

INTRODUCTION

This issue of *Religious Studies and Theology* is devoted to the philosophy of religion. The Western tradition of philosophy, beginning especially with Pythagoras, has had continuous interaction with religious thought; there have been conflicts and accommodations between various parts of philosophy (in particular metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics) and religion. The three papers included in this issue show the spread of interaction between religious studies and philosophy. Towards the end of the Waugh-Roan paper the section entitled “The Western Conceptual Framework” (pp. 23ff) there is a concise history of Western philosophy whereby the reader can take the measure of the philosophy of Cree culture in relation to the history of Western philosophy; Professor Waugh thus makes it easier on the reader to note the differences between Cree thought and Western rationalist thought, on the one hand, and, on the other between Cree thought and Daoism.

The first paper is a dialogue started by John King-Farlow and continued with cooperation from Richard Bosley, both then professors emeriti at the University of Alberta. The cooperative work continued until Professor King-Farlow became too ill to write. It was ever his effort to harmonize religion and philosophy. The point of the Bosley King-Farlow dialogue is to begin at the beginning with principles of logic and metaphysics and to proceed to the possibility of the existence of God and, if that first end is reached, to account for the nature of God or of gods, in case there are more than one. This metaphysical approach to the questions of the dialogue is precisely the object of criticism of D.Z. Phillips. The sort of criticism which Phillips has offered the world during his distinguished career as a philosopher of religion is the chief object of David Checkland’s critique in the second paper. Checkland, who teaches philosophy at Ryerson University, discusses Phillips’ critiques of philosophers who in effect treat religious discourse as though it were itself philosophical or scientific. Following this line Phillips tries to protect the integrity of religious language against philosophers who seek to rob religious language of its power and vigor by reducing religious talk to other terms. Such a reduction treats religious discourse

as a proto-science or as a kind of psychology. Checkland means to show that this procedure is inappropriate to religious language.

Just the aim of the King-Farlow Bosley project—to begin with logic and metaphysics and make our way to the possibility of such a being as a god—is brought into question by the kind of philosophy of religion proposed by D.Z. Phillips and discussed by Checkland, who does not let Phillips off the hook when Phillips tries to insulate religion or religious language from metaphysical criticism. Phillips was a guest in the Edmonton philosophy department and a personal guest at the apartment of John King-Farlow. Ever the polite host John King-Farlow would not let Phillips renege on the obligations of a philosopher to penetrate through to the metaphysical center of any serious view.

Even if the word ‘God’ is not a name but a noun more like ‘luck’ than like ‘Pierre Trudeau’, a question of existence is nonetheless inevitable. Phillips’ anti-rationalism is not met with firm dogmatism by Checkland but rather by careful analysis of the arguments in an attempt to clarify the place of religious language. If Earle Waugh were personally to reply to Checkland’s paper, he would perhaps recommend a point at the center of his own paper: the Cree concept of place.

And the third paper is by Earle Waugh, emeritus professor at the University of Alberta, with the help of Wayne Roan, a leading ceremonialist of the Mountain Cree Camp, which was originally Smallboy’s camp which came into existence when Robert Smallboy of Hobbema withdrew from the ‘sickness’ of wealthy oil money in Hobbema. He took a band of like-minded people with him, establishing a small camp built on original Cree principles in the mountains south of Edson, Alberta, in the foothills of the Rockies.

Professor Waugh broadens the boundary usually drawn around the philosophy of religion by including a discussion of the philosophy of aboriginal religious thought with an emphasis upon the concept of place in Cree thinking.

This volume is dedicated both to the memory of John King-Farlow (1932-2002) (some remarks are made regarding Professor King-Farlow at the beginning of the dialogue) and also to the memory of Edward M. Checkland (1915-2003), long-time minister at First Baptist Church,

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Edmonton, and Instructor in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Alberta, whose insights into what he always called “the Biblical perspective” and the values it manifests enriched the lives of many. I would also like to acknowledge the detailed editorial help I have had from Professor Stephen Leighton, who teaches philosophy at Queens University.

RICHARD BOSLEY

Guest Editor

University of Alberta

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