

Thus a satisfactory theory of lying and misleading should allow contextual contributions to what is said in terms of completion, but not of expansion (p.66). A sentence like

'Beau is late.'

requires contextual contributions for the utterance to be truth-evaluable (Beau is late – *for what?*), whereas in the case of the sentence

'Billy went to the top of the Empire State Building and jumped.'

contextual contributions are not necessary for the utterance to be truth-evaluable, but nonetheless contribute to what is intuitively asserted (presumably jumped *off the edge*, but not excluding the possibility of *up and down on the spot etc.*).

Having put forward her linguistic theory of lying and misleading, Saul proceeds to examine the moral issues. She defends the view that the act of misleading is generally not to be morally preferred to the act of lying, though in some specific sorts of cases it might be (*e.g.* in an adversarial context such as a courtroom). To help explain a conclusion that might be counter-intuitive for many, Saul appeals to the distinction of act-evaluation and character-evaluation. She argues, citing a host of examples, that misleading and lying tend to be on an equal footing in terms of act-evaluation, but to mislead rather than to lie might indicate a better character. Saul moves too quickly here, and has relatively little to say about why acts of equal moral standing should reflect differences in moral character. She continues her account of the morality of lying/misleading in a final chapter dealing with some special cases, such as some of the finer details of the Clinton/Lewinsky case and various theories in the Christian casuistical tradition, such as the doctrines of mental reservation and of equivocation.

Throughout her analysis Saul generally takes a middle position between the leading competing linguistic and moral theories. In this she not only rejects commonly held positions, but also presents an important and novel position of her own. This position possesses the considerable merit of being relatively clear, whilst not downplaying the inherent complexities of the subject matter. The conclusions she draws from her examples struck me as plausible in the main, even if I part company with her in a few, but important, cases. This, however, highlights for me a weakness in an otherwise very strong book, namely, an arguably excessive reliance on a largely assumed consensus regarding our intuitions in response to specific examples and the lack of adequate reflection on the nature of intuitions and on the value of the inferences we might draw from them. Such reflection seems particularly important in ethics, given the extent of disagreement on moral issues and the range of factors (*e.g.* cultural, religious, the nature of the relationship with one's interlocutor *etc.*) that can affect our intuitions in this area. Apart from this, Saul's book struck me as a model of how philosophy of language and of ethics can be combined to help shed light on difficult questions with subtlety, rigour and insight.

JOHN D. O'CONNOR OP

**AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY: BIBLICAL, CLASSICAL, CONTEMPORARY** by Anthony Towey, *Bloomsbury, T&T Clark*, London, 2013, pp. xviii + 537, £22.99, pbk

This is a review of the paperback version, but there are e-book versions, which seem to me easier to read. E-books have given a new meaning to the phrase, 'you cannot judge a book by its cover', and the purpose of this book is easier to

judge in its 'book' version. It is a text book, written in largish font, and neatly subdivided into sections which can easily be read out of sequence. The front is entirely taken up by a painting, 'The Martyrs' Picture' by Durante Alberti. You can find this picture in the kindle version, but without the bright colours we tend to associate with pictures of martyrdom. The painting is in the chapel of the English College in Rome and the title of the book obscures the map of Britain on a globe onto which drips the blood of the crucified Christ. He is held up by his Father, while the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove hovers above him, but there is no cross. Angels hold up the cloak of the Father, while two martyrs St Edmund, King of East Anglia, and St Thomas of Canterbury are seen at the side. The complexity of the painting says something in itself about the complexity of theology, a complexity that will always reflect on particularity. The universal truths of the Trinity and the death of Christ impinge on two very different martyrs, from two very different phases in the life of the British Isles, and this book comes out of the life that continues in these islands.

The title of the book gives pause. It is an introduction to Christian theology, not Catholic theology. It certainly could be read with profit from outside the Catholic world, but it is hard to imagine it coming from someone who is not well versed in Catholic ways of thinking. Still why shouldn't Catholics write 'Christian' theology? Or to put it another way, why should we assume that guides to Christian theology are necessarily protestant?

What we have is a comprehensive introduction to theology, taking in the Old Testament and the New. Then we are given sections on dogma, ecclesiology and the sacraments which come under the heading of 'Theology in the Classical Period'. The next section brings in the modern and the contemporary, which are not quite the same, since modernity begins in the sixteenth century. Ethics too comes under modernity. This could be justified if we see theology in the classical period as being the structure, and modernity as the attempt to test the solidity of that structure. Ethics too has a classical structure which can be undermined. One difference though is that classical ethics has also been challenged in the modern age by all-pervading structures such as various forms of Marxism. Classical ethics steers its way between extremes of individuality, irresponsibility and monistic views of morality, which allow for no leeway. We see this in our contemporary society where a public figure can see their career destroyed for committing the wrong sort of offence, or conversely for wrongly condemning what is no longer considered an offence. Which is which, can change very rapidly.

