Reviews

Göttliche Weltökonomie, Perspektiven der Wissenschaftlichen Revolution vom 15. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert (Divine World Economy: Perspectives of the Scientific Revolution from the 15th to the 17th Century). German. By Dieter Groh. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010. 738 pages. 22.00 Euro.

Originally only a small 50-page introduction to the book *Newton Komplex: die theologischen Denkmuster der Wissenschaft des langen 18. Jahrhunderts (the Newton Complex: theological structures of reflection in science of the long 18th century)* was planned. However, the product was two volumes of over 700 pages each for the introduction and the still unwritten, or at least unpublished, book itself. But this fact actually speaks in favor of the author Groh, who has dedicated himself to a very thorough method of analysis, and it also shows that the evolution of modern natural science, labeled with the term *New Science* by Groh and other sources, is much more complex than a quick analysis can possibly capture.

The second of the two completely self-sufficient introductory volumes, *Göttliche Weltökonomie (Divine World Economy)*, is dedicated to the evolution of New Science from the fifteenth century to the seventeenth century. Groh follows thoroughly the different schools of thought of that time, without getting trapped in apologetics, in order to identify the motor and reason for the evolution of New Science. He is, however, not very interested in the content of New Science itself.

The anthropology of a specific time determines the way nature is perceived and interpreted, so Groh's thesis goes. His argumentation starts with the positive anthropology during the early fifteenth century, represented by the humanists of Italian Renaissance and others, such as Nicolaus Cusanus, an anthropology that formed the image of humans as God's own likeliness. The evolution of natural science is further illustrated by the person of Nicolaus Copernicus, the scientist and theologian at the realm of scholastic and the new epoch. Groh then introduces the theology of Heinrich Bullinger, the successor of Zwingli. The Millennium theory, which is part of his theology, was highly influential and made its way to reformed circles in England and from there back to the reformed German-speaking community. Groh postulates that the positive anthropology in combination with the Milleniarism and the notion of the accessibility of God through the book of nature (all based on Dan 14:2) was the hotbed of the evolution and prosperity of New Science. Groh shows that Francis Bacon, who was highly influential on an intellectual level in the formation of the Royal Society and other societies, in which New Science (not yet rooted in classical universities) was discussed and experiments were shared, was heavily influenced by Milleniarism.

In the course of his book, Groh does not follow this line of argumentation tightly; he is more interested in giving a general overview of the complexity of the different streams of thoughts during that time. He also indicates other lines of interpretation (even those contradictory to his own views) and reasons for them

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and shows the change of the availability of sources over time. This makes his book more detailed, and sometimes the reader wonders where the author intends to take him or her—for example, in the lengthy discussion of the general theology of Bullinger or in emphasizing the part of the life of Copernicus dedicated to theology and church. But those detours are worthwhile. The very thorough description of the crucial step to include mathematics in the evolution of New Science, which also had its famous opponents at the time (e.g., Bacon), as well as the argumentation that the science of the Renaissance was not just a repetition of the science of classical Greek authors, and that at the time physics and astronomy were two separate disciplines (which were themselves still intermingled with astrology and alchemy), are strong.

At the end of the book, the reader is left with a sound and convincing picture of the argumentation of the author and knows where to find further sources. *Göttliche Weltökonomie* is a well-written book that abolished thoroughly the long-beloved prejudice that New Science evolved in contrast and opposition to church and religion.

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Rethinking Human Nature: A Multidisciplinary Approach. By Malcolm Jeeves. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman's, 2011. 337 pages. Softcover $38.00.

Malcolm Jeeves, emeritus professor of psychology at the University of St. Andrews, has been a long-time contributor to the theology-science dialogue and continues his work here with a collection of essays on scientific and theological perspectives on human nature, the result of a 2006 symposium at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. Although there are now a number of works that touch on questions of human nature in the field of theology and science, this volume is valuable for bringing to the table some fresh perspectives and disciplines not usually included in the discussion. In addition, the focus of many of the essays is the basic question of what makes us human and what separates us, both scientifically and theologically, from other animals and our evolutionary ancestors.

Two historical essays by Felipe Fernández-Armesto and Fernando Vidal chart some of the history of thinking about human uniqueness. Fernándo-Armesto indicates how the expansion of definitions of the human community to include ethnic others coincided with a progressive exclusion of nonhuman animals from moral consideration, while Vidal suggests that modernist separations of mind and body were not driven so much by Cartesianism as by ongoing debates concerning the doctrine of the resurrection during the scientific revolution and early modern period. These are followed by a collection of three essays on

philosophical approaches by Jürgen Mittelstrass, Evandro Agazzi, and Franco Chiereghin. These share a common wariness of the influence and relevance of the sciences for addressing philosophical questions of human nature, drawing on Kantian perspectives, and raising issues of reductionism. A third section on human distinctiveness includes essays by Graeme Finlay, R. J. Berry, Malcolm Jeeves, and David G. Myers, and emphasizes insights from genetics, psychology, and (in Berry's article) the history of reception and current interpretation of Darwinian natural selection. The collection is rounded out by a single essay on archeology and paleoanthropology by Alison Brooks, two theological essays by Joel Green and Janet Martin Soskice, and an afterword by Malcolm Jeeves.

