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Friedrich Hermanni's *Metaphysics*

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Friedrich Hermanni's *Metaphysics: Attempts at Ultimate Questions* offers a well structured and internally coherent system that draws upon the continental and analytic traditions in the formation of answers to some of the primary questions of metaphysics, such as the existence of God, the nature of human and divine freedom, the justification of belief in a good, omnipotent and omniscient God in face of evil, the nature of the human person as body and soul, the understanding of death and resurrection and the question of truth in face of the plurality of religions.[1]

Before turning to Hermanni's work, a remark on the status of these questions in pastoral perspective seems appropriate. While these questions are central inquiries of the Western philosophical traditions, they are also discussed outside of academic discourses. Most clergy, in fact, deal with precisely these sorts of questions even if they are rarely framed in the same manner. There is thus a correlation between the theological and philosophical realm of reflection and the occasional duty of a parish minister in offering guidance, insight and pastoral care to church members in certain subject matters. One might call it pastoral metaphysics when the arguments of philosophers provide consolation and thus work as balm to the soul. While it is only a part of clerical responsibilities, pastors occasionally find themselves in situations in which they are confronted with questions of theological and metaphysical character. For example, a pastor might have a conversation with someone sometime long after the funeral of a loved one, when the immediate shock of the loss is perhaps slowly replaced with the haunting questions of life's meaning, the place of the loved one in the afterlife or the existence of God. It is obvious that philosophical arguments would not necessarily be on the top of the agenda in this situation; only a few individuals, furthermore, would suggest that the handiwork of a philosopher could resolve these inquiries absolutely. Nevertheless, at a certain point in the conversation with the parishioner, the philosophical arguments could also be addressed. Perhaps some peace of mind can be acquired in the philosophical reflection, which is, if in fact true, at the same time perfectly harmonious with, or even implicit within the Christian teachings on these matters. In this sense, metaphysical arguments may actually be, on occasion, a tool in the hands of the pastor as a supplement to the other resources used in those special cases where the parishioner is especially eager to know the meaning of the Christian teachings and the ways in which the same issues have been understood by philosophers. One need only think of a pastor's conversation with a church member who is trying to make sense of his faith in God and the reality of evils in the world that he has come to learn about or has experienced firsthand. Perhaps at the right time in the conversation a few remarks on some of the philosophical attempts at addressing this issue might actually aid in presenting the significance of the Christian faith and its way of approaching the issue; or conversely, perhaps another aspect of the implicit logic of the Christian faith is brought to the foreground in the philosophical process of reflection and conversation with the church member. On occasion, of course, the clergy also have to speak about the nature of human life and the fundamental understandings of the soul and body which are, in turn, related to ethical debates about human life and the beginning and end of life. Perhaps the philosophical reflections on these matters may aid the pastor in the expression of the Christian teachings about these things. One might finally refer to the work of a pastor in helping members of his or her church who are seeking to come to terms with the plurality of religions in their community and attempting to understand how the teachings of these religions should be understood and how their ways of viewing the world should be evaluated. Here again it seems that philosophical reflection may not offer a final answer but rather some ways of thinking that a pastor may then draw upon to a greater or lesser degree in the presentation of the Christian teachings about these matters. In all of these cases, the metaphysical issues go beyond the mere speculative realm and have to do with normal life and the lived Christian faith as it is experienced in the world, which of course involves reasoning from time to time. In this sense, Hermanni's book, which is written with a commanding knowledge of the available approaches to these issues in the realms of philosophy, may be understood to offer some points of philosophical orientation that are ultimately edifying for Christians.

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[1] On the first page of his introduction he describes the questions which he attempts to answer in his book: "What is the reason for existence/being [Dasein] and being-as-it-is [Sosein], and in which relationship does this stand to the thought [Gedanken] of God? Wherein subsists the essence of human freedom, and what does this have to do with the evils that people do and to which they are subjected? In which relationship do the animate states of man stand with his corporeal states, and what may he hope for after his death, if he may hope for anything? How is the relationship between those answers to be evaluated which the world religions provide to this question?" Friedrich HERMANNI, *Metaphysik: Versuche über letzte Fragen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 1.

