Book review

Laura Frances Callahan and Timothy O'Connor (eds) *Religious Faith and Intellectual Virtue*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). Pp. xii + 352. £45.00 (Hbk). ISBN 978 0 19 967215 8.

Is having a robust religious faith compatible with reasoning in the way that sensible, conscientious people do? This volume brings together fourteen new essays by a capable cast of philosophers to address this question. It intentionally draws on the resources of virtue epistemology in order to elucidate the interplay between faith and reason. The editors have gathered a diverse range of contributors to put together a volume that, with a few exceptions, is accessible to both professionals and an educated lay audience.

The essays are divided into four main sections:

    I. What is faith?
   II. Evidentialism and faith
  III. Trust and faith
  IV. Religious disagreement

Part I, 'What is faith?' contains essays by W. Jay Wood, J. L. Schellenberg, and Lara Buchak respectively. The section heading is misleading. One might expect an attempt to define or give a conceptual analysis of varieties of faith. Although each contributor does say a good deal about what faith is, the main thrust of each essay is actually quite different.

W. Jay Wood and J. L. Schellenberg are concerned with whether faith is a virtue. Wood suggests the affirmative. A sort of bare, secular faith ('thin faith', in his terms) in one's own faculties and those of others, is necessary for inquiry generally – and thus necessary to acquire the full range of epistemic goods (31). A more robust faith ('thick faith', in his terms) is necessary for obtaining theological and mystical knowledge. On the other hand, Schellenberg's position is that religious faith is not virtuous, provided that we're talking about a faith that involves belief (*doxastic* religious faith). Such faith fails to meet the full range of necessary criteria for intellectually virtuous trust. As a remedy, Schellenberg suggests

replacing doxastic faith with an imaginative faith involving a non-believing acceptance, which he argues will avoid the vices involved in doxastic faith and may be virtuous given our early place in the history of religious inquiry.

Buchak offers a framework for exploring the relationship between rational faith and justified belief. According to Buchak, one has faith in some proposition if one (a) stops one's search for evidence bearing on the proposition and (b) commits to acting on that proposition (49). Since faith involves stopping one's search for evidence, an act of faith will be rational only if it is rational to stop one's search for evidence concerning the relevant proposition and commit to action, which will itself be an evidential matter (58). Buchak discusses a handful of options for understanding the relationship between credence and justified belief. Depending on how we understand that relationship, we'll (unsurprisingly) get widely varying conclusions.

Part II, 'Evidentialism and faith', features contributions by Trent Dougherty, Evan Fales, and Paul Moser. Dougherty's goal is to show that 'everything worth saying about faith and trust in a doxastic … context can be captured by an adequate epistemology of testimony' (97). In other words, Dougherty takes up the line first set out by John Locke that genuine religious faith is nothing more than belief by divine testimony. Fales offers some speculations on religious psychology and concludes that those who appeal to faith have typically forgotten the original evidential grounds for their beliefs (he thinks there generally have been such grounds). When religious beliefs are challenged, one then 'casts about for an explanation' and the resulting appeal to faith is the only really distinctive thing about religious belief (128–129). Fales points out that slowness to respond to counter-evidence is not unique to faith, but occurs also in scientific practice (129–130). Lastly, Moser's essay sketches an esoteric line of thought that does not repudiate the need for evidence, but suggests that the Christian's evidence for God is God himself, specifically his revelation of his own character to us in love and friendship (147–148).

Part III, 'Faith and trust', is the longest section, containing five essays by John Bishop, Elizabeth Fricker, Eleonore Stump, Linda Zagzebski, and a co-authored essay by the editors, Laura Frances Callahan and Timothy O'Connor. Faith in God seems to amount to trust in a person, and many forms of religious belief stem from trust in religious authorities, suggesting that an epistemology of interpersonal trust might transfer neatly over to the religious domain. The essays in this section are essentially attempts to explore that initial thought in various ways.

