

Reviews

The Double Truth Controversy: An Analytical Essay. By Bartosz Brożek.
Kraków: Copernicus Center Press, 2010. 206 pages. Hardcover. \$15.50.

In the introduction to a syllabus of 291 theses that were condemned as heretical, bishop Stephan Tempier of Paris wrote that some philosophers “state things to be true according to philosophy, but not according to the Catholic faith, as if there are two contrary truths and as if there is truth in the sayings of pagans in hell that is opposed to the truth of Sacred Scripture.” The condemnation of 1277 has been incorporated in books on the history of philosophy as a tense moment in the relations between Aristotelian philosophy and Christian thought. In the study under review, the Polish philosopher and deputy director of the Copernicus Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Kraków, Poland, delves deeper into the issue of double truth. Were there philosophers who held the position ascribed to them by Tempier? How might one understand the position of those criticized?

The first part of the book by Brożek is historical. In the medieval context of the condemnation by Tempier, the key figures were Siger of Brabant (c. 1240–1284), Boethius of Dacia, and some time later, John Buridan (c. 1300–1360) and Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525). However, none of these held a naive view of two contradictory truths. Furthermore, for all of them, revelation is superior to natural reason. The particular issue Brożek focuses on is the understanding from the soul and its perishability and separability from the body—either along the lines of Averroes (Ibn Rushd) or along the lines of Alexander of Aphrodisia (as two interpretations of Aristotle).

The later chapters of the book apply modern logic to reconstruct the positions one might ascribe to the philosophers suspected of holding a “double truth” view. Thus, Brożek discusses and applies among others paraconsistent logics, adaptive logics, belief revision theory, and defeasible logic. This book provides a very readable reconstruction of a major philosophical controversy regarding tensions that may arise between religious authorities and secular knowledge. Poland has a great tradition in logic and the philosophy of religion (e.g., Jan Łukasiewicz and Józef Maria Bocheński, both from the Kraków Circle).

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The Sense of Life and the Sense of the Universe: Studies in Contemporary Theology. By Michael Heller. Kraków: Copernicus Center Press, 2010. 182 pages. Hardcover. \$15.50.

Michael Heller is a mathematical cosmologist, philosopher, and Roman Catholic priest. Following the Templeton Prize (2008) he founded the Copernicus Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Kraków, Poland. In this book, he offers in clear language very nuanced and substantial insights in (1) the role of philosophy, (2) reflections on truth and the reaches of our language, (3) naturalism and evolution, and (4) creation and sense. Characteristic for him is the analysis of philosophy *in* science—that is, the study of presuppositions, as distinct from the philosophy of science, which is mostly about “the scientific method.” The role of philosophy in science is to analyze presuppositions (which are working hypotheses rather than dogma). These working hypotheses are not justified by a philosophical system but are provisionally accepted when fruitful in science. Rather than adhering to a Christian philosophy—which does not exist, just as there is no Christian cycling—Heller aspires to engage as a Christian in philosophical reflection on Christianity. The duty is to be a good philosopher (and a good scientist, and all else).

On language and truth, he draws on the experiences with quantum physics: our metaphors are limited, though our language does express in an analogical way something. This was developed by the priest and logician J. M. Bocheński, of the Krakow circle some half-century ago. Heller also discusses the 1277 condemnation by bishop Tempier of Paris of various philosophical (Aristotelian) theses and especially Tempier’s remark that some of the philosophers claim there can be philosophical and religious truth that is contradictory. However, the more extensive analysis of this topic is the book by his deputy director of the Copernicus Center, Bartosz Brożek, *The Double Truth Controversy*, also reviewed in this issue of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*.

The latter parts deal with evolution and divine action—preferring to see the role of a timeless God in the laws of nature rather than in the margins described by Heisenberg’s uncertainty relations. What is natural is God’s plan and action. The fourth and final part considers cosmic evolution and sense or value. This highly personal, readable, and profound work of philosophical theology engages our always provisional scientific understanding of our universe.

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Piercing the Veil: Comparing Science and Mysticism as Ways of Knowing Reality. By Richard H. Jones. New York: Jackson Square Books, 2010. X + 294 pages. Softcover. \$18.99.

