

of theological epistemology (however central these may seem to the overall shape of Barth's *oeuvre*), but are rather deeply conditioned by the particular doctrine that provides the immediate context of its treatment. Thus in his handling of the *Romans* commentaries he resists the temptation to decouple Barth's commentary from the Pauline text, whilst the caution of the *Christliche Dogmatik* is contextualised by Barth's encounter with Catholicism in Münster.

Any work with such an extensive scope will, of necessity, be highly selective: Oakes's omissions, however, are more indicative of directions for future research than of *lacunae* that undermine his thesis. Nonetheless, some will wonder whether the discussion of the Anselm book (p. 174) is prematurely truncated, given Barth's own avowals of its significance; likewise, the discussion of Barth's typology of theological responses to Kant (pp. 143–4) could be enriched by the addition of a 'fourth way' evident in the Hegel chapter. A treatment of *Church Dogmatics* II/1 would also have been particularly interesting, given that it contains Barth's efforts to formulate an anti-nominalist doctrine of the divine perfections (placing the usually Platonic Barth closer to Aristotelian *hexis proaireteke*); nonetheless, this omission is explicitly justified in the text (p. 194).

The reader is left with a more accurate, if less straightforward, picture of Barth's understanding of the theology-philosophy relation; integrating Barth's more trenchant moments into Oakes's bigger picture will dissipate much of their sting for more philosophically inclined theologians. Nonetheless, we may be left wondering whether Barth wanted to have his cake and eat it too, to reap the fruits of philosophy without yielding to it any interrogative power. Notably omnipresent in the book's discussions are Barth's efforts to grapple with the legacy of Immanuel Kant: whilst Barth refuses to embrace Kant as the 'official philosopher of protestantism' (p. 246) or accept a human *a priori* to revelation, he continued to speak admiringly of Kant and his epistemological limitation of reason. Oakes's work, therefore, is an important reminder that Barth is a thoroughly modern thinker, and that in going beyond Kant he does not attempt to revert to pre-modern modes of thought.

OLIVER JAMES KEENAN OP

ONE BODY. AN ESSAY IN CHRISTIAN SEXUAL ETHICS by Alexander R. Pruss, *University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 2013, pp. ix + 465, \$45.00, pbk*

Ought sexual activities, desires, pleasures to be assessed only according to general moral principles which apply to other areas of our lives? For example, is consent enough to justify our sexual choices? And if so, does that make sexual ethics different from other areas of ethics – or alternatively, does it make it the same as other areas, if we are inclined to think the rest of ethics is as 'thin' as that?

Enter Alexander Pruss, a philosopher well-schooled in both the analytic and phenomenological/personalist traditions, to tackle some of these questions. This profound and very readable work sets a new standard for sexual ethics. Built around its central argument is a profound examination of a wide variety of sexual phenomena, many of which are of pressing ethical concern yet are only cursorily dealt with by previous writers. Included are original discussions of sexual desire, the place of libido in human life, sexual fantasy, non-coital sexual activity, same-sex attraction, contraception and natural family planning as well as questions surrounding reproductive technology. Pruss's central argument begins with a discussion of love: a subject which, commendably, is not simply tagged on as an afterthought in an abstract origins argument about the purpose of sex. In

discussing *agape* in its various forms Pruss notes that ‘each of [love’s] forms is in some way the same, and yet the forms are different. Moreover, love becomes distorted when we get the form wrong – for instance, by standing in a relation of eros to one’s parent’ (p. 7). Establishing convincingly that willing the good of the beloved for the beloved’s sake, appreciating the beloved and seeking union are necessarily intertwined, Pruss notes that, unsurprisingly, love is experienced as one thing. Moreover, ‘Our love is humble insofar as it is a response to reality. The central salient part of that reality is the beloved. But that is not all. We also need to humbly, i.e. realistically, examine ourselves and our relationship with the other, and there is an objectivity here. The nature of love calls on us to respond to reality, and this need to respond to reality is what makes the duties of love not to be subjective... The other-focus of love then goes hand-in-hand with a rejection of a relativistic approach to ethics’ (p. 30).

Following Aquinas’s notion of ‘formal union’ Pruss notes that one’s will is united with the beloved’s in willing the beloved’s good. That said, there is a union that is had simply in virtue of loving. In recognising the beloved as a *person*, ‘one recognizes that the beloved *has* a point of view, and by recognizing the beloved as a *human*, one realizes what certain aspects of this point of view must be’ (pp.31–32). However, formal union, which is a necessary part of love, can impel us to ‘real union’ – a union which is a way of being together, not just in mind and will, but externally and cooperatively. And love does not seek just any old real union, but one expressive of the form of love in question. What primarily differentiates the forms of love is not the benevolent or appreciative aspects, not the formal union part of the unitive aspect, but the kind of real union that the relationship calls for. For Pruss it appears that some kinds of real union are paradigmatic and consummatory of a particular form of love.

