

and the ‘herd’ would not just redeem individuals, but society as well. Kirkconnell argues his case skilfully and, while his approach differs radically from that taken by Mulder, it is balanced and coherent and not only communicates an important Kierkegaardian message but has much to teach us about how Kierkegaard should be read.

I found Patrick Sheil’s book disappointing as an introduction to the great Danish philosopher but excellent as a summary aiming at being comprehensive, since it filled out and gave a broader context to the themes and ideas I encountered in the other two books. As well as providing a biographical outline of the Danish philosopher and placing him to some extent in his historical context, Sheil is particularly good at defending Kierkegaard against the criticisms of other philosophers, such as Theodor Adorno, or at relating him to themes and ideas to be found in authors such as George Eliot. I found particularly illuminating his commentary on Kierkegaard’s profound empathy with St Paul, who along with Socrates features across the pages of both the pseudonymous and the signed works. Kierkegaard admires Paul because he is ‘always running’, with the result that past sufferings do not hold him fast and future sufferings have no time to frighten him – he runs because there is more work to be done; likewise, he admires how Paul can admit past sins without being paralysed by them and how he never has an unfinished opinion of other people but is always prepared to be surprised by future events: these features of Paul throw light on Kierkegaard’s intricate and highly nuanced value system. And they also reveal how Kierkegaard, who can appear exceedingly fastidious, tortured even, in his analyses of such favourite themes and motifs as sin, self-accusation, ‘comparison’ and ‘immediacy’ in its various forms – all of which are examined in Sheil’s work – nevertheless could not abide the self-indulgence of the dreamer or speculative philosopher and at all times was insistent that one’s work or task had to get done: ‘Get on with it’ seems to have been a strong undercurrent of even his most intricate and painstaking analyses. While his imagination could soar, most especially when he dwelt on what he called the ‘God relationship’, at all times his ideas have a practical, down to earth application. One can well see why, despite the hard work entailed in coming to grips with his thinking, Kierkegaard has become such an attractive author for so many theologians, spiritual writers and psychotherapists. He never ceases to challenge and surprise.

JOSEPH FITZPATRICK

BIOMEDICINE AND BEATITUDE: AN INTRODUCTION TO CATHOLIC BIOETHICS by Nicanor Pier Giorgio Austriaco OP, *Catholic University of America Press, Washington, DC, 2011, pp. xiv + 327, \$24.95, pbk*

If you wanted to recommend a book to undergraduates or seminarians studying Catholic bioethics for the first time, there are several books available. The pontificate of John Paul II spanned the birth and development of bioethics as a serious academic endeavour, and a new generation of seminarians and students has also come along, actively supportive of the John Paul II project, and rather bemused by theologians who are not. Amongst the possible introductory textbooks for such a generation, the one that seems most acceptable is William May’s *Catholic Bioethics and the Gift of Human Life*. It takes the most important magisterial documents available, comments on them, develops an understanding of human dignity, the human act, and natural law, and then applies that thinking to various issues in bioethics. The book does not contain the kind of proportionalist moral thought that was common some years ago.

What we have with Austriaco's book is a similar kind of approach to May's. It starts by placing the bioethics within the framework of the moral life, which is about the pursuit of beatitude, the happy life, through following Christ. In less than 40 pages, he then sketches out the nature of human inclinations, the anatomy of the human act, the virtues, conscience and the principle of double effect, and so on, as a way of equipping the reader for the chapters dealing with specific issues. Throughout the book, Austriaco always reveals his sources, and frequently directs the readers towards authors who hold a different opinion to his own. It very quickly becomes clear, for example, that he disagrees with certain aspects of the thought of May, Finnis and Grisez, with whom he shares a high regard for the teaching of the magisterium. An example is the 'fact-value distinction'; May *et al* do not think that the human good can be known from facts about human nature because 'is' to 'ought' is a logical mistake. However, Austriaco claims that if we accept Aquinas's anthropology, as he does throughout the book, then 'ought' statements are statements of fact rather than value (p. 29). Similarly he disagrees with May about the place of the virtue of prudence in bioethical reasoning (p. 41).

The book then treats bioethical topics in a systematic way, from the beginning of life and procreation right through to the end of life, with a final chapter treating the status of Catholic bioethics in a postmodern, liberal and secular society. Austriaco always demonstrates a sound and up-to-date knowledge of the biology behind the issues. Many bioethicists are prone to making rookie mistakes when presenting scientific matters in their writings because they do not have the necessary background critically to assess primary and secondary biological literature. Austriaco does not make such mistakes in this book. He has a doctorate from MIT, and as well as writing extensively on bioethics, has an active research career in molecular microbiology; all the while maintaining his life as a Dominican priest and friar. The biology in the book is accessible, avoiding unnecessary technical terminology wherever possible. At the end of each chapter, there is a section which highlights the role of virtue in the particular issue. This is an interesting and somewhat novel feature; sometimes it works well, but with some chapters it is less convincing. However, I am sure that if Austriaco penned a more in-depth book on virtue in bioethics aimed at an advanced readership, it would be a welcome addition to the Catholic bioethical canon.