Since the late 1970s, Fritjof Capra's *The Tao of Physics* and Gary Zukav's *The Dancing Wu-Li Masters* made the mix of quantum physics and a generalized "Eastern mysticism" popular. In the 1980s, two works provided a healthy analysis: Sal Restivo, *The Social Relations of Physics, Mysticism and Mathematics* (Boston: Reidel, 1983), and Richard H. Jones, *Science and Mysticism: A Comparative Study of Western Natural Science, Theravāda Buddhism, and Advaita Vedānta* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1986). This book by Richard H. Jones is another philosophical work on science and the Asian traditions. Part One defines the key terms and provides a preliminary description of scientific and mystical ways of knowing.

The second part discusses central points "in the current crop of works on science and mysticism" (v). The title of this part signals a rather critical assessment of the current literature: "Errors in Comparing Scientific and Mystical Theories"—note the emphasis on *theories*. According to Jones, advocates of parallelism of theories distort both science and mysticism. Among those discussed critically are Capra, but also more recent authors such as Andrew Newberg, Alan Wallace, and the XIVth Dalai Lama. Parallelists are mistaken, since "mysticism is a matter of freeing the mind of conceptions to approach beingness, while science is a matter of changing distinctions concerning structures responsible for changes in the natural realm, any substantial convergence in scientific and mystical *theories* is precluded" (178, emphasis added).

The third part is constructive. Reconciliation needs to begin with the recognition of differences. Each can contribute to a fuller view of reality. Jones argues for "the neutrality of science" (221) on the nature of mystical experiences. Mysticism and science may be held together once premature integration is shunned. This requires that mystics accept the full reality of the natural world and thus give science proper recognition. The objective of seeking mystical experience is not to escape from this material world but to experience another, transcendental dimension of this world. Jones has written a careful, dense, and valuable analysis of a contested relationship.

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Resurrection—Theological and Scientific Assessments. Edited by Ted Peters, Robert John Russell, and Michael Welker. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2002, XVII + 326 pages. \$35.00.

This book contains a collection of papers written by an international group of authors addressing the issue of intelligibility of the Christian belief in the resurrection in light of present-day thinking. A number of the contributors have a long-standing commitment to and expertise in the interdisciplinary discourse on science and religion: Ted Peters and Robert J. Russell from the Center of Theology and Natural Sciences, Berkeley, California; Michael Welker, director of the International Science Forum (Internationales Wissenschaftsforum) at Heidelberg; and the ordained Anglican minister-physicist Sir John Polkinghorne. Six of the 18 authors come from universities in the United States, 10 from Germany (notably Heidelberg), and one each from Great Britain and South Africa. Twelve are theologians, with most of them Lutherans. We also have a computer scientist, a neurophysiologist, a biologist, a philosopher, a historian of religion, and a mathematician. They all want “to place Christian theological reflection into dialogue with the relevant Natural Sciences” (p. XII) in order to “provide critical appraisal . . . regarding the content of . . . eschatological hope” (p. XVII). They do so because they are convinced that “when science is at its best and theology is at its best, both are prosecuted by truth-seeking communities open to reorientation by what they learn about reality in a process [of] ‘hypothetical consonance’” (p. XIII).

As can be expected, the individual papers, too many to be reviewed here in detail, vary widely in scope, outlook, and approach. This makes for an interesting, stimulating, and thought-provoking reading, albeit one that is occasionally redundant. The articles are grouped under four headings: I—Resurrection and Eschatological Credibility; II—Bodily Resurrection and Personal Identity; III—Resurrection and the Laws of Nature, and IV—Resurrection, New Creation, and Christian Hope.

