

**Jeanine Diller and Asa Kasher, eds., *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities* (New York, Springer, 2013. xxi + 1041 pp. \$219).**

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In 1953 Charles Hartshorne and William Reese put together a book called *Philosophers Speak of God*. The aim of that book was to exhaustively categorize the possible models of God. Jeanine Diller and Asa Kasher have put together a collection of essays that seeks to carry on the work of Hartshorne and Reese. Instead of categorizing models of God along the lines of different religions, as is often done, *Models of God* categorizes the various models along conceptual lines. Diller and Kasher have assembled an impressive tome in this regard. This book contains eighty-five essays that cover major thinkers, important issues within ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology, and manages to cut across the religious spectrum in fascinating ways. One of the main motivations for this book is to deal with a particular question: what is the most philosophically and practically satisfying way or ways to conceive of the nature of ultimate reality?

*Models of God* contains thirteen sections that will aid one in answering this question. Part I examines some of the epistemological and metaphysical issues related to modeling reality. Is it possible to model Ultimate reality? How does one go about doing such a thing? What does modeling look like? The first two essays by Robert Neville and Lawrence Whitney (respectively) start the book off on a rather odd note. Each claims that one cannot model God. This might leave one with the impression that she ought not read the rest of the book. After all, if one cannot model God and ultimate reality, why should one read a rather large book on models of God and ultimate reality? Thankfully, the arguments in these first two papers are rather weak, leaving the reader with no sufficient reason to think that ultimate reality cannot be modeled. Neville and Whitney both make the following two claims in their papers. First, that God is ultimately indeterminate, and second, that we cannot offer a model of indeterminate things. The idea seems to be that God only has a determinate nature—what God is like—when God is in relation to something else. Otherwise, God does not have a determinate nature—i.e. there is nothing God is like. I must confess that I found myself scratching my head at this point. Neville explains that God has essential properties regardless of whether or not God relates to anything. Yet, for some reason God only has a determinate nature when God is in relation to something else. It seems to me that, if God has essential properties regardless of any relations that God might stand in, this means that God has a determinate nature. There is something that God is like. So the claim that God is ultimately indeterminate is false. Further, Neville and Whitney do little to justify the claim one cannot model indeterminate reality. Within quantum mechanics, scientists offer models of indeterminate quantum phenomena. So what exactly is the problem for modeling an indeterminate God that has essential properties regardless of the relations that God stands in? We are never told.

The remaining papers in Part I end quite well. Ted Peters offers a nice synopsis of competing models of God, and briefly attempts to justify his own favored position. Donald Viney explains Charles Hartshorne's rather interesting method for classifying all of the possible models of God; and Viney further shows the weakness of Hartshorne's classification system, and seeks to fix these problems. Michael Antony ends the section with a fascinating argument about our ability to acquire knowledge of ultimate reality. While it is often protested that one cannot acquire knowledge of ultimate reality, Antony argues that one cannot know this unless one has acquired knowledge of ultimate reality. Antony ends by saying that we don't know how much knowledge we can possibly acquire about reality, but this agnosticism should leave us optimistic about our prospects. Since we don't know the limits to our understanding, we could possibly come to acquire a great deal of knowledge.

Parts II-X contain essays discussing the different possible conceptual models of God and reality. Diller and Kasher offer nine different conceptual categories of models. The breakdown is as follows: Classical Theism; Neo-Classical Theism; Open Theism; Process Theology; Panentheism; Ground, Start and End of Being Theologies; Ultimate Unity; Divine Multiplicity; Naturalistic Models of the Ultimate. Each section contains an introductory essay describing the essential features of its conceptual model, as well as essays on key thinkers and theories within the relevant conceptual category. Later I shall say a few words about each model's category. For now, I wish to point out an interesting feature of categorizing models along conceptual lines instead of religious lines. Categorizing models along conceptual lines highlights the fact that thinkers of diverse religious traditions are in agreement on the nature of ultimate reality in rather unexpected ways. It is often said that philosophy makes for strange bedfellows, and *Models of God* demonstrates this. For instance, Richard Dawkins and Buddhism both fall under the category of Naturalistic Models. William James and certain Hindu theologians are in the Process theology camp. Immanuel Kant, Karl Rahner, and particular schools within Hinduism are brought together under the banner of Panentheism. These are unexpected bedfellows indeed. With that being said, let us take a look at the different models.

