

# ASDIWAL

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nier promis à une mort certaine, à l'image de celles nourrissant l'ourson, le sacrifice humain ne pourrait-il pas être ramené à un exorcisme de la mort périnatale (p. 284) ?

Ce comparatisme débridé rend la lecture du livre difficile et, surtout, affaiblit la portée de la démonstration. Même en pensant que les grottes du Paléolithique matérialisent en quelque sorte la cavité sexuelle féminine – Alain Testart et Valérie Lécivain identifiant nombre de symbolisations féminines et y voyant la formalisation de l'origine du monde (p. 345) –, on ne saisit pas comment Dunis infirme leur interprétation, qui ferait de ces grottes l'émanation d'une obsession de la reproduction naturelle, pour avancer la sienne : « la grotte met en scène les dangers inhérents à la reproduction humaine (...) : prix fort à payer pour la bipédie (...) » (p. 346). Dans la préface à *L'île aux femmes*, Maurice Godelier avait émis quant à la démarche et aux interprétations proposées de nombreuses réserves que nous faisons nôtres. Que reprochait-il à l'auteur dont, par ailleurs, il disait admirer l'érudition et la force de travail ? Il relevait d'abord que l'analyse structurale des mythes selon Lévi-Strauss ne consistait pas uniquement à relever des analogies entre différents récits, ce qui ne conduit qu'à une lecture en surface de ces mythes. Il notait ensuite que la conception d'un corps féminin révéral à l'origine, pour être ensuite soumis aux

hommes, relève d'une pensée contemporaine quelque peu anachronique. Le mythe peut avoir une portée idéologique en ceci qu'il dénigre un matriarcat originel asocial, cruel et en partie stérile. Il ne montre pas par une lecture trop littérale la difficile destinée humaine soumise aux morts en couches. Comme on le sait, dans les mythes, ce n'est pas la nature qui est cruelle pour les hommes – ils produisent des rites pour tenter de s'en prémunir justement –, mais les hommes qui sont cruels entre eux ou avec les animaux et des monstres mi-hommes mi-animaux. Ainsi, on aurait aimé que, dans cet ouvrage, la question de la diffusion de mythes pour des questions de peuplement ne soit pas confondue avec celle de la signification anthropologique d'un mythe qui demande, quoi qu'il en soit, à être interprété de différentes manières. Un petit ouvrage synthétisant ces deux gros livres, et se concentrant tout en les distinguant sur les deux problématiques essentielles – les questions de peuplement révélés par les mythes d'un côté, l'analyse structurale du mythe même de l'île aux femmes de l'autre –, serait sans nul doute le bienvenu pour donner au lecteur un accès plus aisé à la pensée foisonnante de Serge Dunis.

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CHRISTOPHE GRELLARD, *La Possibilità dell'errore. Pensare la tolleranza nel medioevo*, Rome, Aracne Editrice (« Flumen sapientiale », 12), 2020, 185 pages, ISBN : 978-88-255-3198-5

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In this monograph, Christophe Grellard addresses a key transformation in the epistemology of the Catholic Church. The late antique Church Fathers agreed that true belief in the Christian faith was a non-negotiable condition of salvation, but in 1964, the constitution *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican II recognized the possibility of salvation for not only adherents of the Abrahamic religions, but also those

who seek the image of God in blameless ignorance. The puzzle at the heart of this book is this change of mentality: how did it come about? Christophe Grellard identifies the period in medieval theology between Abelard and Second Scholasticism, the twelfth and sixteenth century, as a time of development of concepts in which the necessary conditions for religious tolerance were established.

This is a story in several stages: at the beginning of the period, we see Peter Abelard, an outlier, the poser of a challenge, who juxtaposed an objectivized understanding of morality with a claim that sin only occurred when a person consented to commit evil. The result was a theory in which Abelard recognized that those Jews who persecuted Christ (who were not able to know that he was Christ) were obliged to do so in their consciences, even though this persecution was evil and merited punishment. Grellard follows the development of a theory of invincible ignorance: he shows how many thirteenth century authors were reluctant to admit that invincible ignorance of the Christian faith might come about. For example, confronted with the case of a baby baptized into Christianity then brought up among pagans, rather than admit that such a child was innocently ignorant of Christ, authors like Bonaventure and Aquinas claimed that Divine Providence would provide miraculous inspiration. Robert Holcott, the fourteenth-century English theologian, was the first to admit the possibility that a simple, non-learned Christian may, through invincible ignorance, meritoriously believe in a heresy. Because a simple old woman has no way to question what she is told by those in authority, she can only believe sincerely despite being deceived.