The first two contributions are critiques of arguments from analogy. Bishop rejects attempts to extend conditions for right trust from ordinary interpersonal trust to trust in God by way of analogy. There are serious disanalogies hampering the move, Bishop argues. Chief among them is the fact that ordinary cases of trust require no 'doxastic venture' of belief in the existence of the one trusted, where trust in God does require such a step beyond the evidence (164–165). Fricker critiques the consistency argument from Foley and Zagzebski which says, roughly,

that if one trusts oneself and believes others are relevantly similar, one should trust others as well. According to Fricker, this argument from analogy won't go through.

Stump draws on Aquinas and the contemporary neuroscience of mind-reading to answer questions relating to the role of trust in the transmission of knowledge through testimony. Essentially, she argues that trust is a virtue because it contributes to the excellent use of the mind-reading capacity, which provides the bulk of evidence bearing on the evaluation of testimony. Zagzebski examines the question of what a reasonable person ought to do when faced with attacks on her reasons for religious belief. These reasons are either theoretical (i.e. propositional) or deliberative (i.e. experiential). Theoretical and deliberative reasons do not 'aggregate' – they can't be weighed against each other (240). If one has mixed reasons for religious belief, and faces attacks on either one's theoretical or deliberative reasons, all one may do is exercise self-trust in one's own evaluation of those reasons (241–242). Whatever survives that reflection is what one ought to believe. Callahan and O'Connor take a step back from the question of religious faith and argue simply for the view that a disposition to trust other people is an intellectual virtue. Of course, as Aristotle warned, the virtue will require us to trust the right people, in the right ways, to the right degree, and fleshing out these conditions takes up much of the essay.

While it's initially hard to decipher, there is a conversation happening across the first three sections of the book. This conversation is about answering the following question: is faith by testimony rational? If you are reading this review, chances are that you know hundreds of people who have a religious faith in large part because of the way they were raised or because of the trust they place in religious authorities. Are those people being epistemically responsible? Schellenberg says no, Dougherty and Zagzebski say yes, and Fricker says probably not.

For his part, Schellenberg argues that trusting others requires meeting many necessary conditions. For example, there's wide disagreement among purported authorities, who tend to be dogmatic, and can't plausibly be seen to be competent or trustworthy on the subject matter in the first place (77). To be aware of this and continue to place our trust in religious authorities, Schellenberg argues, will not be intellectually virtuous. Schellenberg thinks that this condition sidesteps the epistemology of disagreement mess because 'here the question is not about disagreement between yourself and another, but rather about disagreement between two others who appear similarly trustworthy' (78). But that's not right. The millions of people who find themselves already practising a religious faith are not neutral observers. They *already* have stakes in the game. For them it's not a question of an impartial observer looking to decide which of two authorities to trust. It's the question of what happens when you meet others who disagree with the view *you already hold*. And if Schellenberg thinks that this kind of disagreement undermines reasonable trust, then his view will be self-defeating (given the disagreement among philosophers about the epistemology of disagreement).

Dougherty concludes that: 'if [Reasons Commonsensism] is true … , then the appearance of credulity is sufficient to justify much testimonial belief' (111). Reasons Commonsensism is basically Phenomenal Conservatism with a new name: if it seems to S as if P, then S is prima facie justified in believing that P. He then goes on to show that since the Catholic Church appears credible to him, his beliefs generated by the Church's testimony are justified. But Dougherty's argument is redundant – *obviously* if phenomenal conservatism is true, then testimony often gives rise to justified belief. But this is *not* because of some additional 'appearance of credulity'. It's because when a normal human receives testimony that P, it makes it seem to him that P. So testimony is part of the *causal* story of justification but not part of the *epistemic* story of justification. For phenomenal conservatives, the epistemic heavy lifting is done by the seeming-state alone.

