Review of the book The nature of God, G.J. Hughes, 1995, 0415109507
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Published in:
Bijdragen: International Journal for Philosophy and Theology

Publication date:
2000

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):

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Though the blurb presents this book as an introduction to the philosophy of religion, it is, rather, an introduction to *philosophical theology*. In it, Gerard Hughes, Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Heythrop College, London, introduces the philosophical analysis of theological issues, and especially of some central issues in the doctrine of God. In five Chapters he deals with the existence, simplicity, omniscience, omnipotence and goodness of God, respectively. In all of these Chapters Hughes introduces the main problems and their alternative solutions by means of thoroughgoing and clear discussions of classical texts, from which he also extensively quotes. Descartes, Hume, Kant, Ockham, Molina and in particular Aquinas are his favourites. The opening Chapter does not deal with the question of whether God exists, but with preliminary questions that are all too often ignored, such as: 'What do we mean when we say that something exists?' ‘In which sense may existence be attributed to God?’ and ‘What could we mean by saying that God exists necessarily?’ These are crucial questions, and Hughes does well to discuss them in some detail. In the second Chapter, Hughes discusses the alleged simplicity of God. He argues that God indeed is simple in the sense that God exists *de re* necessarily. He does not give a full-blown theory of simplicity, however, and in the end makes an appeal to mystery: ‘the deficiencies in our knowledge of God derive not from any incoherence in God, but from our own limited experience, and sense-bound cognitive apparatus’ (62). In the Chapter on omniscience the sections on Ockham and Molina are especially interesting. Hughes’s own position is that God is timelessly eternal and knows all things by a simple unchanging all-inclusive awareness; it is this awareness that is the ground of God’s omniscience, and not, e.g. middle knowledge (which Hughes rejects). God can eternally know everything that happens in time without taking away contingency and freedom (in the sense of *libertas indifferentiae*). In Chapter 4, on omnipotence, Hughes defends a rather strong view on omnipotence. He largely defends the position of Descartes that God is not limited by the laws of logic: ‘For all we know, God has it in his power to bring it about that something occur which, given our existing beliefs, can be described only by a contradiction’ (151). The phrase ‘given our existing beliefs’ is crucial here, in that Hughes argues that it is possible that our existing beliefs are mistaken (e.g., it is conceivable that someone is both married and a bachelor if our ontology of persons is mistaken and one person can have two bodies, and be unmarried *qua* body\(_1\) and married *qua* body\(_2\) (144). In the final Chapter, on God’s goodness, Hughes argues that the most probable view is that God could do wrong, though there is no good reason to suppose that God in fact ever has acted wrongly. In a brief conclusion, Hughes sums up his argument and indicates why he is inclined to reject non-fundamentalist positions in religious epistemology.

Coming to a conclusion, this book has considerable merits as well as important weaknesses. Among its merits are the high intellectual standards it satisfies and the clarity of its overall argument. It would certainly be useful for a seminar with graduate students. However, Hughes ignores much recent literature, even where it is highly relevant. He did not only miss important Dutch contributions like Gerrit Immink’s *Divine Simplicity* (1987) and Gijsbert van den Brink’s *Almighty God* (1993), he also ignores Swinburne’s *The Coherence of Theism* (1977, mentioned in the bibliography only) and Johnson’s *She Who is* (1992). If he had seriously engaged with these and other studies, he would in some instances have arrived at different conclusions. More importantly, however, Hughes sometimes adopts weird positions, which hardly admit of defence. The way in which he defends Descartes’ position on omnipotence is a case in point (it seems to be a very strange view of marriage that Hughes presupposes in his example). And finally, and most importantly, by concentrating in a study of the nature of God on God’s omnipotence, omniscience and simplicity, and failing to mention God’s mercy and love, Hughes incurs the suspicion that the omni-everything potentate whom one often encounters in caricatures of classical theism, is more dear to him than the loving and compassionate God of Christianity.

Marcel Sarot