R. J. Russell presents a very basic metatheoretical reflection about “Mutual Interaction of Christian Theology and Science” and provides a respective model taking bodily resurrection, eschatology and scientific cosmology as an example. Michael Welker addresses the topic of “Theological Realism and Eschatological Symbol Systems”, asking: “Does theology, indeed, give a fuller account of human reality [than common experience would admit], or does it reach out into areas of fiction and fantasy?” (33). After a brief yet concise scrutiny of relevant NT texts, he arrives at the answer: “The Spirit is the divine power by which the fullness of the divine and eternal life—revealed in the life of Christ—permeates human souls and bodies. . . . They [the members of Christ’s body] incorporate God’s message for God’s creation, and they participate in the divine power and life that sustains, rescues, and ennobles the creation and will never perish” (42). John Polkinghorne, in his article “Eschatological Credibility: Emergent and Teleological Processes”, ponders the question “Is there . . . a purpose behind cosmic process?,” a question “relevant to eschatological thinking, since if past history were to lack meaning, there would be no reason to anticipate further fulfillment” (43) Such theological questioning, to which nearly every article in this volume is devoted, “arises from scientific insight” and “points beyond what can be the subject matter of science” because science “has to be honest enough to recognize

that its success has been purchased by its self-limited modesty in addressing only limited kinds of questions. . . . If a new natural theology contributes to this metascientific discussion, it does so as a complement to science and not in conflict with it. This contrasts with the old style of natural theology” (43–4). Having said that, Polkinghorne discusses a couple of issues of contemporary cutting-edge scientific thinking like complexity, systems theory, autopoiesis and so forth, and concludes: “Eschatological thinking inevitably involves an element of speculation as to its details. Its scope is necessarily limited in terms of what can be comprehended within this life. Yet it is by no means an exercise in fantasy. Rather, it is an exploration of possibility . . . showing that its discourse is reasonable and its hopes well motivated” (55).

“From Evolution to Eschatology” is the subject approached by the biologist Jeffrey P. Schloss, who currently is the director for Biological Programs of the Christian Environmental Association and professor at Westminster College. Schloss unfolds various aspects of the process of biological evolution, including the phenomenon of death. While “death is not necessary for life, the *possibility* of death is necessary—that is, life entails the continual overcoming of entropic forces that, if unresisted, will degrade the function and organization of the living system” (84, original emphasis). Evolutionary processes do not warrant eschatological hope. And while “recent approaches in the biosciences refuse to foreclose options” thus “persistently challeng[ing] reified conceptualizations of the real,” Christians “in recognizing that life admits itself in degrees . . . encounter warrant for eschatological hope” in that their own lives “will not just be continued but intensified in resurrection” (85).

The next three papers—Frank Crüsemann, “Scripture and Redemption”; Peter Lampe, “Paul’s Concept of a Spiritual Body”; and H. J. Eckstein, “Bodily Resurrection in Luke—are exegetical in nature without adding something essentially new to the discussion.

The Egyptologist Jan Assmann presents how “Resurrection in Ancient Egypt” was perceived, carefully noting, “Resurrection is a Christian term and a Christian idea” (124). He concludes: “The decisive denominator of Christianity and ancient Egyptian religion is the idea of redemption from death, that beyond the realm of death there is an Elysian realm of eternal life in the presence of the divine” (135). Significant differences appear, however as this is unfolded.

Brian E. Daley surveys notions of early Church Fathers on resurrection in “A Hope for Worms: Early Christian Hope”. He notes the astonishing materiality of their respective reflections and the broad variety of their concepts. These range from “resurrection as completion of the human potential” (Justin, Tatian, Irenaeus, 14ff) over “resurrection as reinterpretation” (Gnostics, 145ff), and “reconstitution” (Athenagoras, Tertullian, Augustin, 147ff) to “resurrection as transformation” (Origen, Methodius, Jerome, Gregory of Nyssa, 151ff). He boldly claims that for “all of these early theologians, the central issues in concerning a future resurrection were surely the same questions with which contemporary theology struggles” (161) and is convinced that in “the end . . . all Christian anthropology and all Christian hope must grow from wonder at the mystery of the incarnation of God” (164). Bernd Oberdorfer shows in “Schleiermacher on Eschatology and Resurrection” how untraditionally one of the outstanding Protestant theologians of the modern age answered these challenging questions in his very particular way.