The book is broken into four parts: *Part One: The final ground and the thought of God* (Ch. 1: The cosmological argument, Ch. 2: The ontological argument, Ch. 3: The teleological argument); *Part Two: God, freedom and evil* (Ch. 4: The essence of human freedom, Ch. 5: The theodicy problem); *Part Three: The unity and future of the person* (Ch. 6: The body-soul problem, Ch. 7: Death and resurrection); *Part Four: The truth of the religions* (Ch. 8). Chapter One looks at the three versions of the cosmological argument. There must be a sufficient reason given for that which exists. Why is there something rather than nothing? Why is there the "real" or the "actual" ("Wirkliches," 2) which could also not be? What is the reason, cause or basis of the contingent? He first analyzes the Aristotelian Kalam cosmological argument which holds that everything which begins to exist has a cause for its existence, a necessary prime mover, God. Hermanni sees this in a critical light because the non-eternity of the world cannot be argued for *a priori* or on the basis of modern physics. The second option for the Aristotelian cosmological argument with Aquinas is also challenged by Hermanni because of problematic assertions within the argument. He holds that one is not compelled to accept the rationale of Thomas that "nothing would exist if there would be exclusively temporal things." (31) Furthermore, while Thomas posits an end in the chain of causality, what if it is indeed without an end, or what if the primary cause is indeed merely an "imperishable primal matter [Urmaterie]"? (31) Only the third version of the cosmological argument, as proposed by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Samuel Clarke, which he analyses historically and in extensive dialog with its critics, holds up to the test. The sufficient cause of the various contingencies can only be explained by a necessary being. This approach posits not a first cause in the chain of causation but "an ultimate cause of the entire chain of causality." (32) For Hermanni, the considerations that he offers in criticism and review of the various forms of the ontological argument suggest that the createdness of the world and the existence of its Creator are "not only certain in faith, but also not implausible in thinking." (42) In this regard, he offers an understanding for the relationship between faith and reason. On the one hand, he points to the fact that the cosmological argument was itself developed in the cultural world of the three Abrahamic religions, and is thus closely related to the Biblical account of the creation of the world. On the other hand, he asserts that the "insight" ("Einsicht") which is "searched after in faith" and which is "given by God" also "stands for itself" ("steht für sich selbst") "without presuppositions of substantive nature" ("ohne Voraussetzungen inhaltlicher Art"), presuppositions, that is, which "are not also reasonably [vernünftigerweise] understood." (42) The unique approach in Hermanni's work is demonstrated in these final statements. He holds that the plausibility and reasonableness of the belief in a Creator holds up to stringent rational argument.