The essays that I found most valuable were those at the beginning and end of the collection. The historical essays develop novel interpretations (to this author anyway) of the history of psychology and thinking about human uniqueness, while also exploring resources, such as Robert Boyle's reflections on the resurrection and his critique of nature as a concept that deserves wider attention. Alison Brooks's essay, while not breaking much new ground conceptually, nevertheless gives a very useful overview of the rapidly changing field of paleoanthropology. Joel Green's essay provides a minisystematic theology that takes into account the frameworks found in contemporary neuroscience and psychology, and connects them interestingly and provocatively to understandings of conversion and personhood as found in the Gospel of Luke and Paul's writings.

Emphasizing these works is not to disparage the others, which are themselves fine contributions and provide useful guides to the relevant areas of expertise. In addition, the volume has a clear developmental flow to it that suggests its appropriateness for college courses, and the clear prose should make the work accessible in an undergraduate course.

What, then, is missing? In a collection as ambitious as this one, it is easy to envision further contributions to provide greater breadth and depth. In terms of scientific fields, a contribution from primatology specifically would be useful, and a contribution that addresses more specifically the recent history of thinking in Anglo-American philosophy would help to round out the philosophy contributions. In addition, there exists a more general question of whether the category of "human nature" is even useful. The question is addressed in a limited fashion by Soskice, who argues that sexual differences do in fact make a difference, questioning to what extent one can talk about a universal human nature. But Soskice's line of argumentation is relatively modest, and given the fairly robust suspicion of human nature claims in portions of the philosophical and religious academy, a more vigorous defense could be made. In some respects, one might argue that the collection as a whole suggests that argument, for although human nature is not itself a scientific concept, the question of defining a human nature is implicit in much of the scientific work that engages human being as a subject.

These are modest criticisms, however, and Jeeves has brought together a fine set of essays, defying the common wisdom that edited volumes do not sell. This one should, and it ought to provide a ready entry for those new to this area of

theology-science dialogue as well as some insights for those already working in the area.

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Commonsense Darwinism: Evolution, Morality, and the Human Condition. By John Lemos. Chicago: Open Court, 2008. xvii + 246 pages. Softcover $29.95.

John Lemos's *Commonsense Darwinism* is a closely argued exploration of several strains of evolutionary ethics. The Introduction gives us a strong glimpse of his own approach to evolutionary ethics: "Does evolutionary biology require us to give up the notion of objective moral truth, . . . reject a libertarian conception of freedom, . . . [or] give up a correspondence theory of truth? My answers to these questions are: No, No, and No" (p. xi). Lemos's approach is to state an author's case in some detail, present criticisms or contradictions, answer these with real or posited rebuttal, and offer a final refutation or justification of the initial proposition. Unfortunately, most of the works he cites in the first eight chapters are publications from 1970 to 2000. In Chapter 9, Lemos takes up a few later references including some of his more recent writings, appearing after 2002. This material could have been more efficiently presented within the earlier chapter to which it pertains, permitting a reprise and conclusion that would have been welcomed.

The first two chapters engage with the theories of Michael Ruse and various philosophers who either support or disagree with Ruse in his development of a nonobjectivist evolutionary ethics. Ruse's stance on the topic is summed up in his statement quote "In ethics once we see that moral claims are simply adaptations, there is neither place for nor need of rational justification. . . . Morality is no more than a collective illusion fobbed off on us by our genes for reproductive ends" (p. 29). Those who hold this view are termed skeptical ethicists by Lemos.

Lemos brings several criticisms to bear on this concept and finds Ruse's critics as well as his defenders wanting. Lemos points out that, operating under skeptical ethics, a society or individual could determine something to be good that was in fact horrendously bad—the Nazi depravities being the prime examples offered. At minimum, Lemos concludes that Ruse needs to answer his critics much more thoughtfully than he has.