The neuroscientist Dedef B. Linke authored the next article, "God Gives the Memory: Neuroscience and Resurrection". While he does not give definite answers, he shares highly interesting insights from his field of research regarding the origin of the soul, the importance of speech (the Word!) for brain development and function, and even, though very briefly, regarding the "spiritual body." Noreen Herzfeld, a computer scientist from St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, explores "Cybernetic Immortality versus Christian Resurrection": "Cybernetic immortality is based on the assumption that thoughts, memories, feelings, and action define the human person. These are products of consciousness, . . . informational patterns that arise and are stored in the neuronal structures of the brain" (194). And insofar as these patterns can be stored in a computer, the very individuality of people could be preserved—bodiless—and revived whenever desired. But Herzfeld, in taking recourse to Reinhold Niebuhr, is quick to show that the Christian hope in resurrection does not strive for an endless continuation of time or a trust in the power of human skill or machinery: "The Christian concept of the resurrection of the body . . . is a concept that transcends death, not by eluding it with part of our being, as cybernetic immortality does, but by passing through it with one's whole being" (201).

Nancey Murphy, professor of Christian philosophy at Fuller Theological Seminary, and Andreas Schuele, professor of Old Testament at Heidelberg, comment on issues of loss and preservation of personal identity in death and resurrection. In her article "The Resurrection Body and Personal Identity: Possibilities and Limits of Eschatological Knowledge," Murphy suggests that while "the laws of nature of this aeon are God's creatures . . . the completion of Christ's work must include" their "radical transformation" permitting "the fullness of human life that God intends" to come about (217). She is, however, certain "that the science-theology dialogue . . . must reach a point of silence when [it turns] to certain matters of eschatology" (218). Schuele's far-ranging reflections in "Transformed into the Image of Christ: Identity, Personality, and Resurrection", which dwell upon modernity's loss of death awareness, as well as on contemporary psychological and philosophical conceptions of immortality, culminate in the statement: "Resurrection as becoming conformed to the image of Christ . . . is . . . the key symbol to the Christian understanding of what it means to be a person" (235). Eschatology mirrors anthropology, and vice versa.

"Memory in the Flow of Time and the Concept of Resurrection" is the topic addressed by Dirk Evers, who unfolds the eschatological quest over against physicalistic perceptions of resurrection as proposed by F. Dyson or F. Tipler. To Evers it is the "complex interdependence between individual, social, and canonic memory . . . embedded in the overall realm of God's being mindful of us and his creation," which "is the foundation of eternal life" (252). It also is "through God's judgment that our lived life is invested with its ultimate integrity and through which it finds its fulfillment" (252). Günter Thomas, a systematic theologian like Evers, approaches the eschatological issues from a pneumatological perspective in "Resurrection to New Life: Pneumatological Implications of the Eschatological Transition". Being convinced that the "work of the Holy Spirit is the key to any sound and realistic understanding of the Christian symbol of the final resurrection that resists the lure of groundless speculation" (255) and showing that this Spirit is the "nexus between Christ's resurrection and the future resurrection" (267).

Thomas concludes: "Through resurrection in the power of the Spirit, the life of the Resurrected One did not come to an end but experienced a new beginning as perfected eternal life, a life filled by the Spirit and marked by time, relationality, sociality, activity, and dynamic and eventually unendangered openness" (276).

The South African theologian Ernst M. Conradie meditates upon "Resurrection, Finitude, and Ecology". In referring to P. Tillich, he frequently emphasizes that Christian eschatology is not "a form of escapism." Instead, "it may suggest a more profound affirmation of the significance of this earth, this life, this particular body. The hope for the resurrection of the body may help us to put this life into the wider perspective of eternal life. Paradoxically, a vision of the resurrection of the body may in this way empower and encourage a commitment toward this life and toward this earth" (296).

The final paper, written by Ted Peters, who is also one of the editors of this volume, deals with "Resurrection: The Conceptual Challenge". It corresponds in its principal design like a closing bracket to the opening chapter of his colleague Russell. Peters shows that any serious eschatological reflection leads into dilemmas of various kinds, which cannot be resolved easily, if they can be resolved at all. But this does not lead him to resignation. He instead identifies the "doctrine of God"—and thus the genuine *theo*-logical topic or locus—as being at the very center of eschatology. "The question is: Will God act? Resurrection, if it is to take place at all, must be a divine act. As a part of that act . . . God will provide what is necessary to maintain continuity of our identity while transforming us into the new creation" (321). The appropriation of this hinges on unconditional trust and genuine faith in what God is going to do once humans cease being able to respond to His call anymore.

