William M. R. Simpson, Robert C. Koons, and James Orr, eds. *Neo-Aristotelian Metaphysics and the Theology of Nature*. New York and London: Routledge, 2022. 446 pages. $160.00.

A revival of Aristotelianism is afoot in contemporary philosophy and science. Physical reality, it seems, is not just amalgamations of little bits of matter in motion. Rather, the universe is full of fundamental wholes that possess genuine causal powers, natures, teleology, integral and virtual parts, and the like. In short, those concepts long thought to be dead and buried under a pile of Humean corpuscles have found new life. For those under the spell of neo-Humeanism, this resurrection undoubtedly will be viewed as a kind of divine miracle, and thus a violation of nature to be met with ridicule and scorn. But to the neo-Aristotelians, there is a better this-worldly explanation: contemporary science increasingly suggests that Aristotelianism should never have been abandoned in the first place. While not unaware of the return to Aristotle, contemporary theology has been slow to fully appreciate and incorporate many of the insights of neo-Aristotelianism into its theorizing. The collection of essays found in *Neo-Aristotelian Metaphysics and the Theology of Nature* fills this lacuna, demonstrating the fecundity of Aristotelian concepts for illuminating the nature of God, the world, and the God-world relationship. The book itself can be seen as an apt metaphor for the neo-Aristotelian mosaic: while each of the sixteen essays can be viewed as a kind of fundamental whole, ably demonstrating the richness of Aristotelian concepts in elucidating philosophy, science, and theology, the collection itself forms a kind of organic unity, vibrantly displaying the harmony and elegance of Aristotelian theism.

Part 1, consisting of four essays, explores the philosophy of nature. In chapters 1 and 2, William M. R. Simpson and Robert C. Koons, respectively, argue that developments in quantum mechanics provide reasons for thinking whole-priority exists in nature, and they offer hylomorphic accounts of substances at various levels of scale within the hierarchy of concrete material reality. While both of these essays are extensions of topics Simpson and Koons have written on elsewhere, I found David S. Oderberg's essay, "Restoring the Hierarchy of Being," in chapter 3 of particular interest for two reasons. First, the idea of a hierarchy has played a prominent role in the West for millennia, as demonstrated by Arthur Lovejoy, and thus is one of those concepts that ought to be reconsidered given the Aristotelian revival. Secondly, while neo-Aristotelian philosophers have worked hard of late to rehabilitate the idea of fundamental wholes at various levels of scale, there has been little attention given to the question of how these wholes fit together in a world created and sustained by God. Oderberg's specific proposal is that a viable hierarchy of beings can be given in terms of powers. Roughly, "(members of) [a metaphysical] species S1 (are) superior to (members of) species S2 just in case S1

can do what S2 can do *and more*" (106). Oderberg defends a more rigorous definition of the idea of metaphysical superiority than this gloss, ably demonstrating the view, found in Aquinas and others, that there must be a scale of finite substances of various degrees of powers or perfections in order to fully represent divine goodness in any universe created by God.

In the final essay of Part 1, Stephen Boulter argues that the scholastic principle of proportionality—the idea that every effect has an adequate efficient cause—is compatible with contemporary theories of evolution and requires no appeal to divine intervention to explain the various transitions of life. While I think Boulter's main thesis is correct, I have two minor complaints. First, I would have liked more of a discussion on why there is a need, especially given the book's focus on theology, for a noninterventionist account of the transitions found in the history of life. Does science—or philosophy or theology—rule out divine intervention? It is not obvious that it does (or they do), and at least with respect to the origins of life and mind, it seems more and more difficult (to me) to offer a naturalistic account of these transitions along evolutionary lines. Second, I'm skeptical of his claim, at the end of the essay, that an increase in creaturely perfections (say from nonlife to life, or nonsentient to sentient, or nonrational to rational) does not represent an overall increase in perfections within the cosmos. The idea is that for every increase in what Boulter calls, following Duns Scotus, perfections of eminence, there are new problems or difficulties that result in an off-setting decrease in perfections (for example, the transition from nonliving to living involves the emergence of *mistakes*, many of which are nontrivial) such that the overall balance of perfection in the cosmos remains the same over the history of life. It seems to me that some of the standard theistic replies to the problem of evil can rebut Boulter's principle of conservation of overall perfection; there is no need to reject the (common) theistic intuition that a world full of (say) embodied conscious rational moral agents is an overall more perfect or valuable that a world without such beings.