This is where the book comes into its own. It moves from *Genesis* right up to recent pronouncements on the television and the internet. We have not quite reached the point where the blog will replace the book entirely, but it is coming and this book itself shows awareness of the constantly changing range of thoughts about how reality works. So we have a book which gives a kickstart to anyone who wishes to pursue the conversation of theology. To help with this, we are given a brief summary of the important objections to faith, but also those who come to its defence in unexpected ways, such as Victor Frankl, working from his own experience in a concentration camp. The conversation is not necessarily just between human beings. There is a conversation with God. It may be that reality itself is a dialogue into which we are drawn. At the end of the last chapter, the author says that Erasmus translates the word '*logos*' from the first verse of the Gospel of St John as '*sermo*' which he then translates as 'conversation'.

Conversation might imply the possibility of disagreement but it need not. It is possible for conversation to be the statement of truths which are simply accepted as truths. This is what St Thomas Aquinas thought was the basis of conversation between good angels. For human beings conversation can involve doubt, disagreement and sometimes abuse. Yet without conversation, our ability to learn truth would be very limited. We have to choose how we will pursue

conversation for ourselves. So the last words of the book, a book which gives us such a full and joyful set of material to pursue for ourselves the conversation we are called to pursue, he ends with three simple words, 'Over to you'.

EUAN MARLEY OP

**HUMAN DIGNITY IN CONTEMPORARY ETHICS** by David G. Kirchhoffer, *Teneo Press*, New York, 2013, pp. xii + 356, £16.00, pbk

When Ruth Macklin wrote her editorial entitled 'Dignity is a useless concept' in the *British Medical Journal* in 2003 no doubt she hoped to generate debate. However, presumably she did not expect the constant stream of articles and monographs on the subject of human dignity that, some ten years later, shows no sign of abating. Perhaps the overwhelming interest in the subject is itself a testimony to its significance even if responses frequently conflict and are varied. Since so much has been written on human dignity, in order to make a real contribution to the ongoing debate any new work needs to show at the very least rigour as well as perhaps originality and clarity. The danger is that yet another definition of human dignity would merely add to the confusion or advance a feeling of saturation of the topic or simply alienate a different readership.

Kirchhoffer's book, *Human Dignity in Contemporary Ethics*, certainly demonstrates rigour though his book is at times dense. Kirchhoffer takes the critics of human dignity seriously and he thinks that their critical questioning through a hermeneutics of suspicion is justified. However he disagrees with their solution which is to dismiss the concept. Nevertheless he thinks that choosing one of the current alternative understandings of the concept is also inadequate. Instead he calls for a hermeneutics of generosity, a reconstruction after the deconstruction that develops, he claims, a better understanding of the concept.

According to Kirchhoffer the alternative understandings on offer are 'human dignity as something human beings have *versus* human dignity as something that human beings acquire' (his italics p.228). At times he seems to link these two understandings to dignity as biological life or dignity as autonomy. His objection is that this 'either or' approach means that the concept of human dignity is used in 'dignity talk' to resolve conflict by using it as the last decisive word instead of as a starting point. This results in moralism and moral relativism, a 'we are good, they are evil' approach. The fault he finds with treating human dignity in its one dimension as 'some acquired sense of self-worth' is that this makes it difficult to formulate an idea of universal human rights and, in the case he offers of the violent criminal there is no reason to acknowledge the dignity in other persons. The fault he finds with treating dignity in its one dimension as something that all human persons already have is that it creates a deontological obligation to respect that dignity. However, he argues, this 'radically reduces morality, since it removes any teleological incentives from the equation' (p.314). By this Kirchhoffer means that it neglects the 'moral event' by its legalistic focus on the act.

In contrast to these two understandings Kirchhoffer seeks to present 'a more appropriate 'both...and' paradigm' of human dignity that is relevant to ethics (p.228). Human dignity 'properly understood' refers to 'the multidimensional existential reality of the human person' (p.316). Kirchhoffer's understanding of human dignity is not, he says, designed to lead to resolution of ethical conflicts but rather to make the protagonists aware of what is really at stake (p.312).

According to Kirchhoffer, a legalistic and moralistic ethic that focuses on the act does not take meaning seriously and it risks judging before understanding. He