In short, of these very compact papers should not be read in one sitting but one or two at a time in order to digest them properly. One will notice, however, that none of the authors reflects the semiotics of language-based communications, which play a significant role, especially when talking about eschatology and resurrection of the dead. Such considerations would have safeguarded this well-intended dialogue from running the risk of being positivistically misconceived as not addressing the real matter, which could have been avoided if the interface of the different language games of theology and science could have been shown and interacted upon. So, in the end one is somewhat at a loss as to what is actually new here. And one further wonders why those who deal with the question of personal identity beyond death do not consider the several biblical references to the individual's name being "written in the book of life" (see Revelations 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; and also Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3). As mentioned already, this book makes for a thought-provoking and interesting reading, challenging all ardent students of its pages to come to terms with the vital subject matter of resurrection for themselves.

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The Folly of Fools: The Logic of Deceit and Self-Deception in Human Life.

Edited by Robert Trivers. New York: Basic Books, 2011. 397 pages. \$28.00.

Readers of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* should be familiar with important contributions to theories of social evolution, conflict, and cooperation developed over the course of many years by Robert Trivers, professor of anthropology and biological sciences at Rutgers University. Since the early 1970s, he has proposed such influential theories as reciprocal altruism and parental investment, and he is often quoted as one of the main theoretical influences for authors like Richard Dawkins and many others. In his book *The Folly of Fools*, Trivers explores, in a popular key, another theory he is known for: the role of self-deception in biological evolution in general and social evolution in particular.

This highly readable book is full of clever examples of evolutionary processes relevant for human social evolution described by a major theorist, and for that reason it is worthy of serious consideration. Where this book falls short of its lofty goals is in its account of religion.

At first this book is hard to characterize because it reads like a general text in popular evolutionary biology without much care for providing a full account of sources in endnotes, but at times it sounds like a polemic with the social sciences for not taking biology seriously. Only at the end does Trivers fully reveal how personally important this topic is to him and how much this book relies on practical solutions to everyday problems in his life. In short, in order to maximize our inclusive fitness, we need to minimize self-deception, and the only way we can achieve this is to use evolutionary biology as our guide for all problems of everyday life. Trivers will help us transcend our routine self-deception by helping us understand those underlying evolutionary processes that shaped it.

By relating self-deception to deception, which he finds ubiquitous in nature, Trivers explains the evolutionary roots of self-deception. It would be very hard to understand self-deception or deception if we would only look at people, so Trivers gives numerous helpful examples from other animals. In the evolutionary struggle between deceiver and deceived, ever-greater complexity arises on both sides. For example, among butterflies, being able to present themselves as poisonous is very often equivalent to being poisonous. For potential predators, being able to differentiate between genuinely poisonous individuals and those mimicking poisonous individuals is evolutionarily advantageous. The struggle between mimics and predators creates a ratcheting effect that produces even better mimics and ever more capable predators. Trivers claims that in birds and mammals this process eventually also favors intelligence.

Trivers insists that self-deception evolved in order to help deception. In any social context among human beings, who evolved to be very good in detecting deception in social situations, one helpful strategy is to deceive others without knowing that one is deceiving them. In this sense self-deception is much more efficient than keeping track of all kinds of deceptions that would be needed to produce similar results. There is a trade-off between cognitive loads and self-deception.