Classical Theism is defined as a vision of God as a necessary being who is self-sufficient, timeless, simple, strongly immutable, and impassible. It includes thinkers such as Aristotle, Maimonides, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Rushd, and Descartes. This section is quite strong. Each essay is short, clear, and useful for developing an understanding of Classical Theism. I would highly recommend the papers in this section to be used in theology, religious studies, and philosophy of religion courses.

Neo-Classical Theism is a bit harder to define. Kevin Timpe describes Neo-Classical Theism as that family of views that accept perfect being theology like Classical Theism. However, Neo-Classical Theists think that God cannot have all of the perfections that Classical Theists typically ascribe to God. So it is a deviation from the Classical understanding of God. Further, Timpe explains that Neo-Classical Theism is that family of views that is not as well defined as Process Theology or Open Theism. Despite the fuzziness of this definition, it does seem to capture a particular family of views. Consider a philosopher like Yujin Nagasawa in this section. Nagasawa denies that God is timeless, simple, and strongly immutable. Yet, he affirms that God knows the future. It seems like he has a position that falls somewhere between Classical and Open Theism. Further,

Nagasawa denies that God is omnipotent. Instead, God has the maximally possible degree of power. Nagasawa is clearly engaged in perfect being theology, but he comes to different conclusions about the divine perfections than Classical Theism.

The papers in the Neo-Classical section are fascinating and well argued. One paper, in particular, stands out as worthy of further discussion for this journal. John Allan Knight's "Descriptivist Reference and the Return to Classical Theism" explains why analytic theology did not start sooner. He offers a well-supported, and thorough, account of how theologians stopped engaging with analytic philosophy in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Knight documents that a substantial number of theologians were engaging with analytic philosophy in the 1950's and 60's over the issue of religious language and falsification. Yet none of these theologians were offering arguments to the effect that falsification, and its underlying descriptivist theory of reference, is false. So, progress in religious language did not seem to be forthcoming for the theologians. In 1969, Liberation theology hit the scene with its own analysis of language as encoded with oppression and power. Knight documents a steady increase in discussions of Liberation theology, and a drastic decline in theological engagements with analytic philosophy. Liberation theology, at the time, seemed to be more theologically fruitful in its analysis of language than analytic philosophy. Yet, the irony of all of this, as Knight points out, is that theologians turned their attention away from analytic philosophy at the wrong time. As theologians are turning away, philosophers like Quine, Searle, Kripke, and Plantinga are revolutionizing analytic philosophy and rejecting the descriptivist theory of reference. If only the theologians had paid attention to analytic philosophy just a bit longer, the project of analytic theology would have begun much sooner.

Open theism is a family of views that sees God as essentially relational, open, and responsive to the world. The loving God is everlasting, passible, and mutable. The future is open in that there are no truth-values to propositions about the future. As such, God does not know the future. God knows what could possibly occur in the future, but God does not know what will in fact occur because the future is yet to be determined. David Woodruff examines common objections to Open Theism, and Alan Rhoda compares the Open Theist's account of providence to that of Molinism and Calvinism. Richard Rice tries to offer an argument that the doctrine of the Trinity entails that God is temporal. While the arguments within these papers are generally strong, Rice fails to offer a precise argument for his position, and he fails to clearly define divine timelessness and divine temporality. In contemporary discussions it is often assumed that everyone knows what the concepts 'divine timelessness' and 'divine temporality' mean, but it is far from obvious that this is the case. I often find that these concepts are typically misunderstood within contemporary theology and philosophy of religion. Also, I found Rice's article to be oddly placed in the Open Theist section since he is heavily dependent upon Process Theology.

