generally use it exactly the way Miyamoto describes. It would have bureaucrats draft statutes because it stacked the bureaucracy with loyal and capable people. It would have them write speeches for just the same reason. And it would pass the bills they drafted because they drafted the bills it wanted to pass.

Indeed, several passages in this book suggest just this counter-hypothesis. According to Miyamoto, for example, when bureaucrats write a Prime Minister's script, they "cover every angle [they] can think of, knowing that a slip-up could well cost one of [them] a promotion" (p. 40). They treat the other legislators with deference as well, for the "Diet has absolute sway over every member of the government bureaucracy.... For some reason, bureaucrats respond to Diet members with unconditional obedience. Requests for materials cause general pandemonium, disrupting normal operations entirely" (pp. 28–9).

Crucially, however, bureaucrats show this deference only toward the legislators who control their careers: those in the majority party. Those in the minority parties they treat with disdain (p. 29):

> A representative of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), for example, who might have sway over office personnel decisions, receives an extraordinarily thorough reply, with page after page of extra information that no one is ever likely to read. At the opposite extreme is the Japan Communist Party (JCP), which gets no more information than the average person could get with a minimum of effort. These are not bureaucrats who independently make policy. These are bureaucrats who answer loyally the bidding of majority legislators.

Miyamoto's story is lots of fun. It is too bad he took himself so seriously, for it could have been even more fun. When he pillories bureaucrats and brags about his elaborate vacation schemes, the book is genuinely amusing. And one should accept it as just such a book. This is not a book for which the realistic test is whether the author will win the Pulitzer equivalent or a tenured spot at the University of Tokyo. It is a book for which the test is whether it matches a Stephen King for an afternoon on the beach. To be honest, it does not; but it does pass the hours painlessly enough and spares one the nightmares a good King generates. In the end, that is not a bad deal.

Religious Pluralism and Truth: Essays on Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion

Thomas Dean, ed.
Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995. xii, 271pp. Hardback US$19.95. (pbk.).

Reviewed by Joseph S. O'Leary, Sophia University, Tokyo

Though these essays date from the 1970s and early 1980s, their publication is beautifully timed, for the question of truth is imposing itself more and more as the central one in religious studies. Faced with Aum Shinrikyō, with its misery of madness and crime that carries the mask of religion, even government bureaucrats are being forced to discern true from false religion, and even sociologists are likely to find their value-free observations contaminated by worries about truth. In the more genteel sphere of interreligious ecumenism, the question of truth has proved more troubling than one would have wished. The generous recognition of a parity among the world's great faiths, all of them true in their distinctive styles, has been contested by such thinkers as Paul Griffiths, Gavin D'Costa, Kenneth Surin, Joseph DiNoia and Harold Netland, who insist on the logical incompatibility between the truth-claims of different religions. In these debates a fundamental philosophical

issue is emerging: the question of the nature of truth. This opens onto the discussions of truth in analytic philosophy since Frege and Tarski, which have been particularly intense in recent years, as well as onto the post-structuralist questioning of the very possibility of truth in Foucault and Derrida and the pragmatist skepticism of Rorty.

The present collection offers an easy descent into this maelstrom, mapping out the lines of inquiry in a relatively simple and perspicuous way and providing a historical perspective on how the questions that now haunt us have been insinuated over the past twenty years. The approaches represented can be divided into three types. Some essays aim at hard-nosed logical rationality; others develop more global phenomenological and hermeneutical considerations; and a final group focuses on the interplay of specific historical traditions. Each approach has its characteristic strengths: the first challenges us to clear thinking, the second to generous understanding, the third to engagement in the "loving struggle" between concrete perspectives; this third approach is also, to my mind, the one that is most instructive philosophically. But each approach has its characteristic danger: the first can fall into rationalist insensitivity to the specific texture of religious languages; the second can be disappointingly general; the third can become an encyclopedism in which the traditions studied fail to interact.