Part 2 consists of six essays loosely organized around the theme of locating minds within nature. In chapter 5, Timothy O'Connor defends a broadly neo-Aristotelian account of libertarian free will as a kind of fundamental, strongly emergent power possessed by humans to cause an intention to act. Janice Tzuling Chik extends this noncausalist account of action by defending an Aristotelian animalist account of agency in chapter 6. Unlike Cartesianism, there is no constitutive independence of the mental from the physical for the Aristotelian agent. As an animal, agents are possessors of powers that are simultaneously psychological and physical: when an agent acts, she acts intentionally, and in the human case, deliberately, and this action is not reducible to the agent's material parts nor efficiently and wholly caused by the agent's mental states. In chapter 7, Daniel D. De Haan argues that a causal powers ontology provides the best explanation for the human ability to per-

form scientific experiments and in chapter 8, Antonio Ramos-Díaz argues that the human ability for mathematical and logical thinking cannot be a purely physical process. The extended argument of both chapters provides a powerful reason for thinking humans are hylomorphic compounds: tightly integrated composites of an immaterial soul and a physical body.

The remaining two chapters in this section might be of more interest to those seeking to better understand how the neo-Aristotelian metaphysic informs theological themes. One question that has vexed defenders of Thomistic hylomorphism is the nature of postmortem existence, especially in the intermediate state. Since, according to Thomistic hylomorphism, human persons are identified with the body-soul composite, it seems—contrary to traditional Judeo-Christian belief—that human persons cannot survive the death of their bodies. A person's human soul, according to the view called corruptionism, continues to exist, but not the human person, at least not until the soul is joined back to a body in the general resurrection. An opposing view—called survivalism—argues that not only the human soul, but the human person continues to exist upon death. In chapter 9, Christopher Hauser advances a novel argument against corruptionism and in favor of survivalism. The basic argument is this. When a human person engages in a variety of mental activities, it is the human person—not the soul—that thinks. Souls cannot have self-referential thoughts, for then there would be two thinkers instead of one. Rather, as a constituent part of the human person, the soul possesses the power to think, but it is the human person that does the thinking. Further, since there is no reason to hold that our souls think prior to death, there is no good reason, according to Hauser, for claiming that our souls think after death. Since all Thomistic hylomorphists believe that there is some entity that thinks after death, and since, according to Hauser, our soul is never that which thinks, the only other option is to maintain, as the survivalist does, that the human person continues to exist along with the human soul upon death.

Of course, a mature *Christian* neo-Aristotelian account of reality, given the existence of angelic beings, will need to provide an account of both finite material *and* immaterial substances. In chapter 10, Travis Dumsday canvases the medieval debate over the metaphysics of angels, arguing that if angels are possible, then the neo-Aristotelian must either adopt a pluralism of substances (or a pluralism regarding matter) or abandon a key commitment of the Aristotelian philosophy of nature, the individuating role of prime matter. Following Bonaventure, if universal hylomorphism is endorsed, then there is only one substance ontology for finite substances but a pluralistic understanding of matter such that there is spiritual matter in bodiless angels and corporeal matter in bodily creatures. The other neo-Aristotelian option is to follow Aquinas and adopt extreme pluralism regarding substances such that angels are primitive substances devoid of matter (and thus each angel

is the sole member of a distinct natural kind) and all other finite substances are understood hylomorphically (and individuated within natural kinds by prime matter). Finally, one could follow John Duns Scotus and assign the individuating role to haecceities and give up on a core Aristotelian account of individuation. Given the paucity of discussions in the contemporary literature on the metaphysics of angels, I found Dumsday's essay not only fascinating on its own but also a reminder that nonmaterial realities—and thus the deliverances of theology and not just science—must be taken into account in developing a mature philosophy of concrete material reality.

In reading the last two essays in this section, I was struck by the fact that neither author considered nonmereological versions of hylomorphism. Why not argue that human persons are identical to their souls and have bodies as nonseparable parts? If so, then Hauser's claim that we "have no independent knowledge of human souls that are not constituents of human persons" is undermined, along with his claim that we have no reason to think separated souls could ever think (260). This would also remove the mysterious transfer of personhood from the body-soul composite to the soul that takes place upon death according to survivalism. Regarding Dumsday's dilemma for the neo-Aristotelian, it seems that a nonmereological account of substances along the lines suggested above (what Peterson will call in chapter 12, conceptually distinct models of hylomorphism) could also avoid the need for pluralism regarding substances (and even pluralism regarding matter since all matter is defined relationally in virtue of the whole that grounds its existence and nature).

Finally, Part 3 consists of six tightly argued essays exploring the relationship between God and nature. In chapter 11, Ross Inman develops a neo-Aristotelian account of creaturely participation in God. I found Inman's essay of particular interest for at least two reasons. First, while there is a renewed interest in theology in understanding the God-world relation in terms of participation, there has been little analysis (to date) on the metaphysics of the participatory relation. Second, and related, while there has been a groundswell of interest in grounding (a kind of noncausal ontological dependency relation) in metaphysics, there has been little discussion in theology (or philosophical theology) on how to apply the notion of grounding to a mature theistic metaphysics. Inman's essay ably addresses both of these underexplored areas, providing a ground-theoretic account of the metaphysics of participation that powerfully demonstrates the richness of neo-Aristotelian concepts for elucidating reality. Next, in chapter 12, Anne Siebels Peterson explores the relationship between divine and creaturely unity. For Aristotle, according to Peterson, unity is best understood in terms of actuality instead of (following Aquinas and much of the contemporary discussion) in terms of lack of composition or indivisibility. As pure actuality, God's unity is understood as a life of pure active thought. Creaturely unity is to be understood, on this ac-

count, analogically: those creatures that best image the divine life best image the divine unity (and enjoy a kind of unity themselves).

