BOOK REVIEW

Advances in Religion, Cognitive Science, and Experimental Philosophy, edited by Helen De Cruz and Ryan Nichols, Bloomsbury, 2016. *Advances in Experimental Philosophy* series. 221pp. \$42.95 USD ISBN: 978-1-47422-382-9

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In philosophy, naturalism usually means the denial of the view that philosophy consists only of *a priori* reasoning and conceptual analysis and is logically prior to science. Philosophy is not something one conducts from the “armchair” but in close connection with what goes on in science. The anthology *Advances in Religion* raises the important issue of how the Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR) is relevant in the Philosophy of Religion. In an introductory chapter, Helen De Cruz and Ryan Nichols describe two types of philosophy informed by empirical science, both of which provide possible avenues for philosophers of religion. First, *experimental philosophy* is empirical in a direct sense. Philosophers in this area test their claims empirically. Second, *empirical philosophy* means philosophizing based on results of empirical studies. In their introduction, De Cruz and Nichols avoid the term “naturalism” for these approaches, which is wise given that the current volume relates science to Philosophy of Religion. In this area, many define “naturalism” as atheism. However, a naturalist philosophy of religion in the above sense of naturalism is not necessarily atheistic. The authors sketch two possible forms of empirically informed philosophy of religion: experimental philosophy of religion (EPR) and empirical philosophy of religion. The authors do not provide examples of the latter but focus on CSR-research. Is their idea therefore that CSR itself is an example of empirical philosophy of religion? That does not seem to be the case given that they define empirical philosophy as philosophy based on science rather than as science (2016, 3–4). Clarifying where the borders between philosophy of religion and CSR go (if there are any) would here be useful. This is because those who want to preserve the autonomy and distinctness of philosophy of religion might consider too much empirical input to their field as a threat. According to a strong naturalist position, empirical science *replaces* philosophy rather than constituting a resource to which the latter can appeal. Here a move too far way away from the armchair

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and towards CSR could prove fatal to the philosophy of religion. A moderate naturalist sees this differently. The borders between science and philosophy are fuzzy but not absent. Philosophy is still normative and abstract in a way science is not, yet science is empirically relevant (Godfrey-Smith, 2003, 149–152). Is that the position De Cruz or Nichols advocate? A discussion of this would be pertinent. Nevertheless, it is clear from the papers in the current volume that CSR has philosophical significance in ways that should be of interest to scholars in both philosophy and CSR.

The volume has three parts. The first is about challenges to religion. It consists of three articles that all take the view that CSR challenges religion. This is refreshing given that much recent writing on the implications of CSR for religion argues *against* this notion. Some for example argue that the epistemic status of religious beliefs depends on reasons and evidence rather than cognition and therefore is beyond the scope of what CSR covers (Jong and Visala, 2014). In the current volume, John S. Wilkins considers evolutionary debunking arguments (EDA's) and looks at whether these undermine religious beliefs. EDA's that target religion appeal to evolution in order to discredit religious beliefs. John Teehan argues that results in CSR on morality bolsters the problem of evil for theism. Evidence indicates that human morality involves bias in favour of in-groups and propensities to act violently against out-groups. Such evidence puts pressure on attempts to integrate CSR into theistic frameworks and leads to a "cognitive problem of evil." Jason Marsh and John Marsh argue that the fact of religious diversity (that is, that there are many different religions which involve mutually inconsistent beliefs) leads to challenges to theism. CSR predicts that subjects living in different cultural contexts hold different religious beliefs, and thus *strengthens* this challenge. These articles share the view that CSR strengthens existing challenges rather than constituting a challenge on its own. We might then ask to what extent CSR adds independent force to existing challenges and whether it represents a challenge on its own too.

In the second part of the volume, which is about how cognition constrains religion, Helen De Cruz and Johan De Smedt present a study that measured how philosophers rate arguments for and against the existence of God. This study, which is an example of EPR, indicates that religious belief is an important guiding factor in such evaluations, something that points to confirmation-bias. Christine H. Legare *et al.* present experimental research that suggests that performance of rituals leads to an illusion of control that reduces anxiety. The frequent repetition of procedural steps found in rituals triggers intuitive reasoning about causality and contributes to the thought that rituals are efficacious. In his paper, Kelly James Clark focuses on the unbelief, which CSR-scholars usually see as the result of reflective rather than intuitive think-

ing. Clark considers the presence of intuitions in intuitive reasoning and in philosophy and argues against the notion that unbelief is more rational than belief.

The articles in the third part of the volume are about how CSR can lead to re-conceptualization of traditional issues in philosophy of religion. Benjamin Purzycki and Rita McNamara discuss the relationship between how subjects represent the mind of gods and what kind of environmental challenges are salient in their context. In arguing for the (possible) evolution of religious behaviours and beliefs, the authors depart from the cognitivist approach of Pascal Boyer and Scott Atran. Yet in viewing knowledge of cognitive constraints as necessary, they might avoid the charge of “mind-blindness”, which Atran made against socio-biological theories of religion (2002). The two final papers of the volume, which are the most interesting, deal with beliefs about past lives and the afterlife, respectively. In “Remembering Past Lives,” Clair White *et al.* look at the role of memory in reasoning about past lives. What convinces some people that they lived before? Earlier parapsychological studies focused on the possession of information subjects assume they only could have given that they lived before. White *et al.* suggest a different story. Seeming memories of events in a past life encoded in episodic memory play the most important role. What convinces subjects that this memory is of *their experience* is that they remember it from a “field perspective,” that is, the perspective of the person who experiences something. One question left unanswered is where the seeming memories that contribute to past life beliefs come from in the first place. In the final paper, K M. Hodge challenges the notions that after-life beliefs arise because of intuitive dualism or our fear of death. Hodge suggests that such beliefs arise as the result of intuitive reasoning about deceased persons whom subjects represent as somehow still being “around.” Hodge here appeals to the notion of “social embodiedness.” When thinking about the deceased, subjects use an image that represents the subject in an embodied way that indicates that the person has a location and is doing something rather than being a pure Platonic-Cartesian soul, which substance-dualism entails. In an interesting discussion of this, Hodge relates the intuitive thinking social embodied representation involves to what Anthony Flew calls the “Astral Body” view. This view represents the dead as a hazy partly embodied shadow instead of a purely disembodied spirit.

Advances in Religion is a fascinating volume that covers wide-ranging issues related to the philosophical significance of CSR. An example of such significance is the potential of results in CSR to motivate or strengthen challenges to religious beliefs. Another example is how input from CSR can lead to adjustments in philosophical theorizing. One issue the volume does not explore adequately is how empirical input from CSR can lead to a reconcep-

tualization of the field of *philosophy of religion* and what that will do to the autonomy and distinctness of this field.

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