In Chapter 3, we find Lemos's critique of "Recent Objectivist Approaches to Evolutionary Ethics." Lemos develops the case that the defenders of the naturalistic approaches to an objectivist evolutionary ethic also fail because "to be *naturalistic* they must exclude any normative claims from their premises, moving strictly from nonmoral premises to their conclusion" (p. 61), which proponents had not

been able to do. The skeptics hold that objective ethics are superfluous because "judgments of depravity depend upon one's perspective, [so] there is no good reason to think there is a moral fact about Hitler's depravity which plays a role in explaining our moral observation that he is depraved" (p. 39). The best justification for a naturalistic ethics is that it encourages supportive behaviors toward the group to which one belongs. This also can lead to terrible depredation of outgroups, as humans have proved repeatedly.

Lemos's process of argument sets up discussion of his Aristotelian approach to evolutionary ethics, the topic of Chapter 4. Lemos finds that the great advantage of Aristotelian practical ethics is that it "provides objective criteria for determining what qualities a thing [or person] must have in order to be good" (p. 64). This assertion is justifiable because of the way Aristotle parsed the problem in the *Nicomachian Ethics*:

> The function of each thing, whether an artifact or a living thing or the parts of such, can be determined by its characteristic activity. . . . The characteristic activity of human beings . . . is rational activity, [and thus Aristotle] concludes that the human function is rational activity. [Aristotle] recognizes that things are good when they perform their function well, . . . [thus] human beings are good when they do well at rational activity. Aristotle holds that when something does well at performing its function, we have criteria for making objective judgments about its merit. This in turn provides objective criteria for determining what qualities the thing must have in order to be good. . . . These qualities are what Aristotle would call excellences or virtues. . . . Aristotle says the human function is rational activity so that the human virtues will be those qualities which enable a person to reason well. (pp. 63–64)

Now, we come to what I believe is the crux of Lemos's own approach:

> Since Aristotle regards doing well at practical reasoning as essential to any good human life [flourishing, happiness, *eudaimonia*], and since we typically regard the moral life as intimately involved with decision making and doing well at this, in what follows I will focus my discussion of the Aristotelian virtues on their contribution to a good life understood as a life of good practical reasoning. . . . According to Aristotle, possession of moral virtues is necessary for the good human life. . . . His virtues lead him to decide as he ought, and this will in the long run serve his pursuit of *eudaimonia*. (pp. 64–65)

This involves reasoning regarding one's long-term self-interest as well as "genuine non-selfish interest in the well-being of others" (p. 65). Given that we recognize, as did Aristotle, that we are social animals, Lemos concludes that "Aristotle sees no conflict between the rational pursuit of *eudaimonia* and the moral life. . . . For the above reasons, it is reasonable to conclude that the Darwinian theory of evolution *does* enhance the Aristotelian conception of human nature which underlies and justifies his virtue ethics" (pp. 66–67). For Lemos, the moral life means to do well as a neighbor and to avoid damaging the fabric of community. If we do not damage the fabric, but support it, we will be moral and our acts will show us to be rational and to be good at this.

An Aristotelian approach does appear to have some advantages over the skeptical ethics outlined by Ruse and others. But Lemos reveals that he, too, is stuck with the Nazi problem, the fact that one can do well with the in-group—that is, be

seen as moral and rational—and create enormous harm and havoc beyond for any out-group. To this point Lemos says:

> What I mean is that, while social organizations do exist and while one can do well or poorly as members of these groups and, consequently, be good or bad with respect to how one functions within them, these groups are ultimately established to provide support and maintenance of human flourishing, the human good. Even groups that we regard as immoral, like the Nazi S. S. or the KKK or various terrorist organizations, exist to serve and support the human good. It's just that these groups unjustifiably attempt to serve the good of certain humans at the expense of other human beings. (p. 70)

In my mind, this rather blithe statement sidesteps the Nazi extermination of out-groups—Jews, Roma, homosexuals, prisoners of war and captive civilians in the East, and the physically or mentally challenged. Many Nazis and many persons in the high culture of Germany had no problem with the Holocaust. And dealing out this slaughter were civil officials, many of whom believed that they were cleansing the Aryan nation. For others, their rationale may not have been deeper than Eichmann's "I was just doing my job," but that, too, may be seen as an Aristotelian virtue within Lemos's framework.

Lemos's book is a helpful description of some of the struggles that sociobiology has injected into philosophy and ethics. Space limitations permit listing only the topics of Chapters 5–8: the moral status of animals; faith, reason, and evolutionary epistemology; psychological egoism; and free will. On the basis of Lemos's reviews, it seems that the whole field still has a distance to travel before it can rest well, feeling that it has dealt with the conundrum of "the good Nazi" and remained within the sphere of common sense. Donald Worster discusses Darwin's recognition of cooperation as well as competition (1994, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, pp. 130–187). Such a broadened base of understanding might provide an approach to ethics where the starting point is not a Darwinian nature viewed as fundamentally "red in tooth and claw" (a phrase from Alfred Lord Tennyson's long poem "*In Memoriam* A.H.H.") (1849).

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