

KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY

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KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY

Essays in Honor of Alvin Plantinga

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For AI

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Preface

This volume was conceived as a *Festschrift* to surprise Alvin Plantinga on his 70th birthday. That original plan was not entirely successful. For one thing, the day came and went well before the work was complete. For another, the project wasn't quite a surprise: Plantinga caught wind of it (though not of its details) before the unveiling.

The occasion was marked, however, by a presentation of a projected table of contents and an early draft of the cover painting by Keith Lehrer. Plantinga then saw the details, and was quite taken aback that the editors and a few contributors had come to South Bend from as far Virginia, Florida, and California to celebrate.

Now we are pleased to offer the essays themselves. The collection ranges widely over metaphysics and epistemology. Its wingspan testifies to the breadth both of Plantinga's own work and of the audience that has valued it. Some of the essays deal with ontology, examining actualism, presentism, antirealism, properties, and artifacts. Several essays in epistemology raise skeptical questions, work through the implications of naturalism or internalism, and engage Plantinga's own Reidian account of warrant. Other contributions consider the bearing of philosophical ideas on the Christian faith—of split brain cases on the doctrine of the Trinity, for example, and of materialism on the afterlife.

The contributors are friends, colleagues, and former students of Plantinga. The editors thank all of them for their eager participation in this project.

There is little we can add to the expressions of praise and gratitude the contributors and others have voiced. Plantinga's seminal work on modality, the problem of evil, and the rationality of religious belief has long been

celebrated for its rigor, depth, and clarity, and his more recent work in epistemology has been eagerly received as an important, stimulating contribution to the field.

Beyond that, many have had occasion to thank Plantinga for his availability and encouragement, among both his own students and others. As James Sennett has recently observed, Plantinga follows through on his expressed concern for the development of younger philosophers, and in particular members of the Christian philosophical community. The editors add their testimony that Plantinga has been consistently generous with his time and attention.

But perhaps one facet of Plantinga's work deserves greater appreciation: the scope of his vision, the big picture which animates his thought. Plantinga excels not only in analysis but also in synthesis. He aims always to place his ideas in their context, and he has encouraged his students to do the same. His work thus contributes not merely to the development of a handful of philosophical problems, but to a worldview in which all of knowledge, freedom, possibility, the character of propositions, the origins of humanity, and the nature and purposes of God twine each other and cannot be understood in isolation.

Here Plantinga owes something to his own teacher, William Harry Jellema, who conceived of philosophy's history as an arena of competing commitments which are ultimately religious. Plantinga is quick to credit Jellema as a model of historically informed, insightful, and subtle thinking that appreciates criticism without being overawed by intellectual fads—nor even by entrenched errors. Jellema is himself indebted to Abraham Kuyper's conviction that every human enterprise (not least philosophy) is claimed by the sovereignty of Christ, Kuyper in turn to John Calvin's understanding of the original goodness of creation and humans' tasks in it, and Calvin to Augustine's longing for rest in God, the human end.

At Jellema's hands Plantinga saw the vision. We hope to honor them both by applying the proceeds of sales of this book toward a chair in Jellema's name at Calvin College. We are glad to have caught the vision from you, Al.

Thomas M. Crisp
Matthew Davidson
David Vander Laan

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We would like to thank Keith Lehrer for commissioning the volume, as well as for the painting for the cover; Ann Hickman for her patience and hard work in typesetting the pages; and our terrific (and understanding) editors—Ingrid van Laarhoven and Floor Oosting. We are grateful to each of the contributors for the essays, and to Hilda Tomberlin and Greg Fitch for help in preparing James Tomberlin’s essay.