LOGICAL RATIONALITY

Among the logically minded, William J. Wainwright defends the importance of propositional truth in religion. He questions whether standards or truth and rationality vary to a great degree from tradition to tradition. Moreover, "even if different traditions employ different standards of truth and rationality, it does not follow that there are no universally valid standards in terms of which the doctrines and arguments of these traditions can be assessed" (p. 78). He argues that religious doctrines can be formulated as metaphysical theses: "Christian doctrines can be more or less adequately expressed in the concepts and categories of, say, Aristotelian, Platonic, Cartesian or Heideggerian metaphysics" (p. 79). I should say this sentence shows insensitivity to the texture of biblical language.

Joseph A. DiNoia seems to have a rather rigid conception of "the logic of the Christian scheme" that forces him to view other religions as having only partial truth and as surpassed by Christianity:

> If, as the Christian scheme seems to teach, the true aim of life is salvation as union with the Trinity, and if membership of the Christian community is the divinely willed means given to attain this aim, then it would not be consistent with central Christian doctrines to ascribe to other religious communities a value equivalent to that ascribed to the Christian community. Thus, although central Christian doctrines affirm the universality of salvation, they also assert that the Christian community has privileged public access to knowledge about this aim of life and the means to attain it (p. 122).

This view raises worries about "other religious persons' prospects of attaining the aim of salvation despite their persistence in patterns of life that seem to point them in other and possibly wrong directions" (p. 124). These headaches could be dissolved by a deconstruction of such notions as "salvation," "the Trinity," and "divine will," homonyms that mask a great diversity of historical conceptions and that in any case point to referents that far transcend the capacities of human speech and conceptualization. The alternative paths of saving truth cut out in other religious traditions may have more than a "preparatory role" (p. 123); they may help Christian discourse

to make better sense by de-absolutizing it and bringing it back into relation to the wider spiritual adventure of humanity. DiNoia's uncritical acceptance of patristic attitudes to the Greco-Roman heritage, and especially to Judaism, is a poor basis for interreligious negotiations today: "The Christian community's teachings about Judaism's providential relationship to it are generalized in this literature to explicate the invalidation, suppression and fulfillment of all the religions of classical antiquity" (p. 129).

GLOBAL INTERPRETATION

On the hermeneutical and phenomenological front, Ninian Smart pleads for a philosophy of world views that will have a humanizing effect as it extends "our understanding of the symbolic phenomenology of everyday life" (p. 30). Mary Ann Stenger offers Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" as a model for cross-cultural understanding. Conrad Hyers sees religions as ways of dealing with the ambiguity of human experience and argues that, given time, each religion will eventually take up almost all the possible positions on any of the fundamental questions, so that the ecumenical problem of unity-in-diversity arises even within a single tradition.

INTERPLAY OF TRADITIONS

The concrete, historical approach is represented by Frederick J. Streng, who argues that "formulations of ultimate reality...are best understood as part of a process which places valuing at the center of experiencing" (p. 206); they are hodological truths, truths of a path, rather than direct ontological statements. He contrasts Tillich's path, which is centered on being, Hellmut Wilhelm's holistic grasp of moving forces within a concrete life-situation (based on the *I Ching*), and Nishitani's "field of emptiness." The three "structures of ultimate transformation" are well described, but Streng has no proposals to make about the possibility of a critical interplay between them. He is content to note "how different formulations function in order to expose and evolve what is real" (p. 222).

