

through from beginning to end, but it is a book that anyone engaged in these issues should know about, and should be quick to recommend when confronted with questions such as "what does  $x$  think about  $y$  . . ."—Robert Pasnau, *St. Joseph's University*.

NEVILLE, Robert Cummings. *The Truth of Broken Symbols*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1996. xxv + 320 pp. Paper, \$19.95—In this most recent book in an evolving series of foundational works in philosophy, semiotics, and theology, Neville probes into the nature and function of that class of signs that have an astonishing power to transform selves and communities. In unfolding what, for him, are the essential ingredients in religious symbols, he uses some of the categories and phenomenological descriptions that have done service in his other works. Particularly, he brings to bear on symbols his analysis of the creator/creation relationship, his privileging of value over form, and the nature of determinateness and its boundary (worldhood). At the same time, he puts pressure on any semiotic theory that would engulf the uniqueness of religious symbols under a pseudogeneric understanding of codes.

As both a Platonist and a pragmatic naturalist, Neville insists that religious symbols are about something other than themselves; namely, they are about values as rooted in a ubiquitous nature that has its own ground in the eternal creative act of God. Religious symbols participate in that to which they refer and, unlike more prosaic signs, have a double reference (within their devotional context). On one side, they refer to their religious object, while on the other side they refer to the spiritual/psychological condition of the symbol user. It follows from this model that symbols can also use persons, insofar as they (symbols) move in the space between the divine and the personal, transforming the flow of value and meaning between them. On Neville's model, religious symbols are never mere signs or tokens that can be exchanged like nonreligious signs. They have energy gradients and transform the power economy of the individual, and have their own provenance that must be honored.

Neville is very much aware that religious symbols can also be demonic and are far more dangerous than any other class of signs. The healthiest form of a religious symbol is what he calls a "broken symbol," in which the symbol participates in a finite/infinite contrast but in such a way as to put distance between itself and its infinite pole, while also holding finite and infinite together. From the human side, irony emerges as one of the appropriate religious emotions that can live in the partial, yet meaning-granting, truth of the religious symbol that has its own way of enhancing value for finite sign-users. Yet Neville also insists, against the liberal tradition inaugurated by Schleiermacher, that the religious life is not about internal emotions but about how we negotiate our way among the religious symbols that address us in their uncanniness.

provenance makes it unclear what sort of audience would most benefit from the work. Some of the more scholarly essays make important contributions to their topics, such as the extended review of John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*. Other essays are pitched at a far more basic level, and for that reason will be less interesting to specialists. But these latter chapters, such as those on John Searle and Alasdair MacIntyre, would often make ideal introductions for a nonspecialist.

Nagel writes clearly and with a certain flair, as when he asks of R. M. Hare's utilitarianism: "How does Hare manage to extract this large moral rabbit from what looks at first like a rather small and empty linguistic hat?" (p.151). The central strands of Nagel's philosophical thought are much in evidence throughout: nonreductive in philosophy of mind and a Kantian externalist in ethics. Chapters on Daniel Dennett and Bernard Williams, in particular, offer concise statements of Nagel's own views in these areas.

The essays span twenty-five years and illuminate some of the underlying principles in Nagel's work. The interesting (and previously unpublished) intellectual biography, which serves as the volume's introduction, advocates a "problem-centered style" of philosophical inquiry (p.6). With this phrase Nagel seems to endorse the view that there is a central core of distinctively philosophical problems, best investigated through traditional philosophical methods. In contrast, he rejects what he sees as the dominant Quine-Carnap approach in the profession: "a spirit of theory construction that sees philosophy as continuous with science, only more abstract and more general" (ibid.). Complementing these methodological tenets is the conviction that a great deal of work still remains to be done in philosophy; many of the core areas in the field are still at a crude level. He rejects both dualism and materialism, for instance, and claims that "a solution to the mind-body problem is nowhere in sight" (p.105n). He speaks, too, of "the primitive current state of ethical theory" (p.182); we are, he says, in the "moral Bronze age" (p.157).

At many points Nagel would make a better critic if he were less dogmatic. A review of Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* is marred by its excessively dismissive tone. Eliminative materialism gets dismissed as "ridiculous" (p.72) and "work of astounding superficiality" (p.6). Ironically, however, an early review of David Armstrong's *A Materialist Theory of the Mind* displays a great deal of sympathy for eliminative materialism (p.77); in a brief introduction to the review, Nagel notices how his view has changed (p.72), but he does not explain how a position that seemed so promising in 1970 can seem so obviously and astoundingly wrong now.

The Armstrong review is one of several chapters that argue for claims Nagel would no longer defend. In introducing the Rawls review, for instance, Nagel says that he no longer subscribes to the principal criticism made therein. But, frustratingly, he does not say why he no longer accepts the criticism, nor does he direct the reader to some more recent statement of his views.

