philosophy of mind (for a critical discussion of thought experiments in philosophy and of the difference with their use in science, see Kathleen V. Wilkes, *Real People: Personal Identity without Thought Experiments* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988], especially chapter 1). Such artificial analytical philosophy is less relevant for reflection on science and religion than it could be—and should be, for the science-religion discussion can benefit from precise and clear argument from philosophers. The Australian philosopher Peter Forrest exerts some restraint in thought experiments but falls back upon them when considering nonsupernatural possibilities of an afterlife.

Forrest offers a lucid defense of scientific theism, which he takes to be belief in a god as the best explanation of features revealed by, or implicit in, modern science.

This god is personal and after the well-being of humanlike beings. Forrest intends to defend his case without appeal to supernatural entities for which there would be no familiar analogies and without violations of laws of nature. God does not break any laws of nature, even in creating the universe or ensuring an afterlife. Though offering arguments against atheism, Forrest appreciates atheism as a high-minded love of truth, more faithful to the Judaeo-Christian tradition than many a superstitious corruption of that tradition (p. xi).

In a chapter on “the theocentric understanding of life” Forrest argues that, even if physics would derive all fundamental constants from an elegant system of fundamental laws, this would not explain why the laws are life-friendly rather than life-hostile. This question might be answered in terms of the divine motive in creating. Motives based on need or envy are not applicable to God, but recognition of intrinsic value could be acceptable.

Forrest argues for the epistemic possibility of a nonsupernatural afterlife; this would greatly increase the value of the creation of persons, especially when considering persons struck by misfortune. An afterlife might arise when in the vast universe the proper material elements come together in such a way as to bring forth living beings with the same memories on a paradise-earth. Forrest offers a variety of other speculations, not as assertions about how things are but rather as ideas as to how God could bring about an afterlife. In my opinion, these thought experiments do not result in a genuine epistemic option. They do not address how scarcity, finitude, and decay are among the ambivalent consequences of the life-friendly laws of physics.

Conceptually Forrest aligns divine action with the free actions of conscious beings. In my opinion, an antisupernaturalist scientific theist could also argue that the difference between existence and nonexistence is such that there is a genuine case to be made for a nonnatural concept of creation which would not violate any natural laws, although there are no familiar analogies between such a creation *ex nihilo* and actions within the natural world. Forrest acknowledges that “God’s act is *physically singular*” but does not allow this to have conceptual consequences for our idea of God; God’s act “is nonetheless in accordance with a general principle governing the powers of agents” (p. 80). This makes his account dependent upon a particular, and in a sense non-naturalist, view of the power of free conscious agents.

Forrest then discusses naturalism as the ambition to understand “by going beyond the natural sciences as little as possible” (p. 89). Forrest argues that the detail of scientific explanations (e.g., as to why there are five inert nonradioactive gases such as helium and neon) does not make a difference between a naturalist and a theocentric explanation of reality as long as they accommodate science. The theocentric understanding is stronger when considering other features of our world, its regularities, the progress of science toward truth, moral supremacy, beauty, and the serendipity of mathematics. With respect to the success of science, I would suggest that there might be granted more to piecemeal improvement, as in the development of precision multipurpose technologies from Stone Age tools.

Forrest considers not only naturalism as a rival to theism but also non-naturalistic rivals such as pantheism, polytheism, plenitude, a primacy of values, idealism, a malevolent God, or a God who creates out of boredom or at least for nonmoral motives. Some of these positions have particular advantages, for instance the last

one with respect to the problem of evil, but Forrest points out other disadvantages.

After arguing against such rivals, Forrest comes to a further underpinning of his preferred view. He argues that theism is a genuine epistemic possibility. Since humans cannot be understood purely in physical terms, there is the theoretical possibility of unrestricted consciousness. I do not see how an epistemic nonreducibility of embodied social persons delivers any clue regarding the ontological possibility of a nonembodied consciousness. In the final chapter Forrest responds to objections based on the reality of evil; he suggests a theodicy based on plenitude and soulmaking.

In my opinion, Forrest still relies too much on thought experiments and analogies to establish "genuine epistemic possibilities." However, he offers careful arguments and distinctions in a clear style and gives a respectful, fair, and original consideration of alternative views. The book thus is well worth careful study for all who embark on discussions on theism as an explanation of our universe.

WILLEM B. DREES

Nicolette Bruining Professor of Philosophy of Nature and of Technology
from a Liberal Protestant Perspective
University of Twente
and Bezzingscentrum Vrije Universiteit
De Boelelaan 1115
1081 HV Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Religion and Creation. By KEITH WARD. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
351 pages. \$19.95 (paper).

Keith Ward, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, offers here the second part of his comparative theology project. He assesses major themes from the perspective of Christian theology through comparative analysis of other religion traditions. The putative theme of this study is the doctrine of creation, although the bulk of the discussion centers on the attributes of God as creator.

Ward examines the God-world relationship in four religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. In each case, he studies scriptural traditions as interpreted by a contemporary writer. Those selected are Abraham Heschel, Karl Barth, Mohammed Iqbal, and Aurobindo Ghose. Each has sought to restate the classical tradition of his faith in an effort to bring God into a positive relationship with the cosmic process. This requires emendation of traditional ideas about divine impassability, the unreality of the temporal world, the necessity of spiritual detachment from material processes, and an unrelenting monism. Ward describes how these thinkers from four different theistic traditions have sought to modify received teaching in this direction. Within all four, the cosmos is interpreted as brought into being to realize values of goodness, bliss, happiness, freedom, and creativity. This comparative analysis is then followed by substantial philosophical reflections on theological realism, religious language, and the divine attributes. The concluding section engages with recent cosmological theories (Hawking's and others) and trinitarian thought.