In contrast, Ashok K. Gangadean dramatically focuses, in somewhat Einsteinian diction, on the puzzle posed by the incommensurability of religious worlds: "The incommensurability of worlds is synonymous with the relativity of sense and reference. This disclosure of comparative ontology leads to skepticism concerning the possibility of intelligible transformations between worlds" (p. 229). He claims that what is divided at the level of categorial logic is reunited at the higher level of transcategorial meditative thinking, where "the logical atomism of meaning which structures categorial thought in terms of fixed essence and identity as well as rigid designation melts in the light of fluid organic reason" (p. 240). Much of this is the purest metaphysical moonshine: "This logical space turns upon itself in a virtuous circle in which the infinite distance is the point at which one begins: 'here' is 'everywhere,' 'now' is 'everywhen,' and 'I' specifies everything and nothing" (p. 240). The parts of this account that make sense would apply just as well to categorial thought, less rigidly conceived. Gangadean's picture of categorial thought as bound to logical atomism and rigid univocity can be corrected by recourse to the later Wittgenstein or to Derrida. The allegedly transcategorial "poetry of meditative speech" (p. 241) could be mapped quite well in Heideggerian categories. A pluralism informed by Wittgenstein, Derrida and Heidegger allows a fluid dialogal coming and going between different philosophical and religious worlds, and seems to discredit Gangadean's claim that such movement between worlds is possible only in "meditative logical space" in which "the differentiations of diverse worlds are recognized, but now in a context of trans-

categorial unity: there is, indeed, one world" (p. 243).

Raimundo Panikkar, like Gangadean, is aware that though a universal philosophy of religion is not available, "the human spirit seems unable to stop short of a certain unity which appears necessary, indeed vital, to it" (p. 40). But he locates this not in mystical insight but as a transcendent goal always beyond our reach. There is no neutral ground outside of the "dialogical dialogue" between specific traditions, nor can religions be fitted into a dialectical scheme: "among all the human events on earth, the dynamism of religions especially cannot be reduced to dialectical games" (p. 41). He seeks "the passage from a *de facto* plurality to a *de jure* pluralism" (p. 42).

Harold Coward points to certain limits of pluralism: the barriers to dialogue between people proceeding from different visions of the world, the impossibility for any thinker to survey the various religions or to attain a completely objective outlook. These limits throw us back on our finitude, and they also mean that "there is no longer any ground upon which a theologian can make absolute claims for a particular theological position" (p. 57); "all future theologizing in the sense of establishing ultimate claims to knowledge must cease" (p. 58). Troubling for the Christian here is that in the Bible it is God and Christ (not bumptious theologians ignorant of their own finitude) who are represented as making ultimate claims for themselves. Other religions are equally likely to find this curtailment of ultimate claims unacceptable. Can we not have a pluralism that respects the religions' conviction of being vehicles of ultimate truth? Coward grants that "in all religions there is experience of a reality that transcends human conception" and that this "particular experience" may "function in an absolute sense as the validating criterion for our own personal religious experience" (p. 59). But what is the meaning of "absolute" in this sentence? The word is "used simply to describe the felt nature of commitment to the transcendent through a particular personal experience" (p. 60). If it is only a feeling, it is not absolute; if a valid perception of the absolute is involved, then the finite, instrumental and perspectival status of religions is no barrier to the making of absolute claims.

New Directions in Mission & Evangelization 2: Theological Foundations

James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans, eds
New York: Orbis Books, 1994. 215pp.

Reviewed by John E. Schmidt, Kobe

New Directions in Mission & Evangelization 2: Theological Foundations is the second of the Orbis Books "New Directions" series, which offers collections of previously published articles and papers from a variety of sources dealing with the church's mission in the postmodern world. The intent is to provide students and mission scholars with convenient, inexpensive access to important, current missiological literature. In this I think it succeeds admirably.

This volume focuses on recent efforts to explore the theological foundations for the church's missionary efforts. The essays and statements are grouped into five general categories. Part I, The Nature of Mission, deals with the biblical, ecclesiastical, and Christological foundations of mission in today's world. This is the longest, and for me the most thought-provoking section of the book. In it are selections from Orlando Costas, Leslie Newbigin and David J. Bosch, among others representing Anabaptist, Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities.

Repeatedly I found this section not only informative but also personally challenging. For example, in "Christian Mission in the