The chapter on organ donation and transplantation is very thorough in its treatment, and up-to-date. It considers the history of transplants, gives an ethical framework for transplantation, which includes the rejection of the idea of presumed consent. It is then almost exhaustive in its consideration of the various ethical issues with transplants – from trafficking and sale of organs through to the ethics of transplants where the donor is 'brain dead'. It contains a brief but well written analysis of the problem of defining death; a further occasion to disagree with May. He rejects May's suggestion that the capacity for sentience can be used to gauge the presence or absence of life, instead arguing that the loss of bodily integrity is the only robust indicator of death (p. 199).

The chapter entitled 'Research Ethics from the Bench to the Bedside' is also very good. It starts with an examination of the vocation of the scientist, going on to examine biomedical research and clinical trials, issues of informed consent, the use of placebos, experiments on humans at various stages of life. It also briefly treats the emerging issues in neuroscience and neuroethics, and the ethics of plant and animal experimentation and genetic engineering. Whilst some aspects of this chapter might have been included in other chapters of the book, having a clearly marked chapter on the ethics of research is a good idea. And as the biology is as up to date as can be reasonably expected, it looks at some of the important questions which will come to the fore in the next few years, along with other areas that often receive less attention within Catholic bioethics.

This is a good introductory book; much better than any of the other available books which are intended as introductions to Catholic bioethics. It is better written and organised than May's, and is more up to date. It is comprehensive, accessible, and will no doubt act as a catalyst for further interest in the subject amongst students. However, its main weakness is that it has a pious tone running throughout. I fear this may well be off-putting, especially to sceptics both inside and outside the Church. I think this is a shame, because a slightly different tone would have given the book much wider appeal, and would in no way have diluted the sense of passion for the Church's teaching which Austriaco clearly has.

ROBERT GAY OP

THINKING THROUGH FEELING: GOD, EMOTION AND PASSIBILITY by **Anastasia Philippa Scrutton**, *Continuum*, New York and London, 2011, pp. ix + 227, £65, hbk

The idea that God suffers and thus by implication has emotions is now commonplace in some branches of theology despite its departure from orthodoxy. Traditionally, impassibilists have variously contested this, arguing for instance that attributing an emotional life to God is in some sense to make God subject to creation and thereby to challenge his omnipotence and other attributes. Passibilists, on the other hand, frequently maintain that only a suffering, empathic God can help but have also suggested that God might freely choose to undergo suffering in order to do this.

Anastasia Philippa Scrutton expands this arena with her interesting, thought-provoking book that combines a historically and philosophically well-informed exploration of emotions with a nuanced understanding of 'how varied – and sometimes mutually incompatible – understandings of impassibility were in the early church' (p. 2). So varied, she argues, that some early 'impassibilist' positions closely resemble what we might view nowadays as examples of passibilism. Many such early impassibilists, she indicates, were as much if not more motivated to defend God's perfection and sinlessness, and so to 'protect' him from unruly and potential sinful passions, than to proclaim his changelessness. Scrutton's claim, therefore, is that 'some modern forms of passibilism may not be as much of a break from tradition as has generally been perceived' (p. 2). Indeed she 'proposes these moderate positions as routes through the seemingly insurmountable impasse between impassibilism and passibilism' (p. 2). But despite her well-argued thesis I must confess to becoming increasingly sceptical as to whether there is any such simple, *univocal*, middle way.

After a scene-setting introduction, the first two chapters form the foundations for the remainder. In Chapter 1, Scrutton provides a well-informed overview of philosophical and historical views of passibilism and impassibilism and the reasons for the shift from the latter in the twentieth century; this she sees as reflecting the needs of modern theology 'to speak to challenges to faith arising from our increase awareness of human and animal suffering' (p. 3). Next, in Chapter 2, she treats the ragbag and multi-dimensional categories of emotions as having 'family resemblances' with each other. Here, in what is really the nub of the book, Scrutton revives the Augustinian and Thomist distinction between the affections and the passions recasting it as a 'spectrum . . . rather than two entirely distinct kinds of phenomena' claiming that it allows us to posit certain emotions of God (mainly the affections), while excluding those that would conflict with God's omnipotence, omniscience, incorporeality and moral perfection' (generally the passions) (p. 4, parenthetical material added).