Trivers is at his best when he uses examples from various studies in animal behavior and presents them through his lens of evolution of sociality based on a gene point of view. However, this book becomes really different when he discusses anecdotal examples of human behaviors ranging from aviation disasters to his personal love life. Trivers's book becomes really disappointing when he discusses one of his prime examples of self-deception: religion. For one, his main sources for self-deception in religion seem to be Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett, with some help from a very informative book by Robert Wright, *The Evolution of God*. Besides those authors, Trivers uses Richard Sosis and a few others. When it comes to the scientific study of religion, we have seen in the past 20 years a steady rise in theories of religious behaviors based on both cognitive and various evolutionary approaches, and there is an abundance of literature in this area that Trivers did not seem to bother checking. Trivers is not clear on what behaviors does he have in mind when he talks about religion. Here is one of his platitudes: "Religions range from animists to monotheists to nontheists to atheists and then from Christian to Hindu to Buddhist to Muslim to Jew, with many subspecies" (Trivers 2011, 277). Trivers presents us with a view that religion is a mixture of self-deception and behaviors that benefit from within-religion cooperation at the cost of lowered cooperation with outsiders. Trivers makes some interesting connections between religion and health, but without clearly citing any sources for studies of such correlations, it is hard to assess the value of his theoretical contribution. Trivers relates his concept of religious diversity, or a number of religions per unit area, to the number of people who die from parasites in those areas. He claims that religious diversity and high parasite counts are related. This leads him to conclude that religious groups split in order to avoid parasite loads, assuming that religious groups promote in-group cooperation and out-group isolation. Regardless of how interesting Trivers's hypothesis is, it does not make clear what he calls monotheism and what he calls polytheism. Are these concepts something descriptive within his theory, or are they self-reported by religious practitioners? His point remains completely obscure. With all his respectable effort to avoid self-deception Trivers seems to fall for deceptively simple accounts of religious behaviors. In many ways religion is for Trivers a case in point when it comes to self-deception. He lists "some of the key features" of what he calls "Western religions (and some Eastern ones)" (Trivers 2011, 282–5). First, religion gives a unified privileged view of the universe for your own group; second, religion presents a series of interconnected phantasmagorical things (gods, afterlife, etc.); third, prophets or founders of religions get deified; fourth, books are treated as received wisdom from God; fifth, faith supersedes reason; and finally his last category is that religious believers think that they are right. These are the main mechanisms through which religion perpetuates self-deception. When warning about dangers of religion, Trivers explains how religion leads to self-righteousness and that in turn leads to warfare. Another interesting point that makes no sense whatsoever when reading Trivers's account of religion is that he refers to God as "she," and it is not clear how this is related to self-reports by religious practitioners or to any established use in relevant literature.

Where Trivers really holds nothing back is in his account of the social sciences that do not take evolutionary biology seriously. He accuses those social scientists who do not rely sufficiently on the ability of evolutionary biology to defeat

self-deception to be responsible for distortions of reality intended only to keep them in positions of power. The success of natural sciences is based on anti-self-deception devices like, for example, giving in advance clear definitions of all relevant concepts. Trivers maintains that in social sciences whole subdisciplines exist only because of poorly defined words. One only wishes that Trivers would apply this suggestion to his own definition of the word “religion.” Trivers finds most self-deception in cultural anthropology and social psychology. His most disparaging comments are reserved for psychoanalysis and economics. For Trivers psychoanalysis is self-deception in the study of self-deception, and economics, which he dismisses with impunity, is not a science as long as it does not fully ground itself in evolutionary biology. Trivers is at his best arguing against researchers who used the ultimatum experiment in which a person is supposed to accept an unfair split of money by anonymous others in order to show that we evolved to fit this unusual lab situation. Trivers claims that this is the same as saying we evolved to be afraid when watching a horror film in order to fit movie showings (Trivers 2012, 312).

In his last chapter Trivers talks more candidly about his existential context that in retrospect becomes visible throughout his whole book. He gives examples of his thoughts about inflicting harm to colleagues who disagreed with him, his competitive attitude toward perceived rivals in romantic interests, and so on. We read about his search for a method to rise above self-deception in everyday life, and we are presented with arguments that natural sciences in general and evolutionary biology in particular give us the ability to look at ourselves without the negative effects of self-deception. We get a sense of a serious working scientist coping with compulsions that cannot be ignored and that cannot be subsumed under fantasies that would only aggravate them. In spite of its obvious shortcomings, when it comes to a serious approach to the scientific study of religion, this book presents a lasting contribution to a difficult part of evolutionary theory of social behavior, and it gives us a valuable glimpse of the inner self of one of the major theorists of evolution in our times.

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