In Chapter Two Hermanni presents his version of the ontological argument drawing upon Leibniz. In so doing, he also gives a historical account of its development. In *Proslogion*, Anselm argued that God is "that than which no greater can be conceived" (*aliquid quo maius nihil cogitari possit*). The argument was developed in the early modern period, by Descartes for example. In his version of it, he did not emphasize the unsurpassable being, like Anselm, but rather the upmost perfect being (*ens summe perfectum*). He held that because existence is a perfection, God, as the upmost perfect being, could not lack this attribute. Kant, like others before him, challenged this version of the argument. He claimed that existence is not a perfection by which something may be characterized ("in its essence a linguistic critique," 58). Hermanni accepts Kant's critique of this form of the argument. He thus produces a new version of the ontological argument according to which God's essence is the sufficient reason of His existence. Hermanni draws upon the Platonic conception of the good as itself striving after existence according to the degree to which it is good, the degree of its substantive content. This version of the ontological argument asserts that the necessary is actual when it is possible and that the possible, because of its intrinsic goodness and according to its degree of goodness, strives to reality. (63) It presumes the necessary being of the cosmological argument and therefore follows it in the book. (66) Hermanni's first two chapters therefore rely upon the principle of sufficient reason and an account of the *ens necessarium*, the necessary being, which he establishes in Chapter One against its critics. Hermanni's argument has come under criticism. Markus Enders takes issue with Hermanni's version of the ontological argument. He claims that the *demonstrandum* (that which is to be demonstrated) is implied in Hermanni's argument. Enders holds that Hermanni embraces an ontological postulate: "an intrinsic goodness of possible beings presumes the basis of a First Good which is principalizing them."[2] This criticism makes it seem as though Hermanni's ontological argument is essentially fideistic. This could not be the case, however, as that his conception of potentiality rests upon logical argument. He argues that there must be a reason for the actual. The actual itself cannot provide this reason. Therefore, the reason must be found in the potential, and not in the actual. Hermanni's conception of the intrinsic goodness of the potential is a description of this actualization according to its degree of substantive content. Another term could be used; for example, one might say that this potential spreads itself out or is self-diffusive according to its degree of substantive content. These terms are, however, also simple descriptions of the good. In reference to Hermanni's book, Hartmut von Sass argues generally that the "central basic problem of the metaphysical approaches" lies in the impossibility to get from a "yet to be proven God-abstraction to the God of an actually lived faith."[3] Notger Slenczka, in his review of Hermanni's *Metaphysik*, posits a similar conflict.[4] While Hermanni does not assert that the understanding of the *ens necessarium* is a complete conception of God from the Christian perspective, it is of course correct to mention the possibility of a conflict. To declare a necessary conflict, however, would presume too much regarding the nature of the philosophical arguments. The way in which the philosophical arguments are taken up, understood and explained is the determinative element which arbitrates whether they stand in competition to the Christian understanding of God, whether they are supplemental concepts which may be used in the explication of Christian teachings, or whether they help to clarify the Christian understanding of God, or some mixture of these options.

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[2] Markus Enders, Review of Hermanni, *Metaphysik*, in *Phil. Jahrbuch* 120 (2013), 440-445, here: 442.

Chapter Three approaches the teleological argument by introducing the discussion about the "fine tuned" (68), "life-enabling" (69) and "life-friendly universe." (70) If the fine tuning of the universe were to be changed only slightly, life would no longer be possible. Hermanni holds that this fine tuning requires an explanation. In his assessment, it points to the existence of an intelligent cause of the universe. The two attempts at explaining the fine tuning, the theories of everything and the multiverse theories, both negate any necessary reference to a divine plan, an intelligent actor or an "intelligent cause of the world which is interested in the emergence of life." (88) They do not, however, finally resolve the quandary of the fine tuning. They rather merely situate it onto a second level discourse in which it still requires explanation. In Hermanni's account of the "design hypothesis," which he develops in contrast to the various options, he holds that the empirical basis of the teleological argument is not capable of addressing the quantitative, qualitative or modal attributes of the intelligent cause and that, furthermore, it must be completed with a cosmological or ontological argument or even reconceived in a new form. In this new form, which Hermanni develops with help of the late Schelling's account of positive science, the reality of God is to be confirmed "alone [allein] through empirical confirmation of expectations which follow from the concept of God of pure reason [der reinen Vernunft] for the constitution of the natural and historical world." (89) The teleological argument is thus supported by the ontological and cosmological argument and ultimately remains open. As established by drawing upon Schelling, the argument continually embraces all of the experience of the well-tempered universe with every confirmation unremittingly strengthening the proof of the existence of God. In Slenczka's review he holds that the rational and objective quality of the teleological argument is only plausible in a secondary sense as an interpretation of the "self-relation" ("Selbstverhältni[s]") or "self-comprehension" ("Selbsterfassung") which is "earlier" ("früher").[5] Slenczka is certainly right to point out the interrelatedness of these levels of reflection. However, when the self-relating subject is made the supreme reference point within the (solipsistic?) chronological and derivative framework, has it, the subject, indeed not been liberated for freedom but rather left alone with a great deal of work? Hermanni's version of the teleological argument is persuasive because it offers a rational explanation of the fine tuning, preserves the independence of objective rationality without overstraining the subject and, finally, because it sets some limitations on the range of the teleological argument itself, in that it exposes the interrelationship of the argument with other philosophical arguments.