Likewise, Grellard shows a parallel chronology regarding the obligation to follow an erroneous conscience. The high scholastic view was deeply opposed to the idea that a person's conscience could oblige one to do a sinful act: medieval theologians thought that we have an internal sense of the moral general rules, called *synderesis*. Thomas Aquinas recognized that it was possible that one could mistake the facts, and thus make a false conscientious judgment in good faith. However, when an error is pointed out, the individual is required to dismiss her own conscience. Increasingly, later theologians acknowledged a distinction between the internal dictates of conscience and external instruction.

In the final chapter, we see how these theories worked when theologians addressed questions about errant belief in the world: William of Ockham insisted on the distinction between external human law, which could only judge on the basis of behavior, and the internal, unknowable, nature of errant belief. The question of idolatry, and the devil's tendency to disguise himself as divinity, proved useful to Las Casas in explaining the beliefs of indigenous Americans. Grellard shows how Las Casas returned to scholastic arguments about erroneous belief when considering the intentions of idolators, but made a case for the invincible ignorance and pure intentions of inhabitants of the New World who were ignorant of Christianity.

One interesting aspect is Grellard's acknowledgement of a difficulty that affected almost all of his authors: they existed in a world in which heresy was a problem very much on bishops' and theologians' minds. All of these authors are clear that they do not wish to offer heretics the excuse of invincible ignorance: they are clear that those who were brought up in the church, even those who were members of other religions who had received evangelization, are culpable for their errant belief. The church investigated and punished many heretics (whether Cathars, Waldensians, Lollards): it would not be acceptable to admit that the church's actions may not have been just. On the other hand, the ideas had an agency of their own: once one concedes that invincible ignorance must exist, and one accepts that the articles of faith are not innate, but must be learnt, it follows that it is possible that one could hold mistaken beliefs without evil intention. This was perhaps an uncomfortable or politically inconvenient avenue of thought. It is significant that Ockham, who was banished by the papal court and who lived in exile, was the only theologian who explicitly contemplated the ethical ramifications if the entire established church should fall into error and teach a falsehood. We can thus see the effects of events in the world

on scholastic thought, such as the schism and the persecution of heretics. Grellard only briefly acknowledges these authors' engagement in church politics, preferring instead to foreground the internal logic and dialogic aspects of these scholastic debates.

Grellard several times uses the phrase « the right to err ». In some ways this right represents a radical tolerance because his authors acknowledge a moral imperative on, for example, the old woman who has been misled to persist in her false beliefs. On the other hand, the theologians of the thirteenth and fourteenth century set strict limits on this right, because they insisted that *simplices* must seek guidance from religious experts and dismiss an erroneous conscience if necessary. Up until the Protestant Reformation, or the discovery of the New World, I wonder whether we can properly talk about a « right to err », or whether it would be more accurate to call this an acknowledgement that unavoidable error sometimes occurs. There is a question about scale

in play here: how does it change a problem when one transitions from a situation where only a tiny minority are expected to hold erroneous beliefs, to a new reality in which entire populations live in heterodox religion, as was the case after the Protestant Reformation and Europe's encounters with the peoples of the New World?

This is a fascinating, thorough, and insightful monograph that will be of interest not only to specialists in medieval philosophy, but also to historians and specialists in religious studies. Grellard provides an account of the development of religious tolerance that is both precise and empirical, but which also addresses important theoretical questions about the philosophical ramifications of Christian soteriology and the ability of scholasticism to respond to a world in crisis.

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JASON ĀNANDA JOSEPHSON STORM, *Metamodernism: The Future of Theory*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2021, 328 pages, ISBN: 9780226786650.

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In *Metamodernism*, Jason Ānanda Josephson Storm sets out to analyze and resolve some of the thorniest of philosophical problems posed to the social scientist today: the possibility of knowledge or lack thereof, scepticism, moralism, ethical nihilism, the meaning of language and – what is especially important for religious studies – the anti-essentialist or critical turn. As he states from the beginning on, however, *Metamodernism* is not a new name for an actual *Zeitgeist* or state of things. Rather, it is a project, a place the author wants to get to. To be metamodern, according to Josephson Storm, is to be in search of a new foundation for the social sciences in particular, and for theory in general, the seeds of which one can find in this book.

The first chapter offers a discussion on realism and anti-realism, concluding that both these categories are at their core polemical. On the one hand, scholars who portray themselves as realists without discussing the concept of reality are doing nothing but « portraying their scientism » rhetorically, while anti-realists are usually criticizing the same scientific, positivist worldview. This polemic is here interpreted as the consequence of a « crisis » – in the Kuhnian sense of the term: the *dénouement* of models transposed from the natural sciences to the humanities. A possible solution to this impasse, a metamodern solution, would be to account for the difference between reality and existence – what is *real* does not necessarily have a physical, mind-independent existence,