

ETHICS AS GRAMMAR: CHANGING THE POSTMODERN SUBJECT
by Brad J. Kallenberg, *University of Notre Dame Press, South Bend,*
2001. Pp 352, £33.95 hbk.

There is much to admire in this book. Brad Kallenberg, an assistant professor of religious studies at the University of Dayton, will be known to some British readers for two excellent articles in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*: 'Unstuck from Yale: Theological Method after Lindbeck' (1997), and 'The Gospel Truth of Relativism' (2000). *Ethics as Grammar* takes up, in the field of ethics, the central concern of those papers: what happens when the correspondence theory of truth is given up for local criteria of rationality within a believing community.

The book deals with two thinkers: Wittgenstein and Stanley Hauerwas. Kallenberg hopes to display the family resemblance between them and suggest that (by grace) 'the gift of Christian particularity' enables Hauerwas to do theology by means of Wittgenstein. But Hauerwas's Christian ethics are not only thought through Wittgenstein: in turn Wittgenstein is thought through Christian ethics, in a way that allows problems residual in Wittgenstein to be overcome. Theologians 'need not become tongue-tied having taken a course in Wittgenstein' (p.4).

Anyone reading that summary of Kallenberg's ambitions might be tempted to imagine that Kallenberg knows more about Stanley Hauerwas than he does about Wittgenstein, however much the portentous introductory NOTE ON READING WITTGENSTEIN might impress us. The argument of that note is curious. Wittgenstein's work is readily available in English. Kallenberg informs us, but 'this is not to say that forays in the original German are unfruitful, but rather that the task of reading his translated works is more than simply respectable; in some cases the best way to access the thinking of this one-time Cambridge scholar is simply to read him in English.' But what was wrong with 'simply respectable'? And why on earth does Kallenberg feel the need to argue this anyway? Does he... no, surely not... but—*does he not read German?*

Nasty suspicions of this sneering sort arise in the reader's mind throughout the work. Adolf Hitler is a pretty cool name to misspell on page 1 of your first book. Later, a remark of Wittgenstein's to Russell during his farcical doctoral viva of June 1929—'Don't worry, I know you'll never understand it'—is noted: 'Was Wittgenstein's reply an instance of sophomoric arrogance, or was something else going on?' (pp.17–18). Wittgenstein the sophomore was, at the time of his viva, 40 years of age, the author of the *Tractatus* and a veteran of the Russian front. And yes, we will not be surprised to learn, something else was going on. Furthermore, we have 'the German Romantics (1790–1820) a generation before Wittgenstein (p. 181); and 'Gottlob Frege, who possessed one of the brightest logical minds of the day...' (p.21); and 'Wittgenstein's notion of form was influenced by his admiration for both Johann W. von Goethe and Oswald Spengler' (p.96). What level is a reader at who needs to be told of the (arguable) dates of the German Romantics, or Frege's

competency in logic? Which other Goethes and Spenglers is Kallenberg, with this meticulous use of forenames, ruling out? These sort of irritations are, of course, trivial and will be shrugged off by the serious reader of *Ethics as Grammar*, for Kallenberg's knowledge of his subject is profound. But the difficulty one has in shrugging them off indicates the main problem with the work as a whole.

What there is to admire in *Ethics as Grammar* falls into three categories. Firstly, the book contains excellent expositions and interpretations of Wittgenstein. If a successor is needed to Fergus Kerr's *Theology after Wittgenstein*, then Kallenberg could be the one to write it. Chapter 5 — 'Back to the Rough Ground' — is particularly informative, applying Aristotelian tropes of *phronoēsis* and *technē* to the later Wittgenstein's practical philosophy. Secondly, the book provides a good deal of material that would be useful in introducing any reader to Stanley Hauerwas's ethics, including analysis of and adjudication on two of his many pitched battles— with Gloria Albrecht, and with Max Stackhouse. Thirdly, the book constitutes a general ecclesiological meditation on how the Wittgensteinian self might be a Christian. This extract, from the end of chapter two is perhaps a summary of the author's thought. Kallenberg concludes that ethics 'has an aesthetic component because of the givenness of language and narrative. We are each recipients of a communal way of life, of a stock of stories, of a conceptual vocabulary, and of a history of conversation; against these linguistic stones the lens of our moral vision is being ground. And we cannot put off our spectacles. For without them we are not only blind to our past responsibilities and myopic about our future; without them there is no 'we' at all.' The metaphor may be somewhat mixed and over-extended, but we can see what it means.