In chapter 13, Edward Feser provides an Aristotelian-Thomistic (A-T) explication of the natural and supernatural. The natural is that within the created order which contains *within itself* a source of change and stability (346). The supernatural is defined contrastively as that which no creature can bring about (352). With this understanding of the natural and supernatural, Feser ably shows the explanatory power of A-T metaphysics for explicating the nature of miracles, grace, faith, and mystery. With respect to Feser's treatment of mystery, I have one complaint. Feser claims that those who deny the doctrine of divine simplicity—the so-called theistic personalists—trade a gain in comprehensibility "at the expense of essentially putting [God] *within* the natural order, broadly construed" (358). God becomes "just one further item in the order of things with a nature or essence distinct from its existence, which would (even if the theistic personalist does not realize this) therefore require him to have a conserving and concurring cause from outside this natural order" (358). None of this obviously follows. The theistic personalist could affirm divine ultimacy such that God is the sole ultimate cause and ground of all distinct from God reality. On this account, God is neither within the natural order nor in need of some outside conserving and concurring cause. I raise this worry because this is a poor, yet all-to-common argument against the theistic personalist by those in the grip of A-T metaphysics. The neo-Aristotelianism under discussion in this book is part of a bigger tent than "A-T-ism." Feser begs the question against the theistic personalist in claiming that a denial of the identity thesis (between divine existence and divine essence) entails neglect of mystery or renders God as one being among beings in some problematic way.

The remaining three chapters further explore the topics of evolution, chance, providence, and laws. In chapter 14, Alexander R. Pruss argues that if one adopts a theistic best-fit account of probabilities then it is possible to consistently hold evolutionary explanations of the origin of species with the view that such species are the result of God's blueprint. In chapter 15, Simon Maria Kopf challenges the popular idea in theology that divine providence requires an overarching teleology of nature. Kopf argues that substantial essences—along with their causal power profiles and ends (teleology of natures)—are all that is needed to provide a traditional account of divine providence, including the idea that necessarily, if God wills human beings to evolve, then they will evolve (a necessity of the consequence, not the consequent). Finally, in chapter 16, James Orr argues that a theistic account of laws grounded in divine kind-concepts and corresponding substantial kinds offers a theoretically attractive account of the regularities found in nature that is superior to its naturalistic and Platonic competitors.

With the main themes of each essay now stated, and some minor quibbles and worries raised along the way, I conclude by heartily commending this collection of essays to philosophers, theologians, and scientists.

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Dru Johnson. *Biblical Philosophy: A Hebraic Approach to the Old and New Testaments.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 343 pages. $34.99.

In *Biblical Philosophy*, Dru Johnson offers a robust defense of the idea that the Bible provides evidence for a distinctly Hebraic intellectual tradition, independent of Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Greek traditions. His aim is not to "pronounce *the* only philosophy of Christian Scripture . . . [but to] suggest that the biblical literature might represent an entire, distinct, and coherent philosophical style" that has gone unnoticed by most (4). While the majority of chapters focus on a Hebraic Philosophical style (hereafter HPS), the final section also addresses intuitions about truth, logic, and justification associated with the Hebraic tradition.

The introduction, "A Case for Retrieving Hebraic Philosophy," situates this book among related literature and explains why the time is right for philosophers *and* theologians to discuss the existence of a HPS. Several pages (10–16) discuss how this project is in league with, yet different from, Yoram Hazony's, *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture* (2012). Johnson suggests it is time we discussed Hebraic philosophy in classes alongside other non-Western philosophies (for example, Asian philosophy) and that Greek thought should not be retained as the standard of all things philosophical (34). While comparative and descriptive, the project is also prescriptive. In his final chapter Johnson clarifies that he in fact thinks the Hebraic intellectual tradition should play more of a paradigmatic role among Christian scholars. There, he throws down the gauntlet (his words) to colleagues in philosophy and theology to reconsider their own work in light of the possibility that Hebraic sources are marching to their own philosophical beat; not the Hellenistic beat many academics follow (319–23).

The first chapter opens with a metaphilosophical question, "What Counts as Philosophy?" Johnson uses a two-part strategy to answer this difficult question. He begins with ground clearing by offering five defeaters for the idea that Hebraic literature is *disqualified* as philosophy (24–36). Second, Johnson places into this clearing a positive criterion for qualifying a literary work as philosophy. A text counts as philosophical when it *advocates* a method or style of second order thinking (37–8). Again, *advocacy* of method/style, not merely the presence of second order thought, seems to be a key criterion here (5, 24, 36–7, 67, 76, 92). Many ancient texts are *scholarly* (they