Zagzebski and Fricker disagree about whether the masses are reasonable in holding faith on testimonial grounds. Zagzebski's argument is that the initial trust is justified by analogy to self-trust (i.e. if you trust yourself to get to the truth, you should trust others like you to get to the truth) and that this trust can survive challenges to 'theoretical' reasons via a process of sustained reflective equilibrium. As noted above, Fricker thinks that the self-trust to other-trust argument fails. Furthermore, she thinks that for testimony to provide justification, we need to evaluate the credentials and trustworthiness of the testifier. In at least many of the religious cases, this condition will not have been met. So while the discussion between Schellenberg, Dougherty, Zagzebski, and Fricker is difficult to capture given the section titles, it's a worthwhile discussion nonetheless.

Part IV, 'Religious disagreement', concludes with three essays by Sanford Goldberg, Jennifer Lackey, and Nicholas Wolterstorff. Goldberg's contribution challenges attempts to defend the rationality of religious belief by appeal to externalist epistemologies, especially those positing special belief-forming processes devoted to forming religious belief specifically, such as those on offer by William Alston and Alvin Plantinga. The basic idea is that, if everyone has a token of a single belief-forming process type, then disagreement reveals that it must be the case that the process produces more false beliefs than true beliefs and if a process produces more false than true beliefs, it's unreliable. But if thinkers token *different* process types, some being reliable and some not, those who happen to have the reliable process types aren't entitled to rely on them. In support of the latter move, Goldberg compares those who would rely on such (reliable) modules to Norman the Clairvoyant in Bonjour's familiar example. Though Norman forms true beliefs about the location of the president on the basis of a reliable faculty of clairvoyance, he is not entitled to rely on that faculty, because he has a defeater, namely evidence that clairvoyance is unreliable in general. Goldberg thinks that disagreement provides a defeater that puts religious believers in the same position as Norman.

To get a problem of disagreement off the ground, it's important that those with whom we disagree be in some way our equals – our 'epistemic peers' – otherwise it becomes trivially easy to dismiss their differing views: perhaps they aren't as intelligent, haven't thought long enough, or haven't taken the issues seriously enough. Lackey argues that existing ways of understanding epistemic peerhood in the literature have the disadvantage that those who disagree over propositions with religious content will rarely consider each other epistemic peers, a claim interestingly backed up by a recent survey conducted by Helen de Cruz ('Results of my survey on religious disagreement', *The Prosblogion* (blog), 10 December 2014, <http://www.prosblogion.ektopos.com/2014/12/10/results-of-my-survey-on-religious-disagreement/>). Given that parties to religious disagreement would not count each other as epistemic peers under the existing ways of understanding epistemic peerhood, rationality would seem to require nothing by way of belief revision. But, surely, many parties to the disagreement *ought* to regard each other as epistemic peers. Lackey proposes we rethink peerhood in a way that forces parties to the disagreement to take it seriously. We should not simply ask whom we *actually* regard as peers but whom we *ought* to regard as peers (310).

Wolterstorff shifts the focus of disagreement from religious beliefs to philosophical beliefs. The core of Wolterstorff's response to Lackey and Goldberg is that we're simply ignorant of many of the sources of our beliefs and disagreements in these areas. Our disagreements are 'inexplicable', which means that we're perfectly able to meet Lackey's criterion and still believe that those with whom we disagree have gone wrong somewhere. It also means that a number of options are left open concerning how our religious belief-forming process might be operating. For example, parties to religious disagreement may all be utilizing the same reliable belief-forming process, but some are not utilizing it properly.

In sum, the book achieves the goal of being accessible to a lay audience while also being useful for experts in the field. There's a lot in the way of new and interesting arguments and lines of thought, and the variety of contributions gives a nice overview of the sorts of issues that may be raised and approaches that may be taken in virtue epistemology concerning religious faith. Language is generally either simple or well defined throughout, making for an easy read on the whole, while the introduction gives sufficient background to get the reader off the ground.

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