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[3] Hartmut von Sass, »Allerletzte Fragen. Zur Kritik metaphysischer Theologie und ihrer gegenwärtigen Renaissance,« in *Theologische Rundschau* 78 (2013), 99–117, here: 116.

[4] Notger Slenczka, Review of Hermanni, *Metaphysik*, in *Marburger Jahrbuch Theologie* 23 (2011), 164–175, here: 174–175.

In Chapter Four, which deals with the essence of human freedom, Hermanni develops a compatibilist account of human freedom which presents freedom and determinism in a teleological framework while dealing with many alternative approaches to this question. His account of freedom asserts that a human action is free when it is not coincidental, does not follow from internal or external compulsion and when the motivations leading to it are not manipulated. He articulates the same account positively by asserting that free actions are determined by motivations which belong to the individual character of a person. He therefore postulates an "*uncircumventability of the self [Unhintergehbarkeit des Selbst]*." (114) Against radical determinism, Hermanni holds that the free actions of this subject are not determined by past events in the sense of heteronomy. Against radical libertarianism, however, which asserts the human capacity of "absolute spontaneity" (115), Hermanni holds that man is not like God, a *causa sui*. (110) On the contrary, the compatibility may be understood in that God, in the eternal councils before the foundation of the world, could "arrange the earlier condition of the world unto the later, and especially to the character of the persons, which are included in the later conditions." (115) Hermanni's account of human freedom thus closely follows his understanding of the teleological argument (Ch. 3) and the fine tuning of the universe. It would have been interesting to see how Hermanni's position in Chapter Four would differ from Luis de Molina's concept of *scientia media*.[6] While certainly different, Hermanni's uncircumventability of the self has a functional similarity to Molina's divine middle knowledge in that it preserves the character of self-determinative actions while also maintaining divine providence. The role of individual responsibility or accountability before God seems to be implied in Hermanni's argument. Further research might be able to determine whether the position of the "honest Lutherans" (111), which Hermanni convincingly revives, is not all that different from the honest Melanchthonians, Arminians or Leibnizians. While the structural frameworks differ, certain parallels may be identified between Hermanni's "character of the persons" (115) and Melanchthon's terminology of *voluntas humana* or Arminius's *causa secunda*. Although Hermanni does draw upon Luther in emphasizing the limitations of human freedom (111–113), the radical accounts of sole divine efficacy, as found in Luther's *De servo arbitrio* and Calvin's *Institutes*, appear in a somewhat milder Leibnizian form with Hermanni's "character of the persons." In the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, for example, Leibniz wrote: "As the individual concept of each person includes once for all everything which can ever happen to him, in it can be seen, *a priori* the evidences or the reasons for the reality of each event, and why one happened sooner than the other. But these events, however certain, are nevertheless contingent, being based on the free choice of God and of his creatures. It is true that their choices always have their reasons, but they incline to the choices under no compulsion of necessity."[7] Leibniz thereby successfully avoids a position in which there would "be no place for human liberty" and in which "an absolute fatality" would "rule."[8] Hermanni's account is convincing not least because he articulates it by drawing upon a wide range of historical sources while also carrying on a deep conversation with contemporary authors.

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[5] SLENCZKA, Review (see above n. 4), 173. See also Notger SLENCZKA, »Gottesbeweis und Gotteserfahrung,« in *Letztbegründungen und Gott*, ed. by Edmund RUNGGALDIER and Benedikt SCHICK (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 6–30.