In fact, this is a major complaint of mine with the whole book. There is an unusually heavy emphasis on Process Theology. Just about every section of the book contains a discussion of Whitehead and Hartshorne. Many of the papers could, and possibly should, be placed in the section on Process Theology. Of course, the section on Process Theology would become significantly longer than all the rest. Without denying the significance of Whitehead and Hartshorne for contemporary philosophical theology,

they seem to get a disproportionate, and possibly undeserved, amount of attention in this volume.

The section on Process Theology contains several interesting and well written papers. In particular, Jeffrey Long's paper on Hindu Process Theology is quite fascinating. What I find to be missing from this section, however, is a clear definition of Process Theology. Many typical Process terms are used, but no definitions are offered. The best that is offered is that Process acknowledges that the world is complex and multiple, but most models of ultimate reality acknowledge the complexity and multiplicity in reality. So nothing about acknowledging the complexity and multiplicity of reality distinguishes Process Theology from any other model. The other defining feature offered is that Process takes experiences to be fundamental to reality. Yet that does not seem to be coherent. There needs to be a thing that has experiences. One has an experience of things. One is not an experience. What this section needs is a better introduction that clearly defines the unique terminology of Process Theology. It also needs to be less triumphalistic. A common assertion by Process thinkers is that Process Theology simply is the best system for accounting for religious pluralism, science, and our lived experience. Yet, I often struggle to find the arguments for such assertions, and this section in *Models of God* is no different.

The section on Panentheism does no better in offering a definition of its conceptual model than the previous section. Panentheism is notorious for being a slippery concept that is supposed to rest between Theism and Pantheism. Theism says that God and the universe are separate, whereas Pantheism says that God and the universe are identical. Panentheism wishes to say that the universe is *in* God, but that God is more than the universe. This ever elusive "in" is the alleged defining feature of Panentheism. Yet there is no agreed upon definition of "in" amongst Panentheists. Philip Clayton writes the introduction to this section, and notes the difficulty in defining this "in." He further notes that the authors of the papers on C.S. Pierce and Karl Rahner (two papers which appear in this section) do not consider the views of their thinkers to be Panentheistic. Clayton also notes that the chapter on Kant offers a controversial interpretation of Kant since many would not typically label Kant as a Panentheist. Yet, Clayton insists that Kant, Pierce and Rahner are Panentheists because they emphasize themes like transcendence in immanence, and immanence in transcendence. Is that all it takes to be a Panentheist? I can't help but get the feeling that something has gone awry here. Perhaps the lack of a clear definition of Panentheism has contributed to the fact that there is serious disagreement over who in fact is a Panentheist and who is not. Without a clear demarcation it is hard to say who is and is not a Panentheist.

The next section is on Ground, Start, and End of Being Theologies. Start of Being Theology holds that God is the efficient cause of the universe. God starts the universe in its existence; however, God doesn't do much afterwards. Start of Being Theology would include positions like deism. End of Being theology says that God is the final cause, or telos, of the universe. In some cases, God emerges out of the universe. God is the love that emerges out of the complex relations instantiated in the universe's history. Ground of Being theology denies that God is a cause of any sort; God is not one cause among others. Yet, somehow God is the source of all that exists. Start, End, and Ground Theologies make the defining features of divinity efficient cause, or telos, or ground. Any other attributes God might have are purely accidental and incidental. The problem with

these models is that they are conceptually sparse. They don't really seem to say much of anything about God, and intentionally so. In Diller's introduction to this section, she provides a famous quote from G.E. Moore about Paul Tillich's *Ground of Being* theology. Moore says, "I am sorry to say that there is not a single sentence that Professor Tillich has uttered that I was able to understand—not a single sentence!" (p474). While I don't entirely agree with Moore's take on Tillich, I do think much of Moore's concern about the lack of clarity of *Ground of Being* Theology, and related conceptions, applies to the essays within this section.