Although not all of these essays capture Nagel at his best, and they do not always represent his current thinking, nevertheless there is something in this book for nearly everyone. This is not a volume to be read

Ontologically, religious symbols have the unique role of opening up some sense of worldhood for the individual. By this Neville means that the religious symbol shows us that the world is a determinate totality that has its origin in something that is not worldly; "Determinateness, epistemologically represented as the property of being distinguishable and measurable, is how modernity defines what makes the world worldly" (p. 55n). For an object to be determinate is for it to have essential (mostly unique) and conditional (mostly relational) features in some kind of harmony (which need not be "harmonic"). The world *per se* is determinate for Neville, but this primal fact is continually being overlooked. The religious symbol, as a gateway to worldhood and the finite/infinite contrast, brings us back to the basic sense of cosmic determinateness.

Religious symbols are true insofar as they carry over value into the individual's interpretive world and transcend the ordinary semiosis of culture, biology, and the social. The value conveyed is embedded in the divine, even though there is a degree of indeterminacy in just how that infinity is presented. For the philosophical theologian the task becomes that of correcting those symbols that sustain the finite/infinite contrast so that genuine knowledge of the creative ground, rooted in and as the eternal, can occur. This book is a brilliant and highly judicious analysis of some of the knottiest problems in the foundation of religious semiotics and once again shows Neville's mastery of the complex terrain where the irruption of ultimate meaning takes place in and against the culture of signs and the signs of culture.—Robert S. Corrington, *Drew University Theological School*.

REAGAN, Charles E. *Paul Ricoeur: His Life and His Work*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996. ix + 151 pp. Cloth, \$24.95, £19.95—Reagan mixes the genres of biographical essay, memoir, philosophical essay, and interview to provide the reader with a fascinating and highly readable account. The biographical essay narrates Ricoeur's early life, his experience as a POW during the Second World War, professorships at the Sorbonne, Nanterre, and Chicago, and his "rediscovery" in and return to France after the publication of *Time and Narrative*. Reagan's analysis betrays Ricoeur's comment that "no one is interested in my life . . . [since] my life is my work . . . my books and my articles." Ricoeur's captivity as a prisoner of war (1940–45), the problems he encountered at Nanterre University as doyen of the Faculty of Letters during the 1960s, and the pain and love he and Simone felt for Olivier, their fourth child who committed suicide, are some of the intriguing and touching elements of the narrative. After Olivier's tragic death in 1986, Ricoeur added "suffering" to the phrase "human action" whenever he wrote about the problem of human action and suffering.

Reagan's descriptions of Ricoeur's long and rigorous critique of the French university system while at the Sorbonne and Nanterre will be of interest to those who follow contemporary debates on the idea of the university. Ricoeur felt deceived by the minister of education, abandoned by his colleagues, and demoralized by what he perceived as his failure to reform the university in Nanterre in the late 1960s. Reagan sets the existential record straight with evidence that shows Ricoeur followed his conscience with integrity throughout the academic conflicts and restructuring of the French university system, while upholding the conviction that the university is one of our most important social institutions, in that it has the charge to critique other institutions and propose change. Reagan also pays considerable attention to Ricoeur's reading of Freud, as well as J. P. Valabrega's vitriolic attack that Ricoeur plagiarized Lacan's ideas in *Freud and Philosophy*. Ricoeur found Lacan to be "incoherent and unintelligible" and only wanted to read and interpret Freud, not Lacan. Against the critics who said he misunderstood Lacan, "Ricoeur had a larger architectonic into which he wanted to fit Freud's writings, and that was the dialectic between suspicion and faith, between symbolic language as illusion and symbolic language as revelation of the sacred" (p.31). These first two chapters give an impression of Ricoeur's "character" where, to borrow Ricoeur's own language, sameness and permanence of dispositions are constitutive of his selfhood through time.

Reagan's "philosophical essay" provides an analysis of Ricoeur's understanding of personal identity in *Oneself as Another*. Ricoeur scholars may not be completely satisfied with the essentially descriptive, though careful, analysis of the text, but Reagan more than succeeds in showing Ricoeur's philosophical style and main points to the uninitiated and semi-specialist alike. More importantly, Reagan is sensitive throughout to lived experiences such as Olivier's suicide and the tragic mark this left on the Ricoeurs' lives, as well as his own friendship with Olivier. The thirty-six pages of heretofore unpublished interviews—conducted in 1982, 1988, 1990, and 1991—are alone worth the volume's price, and Reagan contributes a significant translation from the French in the final, more personal interview conducted at Chatenay-Malabry on July 8, 1991. Here Ricoeur comments on his overall philosophical method, its relation to and distance from the philosophy of Karl Jaspers, and his own final recourse to transcendence in *Oneself as Another* in the experience of "moral conscience" whose inner voice "could be that of my ancestors, that of my deepest being as Heidegger claims . . . or the word of a living God" (p.125). While Ricoeur's philosophy leaves all three possibilities open, it is clear that the moral conscience remains the "point of intersection" between the philosophical and religious dimensions of existence. Another important piece of the narrative is the dialectic between Ricoeur's pacifism and his direct and indirect involvement in war.

Reagan is to be commended for an engaging and, at times, inspiring portrayal of Ricoeur's life and work. The book attests well Ricoeur's aim at a good life with and for others in just institutions.—Gregory J. Walters, *Saint Paul University, Canada*.