In Chapter Five Hermanni provides a theodicy and thereby demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of his area of specialization.[9] He divides the issue into a logical question and an empirical question. The logical question asks whether it is a simple contradiction of terms to assert that there is a good, omniscient and omnipotent God and at the same time evil. Hermanni argues that it is not a con-

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6 Cf. Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia*, transl. by Alfred J. Freddoso (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Pr., 1988).

7 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, par. 13, in idem, *Discourse on Metaphysics, Correspondence with Arnauld, Monadology*, transl. by George Montgomery (Chicago, Il.: Open Court, 1908), 19.

8 Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* (see above, n. 7), par. 13, p. 20.

9 See also Friedrich Hermanni, *Die letzte Entlastung: Vollendung und Scheitern des abendländischen Theodizeeprojektes in Schellings Philosophie* (Wien: Passagen-Verl., 1994); Hermanni, *Das Böse und die Theodizee: eine philosophisch-theologische Grundlegung* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verl.-Haus, 2002).

tradiction and supports this with a no-better-world defense: "If the world was created from an omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good God, then it is good in an unsurpassed [unübertrefflich] way. The evils in the world are in this case constitutive elements of its [the world's] unsurpassed goodness [Gutsein], and God therefore has a morally sufficient reason to permit them." (127) The argument is pointed, for he claims that if some evil in this world were actually taken away, or would have never happened, then the world would be a "different" world that was either "worse" than this world or as good as this world but having other "disadvantages" ["Nachteile," 127] in comparison to this created world in which we live, which is created in an unsurpassed good way because it is created by a good, omniscient and omnipotent being. The logical problem is different than the empirical question. The empirical question asks whether the world would not in fact be a better world if some of the evils in it were taken away. This could continue: "Is it therefore not improbable that that theistic God exists who would have undoubtedly created an unsurpassed good world and prevented such evils?" (133) Hermanni holds that this question can be neither negated nor affirmed because of a lack of knowledge, knowledge, for example, of the future, and of all of the possible consequences of evils that would have been prevented, etc. The empirical question thus leads to the problem of the comparison of possible worlds, which Hermanni addresses at length. The advantage of Hermanni's approach is identifiable not only in his challenges to the free-will-defense (123–124), which may harvest a response if the book is translated, but also in his basic avoidance of a fideistic framework that is less willing to engage the logical and empirical questions. While the question about the possibility of evil is carefully addressed in Hermanni's treatment, there is room for the explication of the specific ontological status of evil as *privatio boni* (as presumed with his reception of Augustine, 126). One might finally ask if a collaborative relationship between the no-better-world argument and a modified version of the free-will-defense might be possible.

In Chapter Six, Hermanni deals with the relationship of mental and physical states of the person by arguing for a position in distinction to both dualism (149–152) and physicalism. (153–158) Following upon his initial triad of premises (1. necessary limitation of physical inquiry to the physical, 2. explanatory relevance of the mental state for human action, 3. explanatory irreducibility of the mental state, 159–160), the body and the soul are presented as one identity as that the essence of one constitutes the essence of the other and vice versa. (162) These are identical in a fundamental third, the person. (163) The person appears in two ways, physically and mentally, and is experienced and described in these two ways. Hermanni draws upon a convenient analogy to describe his understanding: the planet Venus (identity of the person) can be described or experienced both as the Morning Star (physically) and as the Evening Star (mentally). (166) In connection with the Fourth Chapter on freedom, and his account of the uncircumventability of the self against physicalist determinism, the argument in the Sixth Chapter preserves the significance and irreducible character of the mental state of the person as a necessary condition for the possibility of human freedom. (165) Both here in the account of the person, before in the teleological argument and then again in his theodicy, Hermanni presents the necessary philosophical limitations of the naturalistic or empirical method. He does this in such a way, however, that also accepts the legitimacy of the empirical methodology in its area of inquiry. Yet "while each physically described process can be in principle physically explained from others, this does not appear to be the case with mental states." (164) The advantage of Hermanni's position, the importance of which can hardly be underestimated, is its ability to preserve simultaneously the affirmation of natural science, and thus the natural scientific perspective on the human, while also preserving the affirmation of theology and philosophy, and thus the spiritual and intellectual perspective on the human. Hermanni's account of the person correlates with his understanding of death and resurrection.