In the section on Ultimate Unity, one might expect to find strictly Pantheistic and monistic models. This certainly does appear in this section, but it contains a bit more nuance. Spinoza is represented in this section, and he certainly has a version of monism. However, the other thinkers represented in Ultimate Unity do not appear to be strict monists. Each offers a different account of unity. For instance, Ramanuja's account of unity is through embodiment. The conditions of embodiment are such that the world is God's body, and as such is united. One interesting feature of this section is that not all Unity models deny that God is conscious. Panentheists typically follow a conceptual schema devised by Hartshorne to distinguish Pantheism from Panentheism. One of the alleged distinguishing features is that Pantheism denies that God is conscious, whereas Panentheism affirms that God is conscious. However, this section shows that Pantheists of various sorts, like Toland, affirm that God is conscious. Perhaps one might wish to say that Toland is not actually a Pantheist, but is instead a Panentheist. As noted before, Panentheism is a slippery concept that lacks a clear definition. Until Panentheists get clear on what distinguishes their position from everything else, it is not obvious to me that it really is a position that lies between Theism and Pantheism.

Divine Multiplicity is an odd section. It too lacked any clear defining features to demarcate it from other models. Lots of conceptual models could affirm that there are multiple divinities. Trinitarian monotheism could affirm divine multiplicity. Strict monotheism could affirm that there is one God, but many lesser divine beings. It was a struggle to figure out what exactly united these papers together. This section contained a paper on Daoism, African religions, and Hinduism. Each affirms a multiplicity of divinities of some sort, but it was never made clear what distinguishes these models from other models that could also affirm some type of multiplicity.

Naturalist Models of the Ultimate is quite straightforward. These are models that deny divine beings. This was a fascinating section as it brought together Buddhists, New Atheists, Daoists, Nietzsche, and Levinas. The papers in this section were fairly clear, and well argued. Rita Gross's paper on Buddhist Ultimates delves into various issues that are often misunderstood within Western interpretations of Buddhism. In particular, most Westerners would see Buddhism as denying any ultimate at all. Gross points out that Buddhism can have many ultimates in reality, even though they are not divine ultimates.

At this point in the book you might find yourself all modeled out. Perhaps after 700 pages of different models you might find yourself a bit skeptical of our ability to develop models. If you are skeptical of all of these models, or our ability to model ultimate reality, the Negative Theology of Part XI may speak to these concerns. It contains papers on key thinkers and ideas that suggest that we cannot model reality. Papers in this section cover thinkers like Plotinus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, Eckhart, Feyerabend, Maimonides, and Jean-Luc Marion. A great deal of

ineffability is at play in these papers, as well as discussions on the limits of religious language.

If you are like me, you might say that ineffability is self-referentially incoherent. To say that something is ineffable is to say that it is unspeakable, or cannot be captured in human language, or is completely unknowable. Yet, in saying that something is unspeakable, one has spoken about it. In labeling reality as ineffable, one has captured reality in human language. In asserting that reality is ineffable, one is claiming to know something about reality. So ineffability seems to be an incoherent concept, and as such it cannot be employed to prevent us from modeling reality.

It seems to me that we can model reality. In fact, this book thus far has demonstrated that there are many models of reality. At this point, one might ask what one is to do with this diversity of models. Part XII deals with this very question. It contains some interesting papers on how to evaluate competing models of reality, and possible ways to incorporate all of the models into one overarching model.

It should be recalled from the above that the motivation for *Models of God* is twofold: (a) to find a philosophically satisfying account of reality, and (b) to find a practically satisfying account of reality. Diller and Kasher are committed to the notion that our beliefs about ultimate reality have a profound impact on our practical thinking and ethical behavior. Part XIII concludes the book with papers on the practical implications of models. Topics include global warming, just war theory, nonattachment, and feminism. These papers highlight the role of models in our practical reasoning. It is a great way to end this compilation of essays.

Despite various weaknesses and complaints, *Models of God* is an outstanding collection of essays. Diller and Kasher have provided us with a tremendous resource for course material and research projects. The papers are all relatively short and to the point, and contain valuable information. Diller and Kasher have done a fine job at bringing together many diverse thinkers and topics. It is the first book project that has brought together the American Philosophical Association and the American Academy of Religion. A second edition of the book is already underway to fix various problems and fill in conceptual gaps. I look forward to what Diller and Kasher will provide for us next.