But that metaphor is perhaps itself a metaphor for the whole of this book. The three categories described are somewhat mixed and over-extended. Undoubtedly, the message of the book is that Hauerwas is right— and right in holding that 'the internal relation of world and language implies that those who have learned to speak the Christian language inhabit a world aeonically different from that inhabited by nontheists [and also non-Christians] precisely because conflicting (and, at some points, incommensurable) descriptions are rendered by each' (p.219). So ethics is aesthetics, requiring phronetic 'skill' amongst particular language-users. Hopefully it's not giving too much away to quote the climax of the book: 'To be a Christian is to be a witness; to be a witness is to skilfully engage in Christian discourse; skilful engagement in Christian discourse requires time-intensive participation in particular historical practices; such historical practices constitute a political reality over which we, as individuals, exercise little or no control and yet in which we find salvation. For by means of this community we are schooled to speak of, for and to God' (p. 256). But this apparent climax seems to be implied in chapter 1 '.... the values that aesthetic and ethical judgements expose are those shared by a community. In an important sense, these values (or at least, agreements in judgement of them) is what makes a group a community' (pp.43–44). These are the

conclusions at either end of the book, and they're repeated throughout.

Kallenberg is disarmingly modest about the way his work developed: 'I feared that there was something terribly un-Wittgensteinian about the way I had framed the task' (p. 250). But he went ahead with it: and, despite that modesty, it should still be pointed out that the failings of the book come about through 'Hauerwasolatry'. Hauerwas in his puff on the book's dust-jacket is delighted to note this himself 'this extraordinary book... wonderfully exposes the high-wire act that constitutes 'my work'..., an absolutely wonderful book.'

Kallenberg has set out to write first about Wittgenstein, and then about Hauerwas. The argument journeys down a highway made straight by Wittgenstein in the aporetic desert; preparation, so the argument goes, for Hauerwas the Christ. The theme must simply be hammered out, chapter by chapter, as we make our way. Unless you (like Stanley) are a real fan of Stanley's, this structure makes for some rather tedious reading, and will make you wonder: What does *Ethics as Grammar* do? What are the effects of the Hauerwas-Wittgenstein ecclesiology? Well, those no-good, cry-baby, enlightenment liberals seem to be kicked about a bit. And namby-pamby abstract notions like 'human rights' and 'the categorical imperative' are laughed out of church. Oh, and we can proceed in orthodox fashion, much as before. There—Wittgenstein's not so difficult after all.

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ON CREATION, CONSERVATION AND CONCURRENCE. METAPHYSICAL DISPUTATIONS 20, 21 and 22 by Francisco Suarez SJ, translation, notes and introduction by Alfred J. Freddoso, *St Augustine's Press, South Bend, Indiana, 2002, £29.00 hbk.*

Suarez (1548-1617) presented his *Disputationes Metaphysicae* (1597) as detailed examinations of the metaphysical underpinnings of theologians' theology. This annotated translation of three of the 54 Disputations aims to present his conception of metaphysical inquiry and his account of efficient causality as 'alternatives to the standard accounts...that dominate contemporary Anglo-American philosophy' (vii). Profesor Freddoso presents the alternatives as internal, within the currently received assumptions. Their value could rather be in serving to undermine the received problematic.

Creation, discussed in Disp.20, is 'the first emanation of all beings from the First Cause' (107), with God considered as First Cause, not as First Being, which is being presupposed, though with promise of demonstration in Disp.29. God's governance of creation is 'the sort of continuous...dependence those entities have on that same First Cause for esse and operation (107): treated under the heads of conservation (Disp.21) and concurrence (Disp.22).

Creation ('a creature's dependence on God') 'is something that exists within the creature' and 'is distinct in reality from the creature itself' (70,71). This tree's being created is thus no part of its nature, but is that nature, viewed as an instantiated singular, and viewed as related (not-necessarily) to the presupposed divine nature. It is called 'distinct in reality' from the tree itself, on account of the pre-modern treatment of relations relied on here. The