In Chapter Seven Hermanni addresses the subject of death and resurrection from a non-dualistic perspective. Drawing upon various arguments, he understands death as not only the death of the body, with the soul continuing to exist in a dualistic account, but as the death of the entire person, body and soul. (176–179) Some readers will continue to have questions regarding the suitability of the univocal use of the term "death" for both biological and spiritual states, but Hermanni's extensive argument warrants careful consideration. He defends the logical possibility that the continuity and unique identity of the person could be secured in the eternal memory of God. Hermanni calls into question any simple equalization of the continuing human identity in the memory of God with the resurrection of the dead. In such an account, "the Christian hope for the future would be decisively shortened. For it [i.e. the hope] certainly relates to a new bodily life before and with God, not only to the remaining presence of the past life in His memory." For this reason, "the talk of continuing life in the memory of God cannot take the place of the hope of resurrection in Christian theology." (187)

In Chapter Eight, Hermanni develops a critical version of inclusivism while dealing with the question regarding the truth of the religions and the three possibilities for understanding the relationship between the religions. The first option is exclusivism which holds that the truth claims of only one religion are warranted. Hermanni holds that this position is problematic because of the historical interconnections of the religions and the parallels in content. (195) Inclusivism presumes the truth of its own religion to the highest degree and measures the truth claims of other religions according to it. Pluralism holds that the truth claims of many religions are to be warranted equally in the highest degree. One of the major problems that Hermanni identifies with this conception in its popular form with John Hick is the necessary exclusion of the differences in religions in the isolation of the universal characteristics or common denominator, such as the soteriological and ethical criteria, which are presented as rooted in a transcendental orientation that is at the same time beyond the actual specific conceptualizations in the religions. For this reason, the various concrete conceptualizations, as offered in the religions, are necessarily excluded. (196–203) Hermanni develops an account of religion which is not reliant upon an external measure but one which rather conceives of the common essence of religion as the finite consciousness of the infinite. The infinite in turn includes this consciousness. For if the infinite did not include this finite consciousness, if it was, that is, wholly other than it, it would be itself finite. (204–205) Although he does not remark upon it, at this point Hermanni's system ultimately rests upon a tradition that was established in Christian theology with, and already long before, Nicholas of Cusa's *De li Non Aliud* ("On the Not Other"). Hermanni also draws upon Hegel. From this understanding of religion, religion itself is that consciousness in which the divine Spirit knows itself through mediation of the human spirit. (205) From this concept, one may hold that religion is not a "mere subjective occasion of man." (205) Hermanni points out that according to Hegel the divine Spirit knows itself in all religions. (208) The plurality of religions is therefore a consequence of this process of mediation. (209) The essence of religion is made representational, however, first in the Christian faith. (211) Hermanni offers a serious and thus refreshing attempt at answering the challenging question about how to make sense of the plurality of religions in the world and their accounts and especially Christianity's account of reality. Against a radical exclusivism, Hermanni's position can affirm the truth of the various religions within the greater truth of the divine Spirit which includes them. Against a radical pluralistic account, Hermanni challenges the tendency to eliminate all of the particularities of the religions in favor of a common denominator which appears, oddly enough, to be more of an "equal disvaluing" of the religions than an "equal valuing" of them. (214) There are strong advantages to Hermanni's approach. It can embrace, for example, Luke's account of Paul's remarks (from Epimenides and Aratus) in Athens, that God "is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being;' as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'" (Acts 17:27–28) Thomas Groß has also seen the strengths of Hermanni's case. He writes positively in review of Hermanni's philosophy: "A general, not absolute and exclusively conceived concept of religion may be understood as a background upon which a real dialog of the religions could first unfold."[10] Versions of the Hegelian approach have often been challenged because of the implications that the system brings with it for other Christian doctrines.[11] Further research will be able to determine whether these challenges actually apply or if in fact they do not apply. There is more work to be done in this area to help those who want to embrace the good aspects of this approach but, at the same time, cannot easily rid themselves of their questions. Nevertheless, Hermanni's approach is certainly one of the options which should be considered when reflecting on this issue, for the fundamentally peaceful command of Christ to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19–20) – which rests at the heart of the Christian religion, as that it does not discriminate upon ethnicity or background ("I was a stranger and you welcomed me" 25:35) and seeks charitably to help the weak ("I was hungry and you gave me food" vs. 35) and with longsuffering to protect the vulnerable ("I was naked and you clothed me" vs. 26) – is, of course, in no necessary conflict with the conceptual reflection about the meaning of the factual plurality of religions.

