

Preface

The new book by Johnson Uchenna Ozioko presents with great enthusiasm one of the most outstanding figures in the contemporary philosophy of religion, professor Richard Swinburne. This well-known Oxford philosopher is the foremost proponent of philosophical theism with the program of providing a rational justification for theistic claims through rigorous and coherent argumentations. Swinburne has been particularly interested in the defense of the rationality of the Christian faith. The new book by Ozioko undertakes a critical appraisal of Swinburne's theory and retraces and reconstructs the mainlines of his thought in a way which is useful for anybody who wishes to approach him with a sympathetic but at the same time critically vigilant outlook. Particularly laudable is its reconstruction of Swinburne's religious epistemology and the attention given to his *Faith and Reason*, a book which has hitherto not been very much considered. The new reconstruction and evaluation often emphasize the originality and depth of Swinburne's philosophical work.

The first chapter is introductory, and it gives a brief overview of the contents, aims, and strategy of the whole work. Moreover, it offers a brief sketch of the current status of the analytical philosophy of religion in the context of other philosophical traditions and introduces the reader to Swinburne's philosophical project. The author highlights the novelty of Swinburne's entrance into the philosophical scene, particularly the question of his probabilistic justification of the religious claims. The second chapter examines Swinburne's understanding of belief, and what the rationality of religious belief means. The key terms are rationality, probability, criteria of being probably true, and the question is how they lead to human action and how they apply to religion. The chapter represents the epistemological foundation of Swinburne's project. The third chapter focuses on Swinburne's concept of God, its coherence and deviation from the classical concept of Thomas Aquinas. Swinburne's famous inductive (probabilistic) arguments in defense of the rationality of theism follow. In the fourth chapter, the reader's attention is directed specifically to the concept of Christian faith and its role in achieving the goals of religion. The final chapter critically examines Swinburne's arguments and conclusions, evaluating the overall success of his philosophical project.

The book acknowledges the undeniable legacy that Swinburne has achieved through his intellectual project. Among other things, Ozioko appreciates Swinburne's clarity of exposition and intellectual rigor, the unity of his thoughts, and his ingenious combination of the tools of science, philosophy,

and theology in an attempt to regain intellectual respectability for Christianity. He also highlights the novelties introduced into the philosophical discussions on religion through Swinburne's endeavor, which is evidenced especially in his cumulative approach in defense of theism and application of the scientific criteria to theological matters. This is how Swinburne brings novelty into our understanding of the rationality of Christian faith. Crucial for the appreciation of Swinburne's success is his contribution to the overall project of Christian philosophy.

The author finds several unresolved and problematic issues in Swinburne's theory. Among other things, he highlights the difficulties of Swinburne's construal of the attributes of God, which is, according to the author, based on a problematic usage of analogy and human logic. In addition, the defense of God's existence makes somewhat exaggerated recourse to the scientific criteria, which has an undesired impact on the meaning of the Christian faith. Faith results over-intellectualized and a far cry from the religious faith of Christian believers. The author does not agree with Swinburne's claim of being a contemporary follower of Thomas Aquinas. Swinburne is a philosopher on his own right without strong theoretical bonds of discipleship to Thomas Aquinas. Through critical scrutiny, the work also points to the limitations of Swinburne's endeavor, especially, to the probabilistic character of his conclusions and obscurity and confusion in regard to the boundaries between philosophical theology and revealed theology, and consequently between faith and reason. The reader might not agree with all Ozioko's criticism but will appreciate his overview of the debates on various topics related to the philosophy of religion and the profound insights he brings to the questions. Ozioko believes that the difficulties and limitations do not undermine the relevance or significance of Swinburne's intellectual exploit, but rather show the enormous task which is still waiting for the philosophers of religion who are seeking even more plausible arguments in response to the ulterior questions, which Swinburne's endeavor has raised.

The work by Johnson Uchenna Ozioko proves very useful in many respects, especially as it addresses the debate on theism through a documented analysis of one of its most renowned contemporary defenders. The reader will appreciate his great enthusiasm for Christian philosophy and the effort of assuming a critical point of view nourished by insights both from the Christian philosophical tradition and from the most recent international philosophical literature. In addition, the author makes many interesting and valuable observations while analyzing various positions in the debates.

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