The real union of the activity of sexual intercourse involves a set of organs functionally matched and striving towards a momentous (non-trivial) end. It involves a union as *one flesh, one body* where two bodies come together united by a common biological striving for reproduction. But two embodied persons are involved and they yearn for a union that does justice to a form of interpersonal love – one in which the biological aspect of the union needs to be in harmony with the attitudes of the two *as persons*. In short, the couple cannot fight that which unites them if this is to be an integrated real union of persons.

Pruss considers forms of love and focuses on specifically erotic love as one that seeks a real union of two persons as one organism in loving lifelong commitment through a personally integrated reproductive striving (lifelong, so the brief act of intercourse can be stretched through time by an act of commitment allowing for sexual union as a fully personal union of *one body*).

I cannot do justice here to the depth and detail of the arguments put forward by Pruss. Suffice it to say that he lays out precisely the meaningfulness of sex in human life, examining the question at many levels. Some sections are, admittedly, incomplete in feel, as with Pruss’s interesting discussion of sexual desire and ‘doomed’ erotic love in cases where genuine erotic union is literally impossible (such as incestuous or same-sex erotic love): it would be good to hear more on the connection – sometimes a very obscure connection – between felt desires and underlying ‘desires’ or needs for friendship and more realistic union.

Helpfully distinguishing between desire for union with another and the more generic libido, Pruss further states that ‘libido implicitly points us toward union with another human being, both because it is reproduction *with another* that is desired – humans reproduce sexually – and because as a matter of fact, for the good of the child the context for reproduction is that of interpersonal union between the parents’. However, surely reproduction may not be desired here, even sub-consciously; it is much more plausible to say that reproduction is the *purpose* of desire. There are other difficulties: Pruss tells that, ‘Human reproduction

involves ejaculation by the male into the female. In order to engage voluntarily in reproductive-type activity, it is plausible that one needs to intend the semen to reach the woman's reproductive system . . . ' (p.323). This sets the bar too high, for it would exclude all those who had no knowledge of semen or the specifics of conception (Pruss elsewhere appreciates this p.273) and thus no ability to intend this precise process – though they are certainly free of any intention to make their union non-reproductive or otherwise distort it. It is also a little surprising that Pruss favours semen collection via use of a perforated condom for married couples with fertility problems: he sees this as 'entirely morally unproblematic' (pp. 353–354), a view with which I would certainly take issue. For although the act resulting is minimally preserved as an act of a reproductive kind, it radically contradicts that total one-flesh self-giving union which Pruss's argument seems to demand (i.e. semen is deliberately withheld from the wife in the very act of union, albeit with a good further motive).

One becomes acutely aware in reading this book that sexual ethics *is* different from other areas of ethics, and radically so. The number of moral absolutes which proliferate in this area, in order to protect what some call 'reproductive integrity', is admittedly extraordinary. Pruss gives us excellent reasons, bound up with love and life and humane parenting, as to why this should be the case. I doubt I will read a better book on the philosophy of sex in my lifetime.

ANTHONY McCARTHY

FROM MORALITY TO METAPHYSICS: THE THEISTIC IMPLICATIONS OF OUR ETHICAL COMMITMENTS by Angus Ritchie, *Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, pp. vii + 198, £35.00, hbk*

In his book *From Morality to Metaphysics* Angus Ritchie challenges the current orthodoxy in moral philosophy (at least as it is practised by analytical philosophers), which seeks to account for our ethical commitments, whilst disposing of the teleological framework of classical theism. To this end Ritchie argues that contemporary moral theory fails to fulfil two conditions. The first condition is to account for the objectivity of our moral commitments. He notes that most philosophers currently working in ethics wish to defend the objectivity of ethics. Here Ritchie quotes from the experiences of Philippa Foot who found that the moral subjectivity prevalent in Oxford made no sense in the light of the atrocities of Nazi Germany (p.36). To maintain that moral judgements are subjective flew in the face of the objective horror of human suffering. Thus, even accounts of moral judgement which locate their source in purely in human reactions to the world, such as Simon Blackburn's quasi realism, seek to explain why they have the character of objectivity. The second condition which Ritchie argues a theory of moral judgement must fulfil is to account for *why* our moral judgements are objective. This second condition is particularly pressing for those accounts which ascribe a fully blown objectivity to moral judgements (as opposed to quasi-realism), for the further we move in the direction of objectivity the more difficult it is to explain moral judgements as originating purely in human subjectivity. Here Ritchie argues that any adequate moral theory needs to explain why human beings have the ability to track moral truth, in an analogous manner to the way in which we track other truths (p.42), such as physical truths about the world. Ritchie claims that accounts which fail to explain this capacity for tracking an objective moral order suffer from an explanatory gap.

In response to this challenge Ritchie divides moral theories up into those like Blackburn's which are sophisticated versions of projectivism, and those such