While Slenczka suggests the need for a *metaphysica generalis* in the introduction,[12] I would cast my vote for a chapter on the metaphysics of beauty in the second edition. A strong defense of the importance of this theme in metaphysics is provided by Leibniz in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* in which he argues against an account of the "principles of goodness and beauty" as "arbitrary." Leibniz challenges those

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[10] Thomas Gross, "Hegels Religionen," in *Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung* (17 July 2013), Nr. 163, N4. See Friedrich Hermanni, "Kritischer Inklusivismus: Hegels Begriff der Religion und seine Theorie der Religionen," in *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosphie* 55 (2013), 136–160.

[11] For example: Does this conception of religion (finite consciousness of the infinite) do justice to the centrality of ritual, good deeds, the liturgy and human action in the self-understandings of the essences of religion? What are the consequences in Christian anthropology and the doctrine of justification when man is drawn into the process of the perfection of the absolute Spirit? Is it an adequate description of the God of Christians and of the doctrine of creation which asserts that the divine Spirit is coming to itself and requires the fallen finite spirit of man, of a creature, in this process? Is the goodness and sovereignty of God maintained here? What is the status of the immanent Trinity in this system? Can one here still hold that God is God without creation?

[12] Slenczka, Review (see above n. 4), 165. Cf. Ernst Vollrath, "Die Gliederung der Metaphysik in eine Metaphysica generalis und eine Metaphysica specialis," in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 16 (1962), 258–284.

> who hold that the beauty of the universe and the goodness which we attribute to the works of God are chimeras of human beings who think of God in human terms. In saying, therefore, that things are not good according to any standard of goodness, but simply by the will of God, it seems to me that one destroys, without realizing it, all the love of God and all his glory; for why praise him for what he has done, if he would be equally praiseworthy in doing the contrary?[13]

In his 1687 correspondence with Antoine Arnauld, Leibniz also defended his philosophy as "worthy of God and of the beauty of the universe" for "all substances must have a harmony and union among themselves, and all must express in themselves the same universe and the universal cause, which is the will of their Creator."[14] He remarks that "there are everywhere substances indicating God's perfection, and there are just so many differing reflections of the beauty of the universe, where nothing remains empty, sterile, uncultivated and without perception."[15] In the *Theodicy* Leibniz claims that "Order, proportions, harmony delight us; painting and music are samples of these: God is all order; he always keeps truth of proportions, he makes universal harmony; all beauty is an effusion of his rays."[16] He also addresses "the beauty of the Author of all things, who is the source of truth,"[17] and asserts that there is "a contrivance and a beauty transcending all imagination."[18] Looking forth into eternity, he claims that after a "happy passage from this mortal state to another and better one" we shall "marvel" at the "beauty" of "the worth of this whole world."[19] The sublime character of beauty and its external confirmation of the truth and goodness of reality is also captured in the *Monadology*: "There is [...] nothing uncultivated, or sterile or dead in the universe, no chaos, no confusion, save in appearance; somewhat as a pond would appear at a distance when we could see in it a confused movement, and so to speak, a swarming of the fish, without, however, discerning the fish themselves."[20] As suggested by Leibniz, beauty is perceptible truth, a witness to the goodness of creation and its Creator. The existence of God in universal harmony, the texture of reality and the nature of created agency are all conceptualized in the realm of not only non-contradictory structured rationality, and the self-diffusing essential goodness of being but also in the language of beauty, of excess, that is of divine origin and graciously overflowing in all of creation without want or need of return. The loving and gracious goodness of the ever giving fullness of being in its fundamentally harmonious unity and non-contradictory truth is personally and volitionally given, in the sense of Job 38:4, 7: "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? [...] when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" Because this given is perceived as pleasing and desirable, it is also rightly called beautiful. This is also a matter of pastoral interest, for that beauty is not arbitrary which is found in people, in the arts, music and literature, in other religions, in the natural world, in thought and in God. While readers may have to wait for Hermanni's essay on beauty, its principles are already at work in his recent publication. The fine proportions of the arguments, the seductive and also convincing intellectual clarity, the elegant grasp of theological themes and the sublime almost obvious matter of course are all indicators of the sophisticated aesthetic quality of a mastered style. Like Leibniz, he presumes that reality has a fundamental rational basis, an orderly givenness that can be grasped, and is, in its most essential makeup, "very good [טוֹב מְאֹד *tov meod*]," (Gen. 1:31) or as the lexica suggest the full semantic domain of טוֹב [*tov*]: (very) good, (very) joyous, (very) pleasing and (very) desirable, which happens to be captured here in the LXX's καλός (as opposed to ἀγαθός), which means both "good" and "beautiful." The quality of the book certainly warrants a translation into English, above all else to edify Christians in their faith and beyond this to equip pastors for those occasional conversations in the work of the ministry. A final argument in favor of a translation has to do with the specific academic subject matter. As Paul Schroffner explains, the author has offered a "successful symbiosis of continental and analytic philosophy of religion" which exemplifies the strengths of both systems in a multi-layered dialog.[21] Hermanni has diligently studied and conversed with the analytic philosophers of religion. The provision of this work in an accessible format would help to advance the intercultural discussion about these ultimate mortal questions.

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[13] Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* (see above, n. 7), § 2, 4–5.

[14] Leibniz to Arnauld (nr. 23, Oct. 6, 1687), in Leibniz, *Correspondence with Arnauld* (see above, n. 7), 216.

[15] Leibniz to Arnauld (nr. 23, Oct. 6, 1687), in Leibniz, *Correspondence with Arnauld* (see above, n. 7), 234.

[16] Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, transl. by E. M. Huggard (Chicago, Il.: Open Court, 1985), Preface, 51.

[17] Leibniz, *Theodicy* (see above, nt. 16), Preliminary Dissertation, §30, 92.

[18] Leibniz, *Theodicy* (see above, nt. 16), Essays on the Justice of God, § 194, 248.

[19] Leibniz, *Theodicy* (see above, nt. 16), Essays on the Justice of God, § 416, 373.

[20] Leibniz, *Monadology*, § 69, in idem, *Discourse on Metaphysics, Correspondence with Arnauld, Monadology* (see above, n. 7), 266–267. See further the very helpful presentation made by Jens Halfwassen, "Die Idee der Schönheit im Platonismus," in *Méthexis* 16 (2003), 83–96.

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[21] Paul SCHROFFNER, Review of HERMANNI, *Metaphysik*, in *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 134 (2012), 96–98, here: 98.