



Philosophical Review

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Conception of God* by

Review by: J. G. S.

Source: *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Mar., 1896), pp. 213-214

Published by: Duke University Press on behalf of Philosophical Review

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2175355>

Accessed: 13-02-2021 22:35 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Duke University Press, Philosophical Review are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Philosophical Review*

NOTICES OF NEW BOOKS.

The Conception of God. Published by the Philosophical Union of the University of California, Berkeley, 1895. — pp. 84.

This is an address by Professor Royce with comments by Professors Mezes, Le Conte, and Howison. The text of the address fills one-third of the volume; and the comments by Professor Howison somewhat more. It is highly creditable to the University of California to have arranged for the consideration of the high theme discussed, and complimentary to the public that "some fifteen hundred persons" assembled to listen to such addresses. If the effect on the mind of a reader is not so stirring as it was to the listener in Berkeley, this is doubtless in part due to the difference between oral and written discourse, and in part to the circumstance that the proceedings were supplementary to previous studies of the Philosophical Union, of which the present pamphlet contains no record.

Professor Royce makes his position very clear. If there is a God, we must discover him in experience. Our individual experience is made up of shreds and patches. But we interpret it by the consensus of the various experiences of our fellow-men, and by the relatively organized conceptions of science. Nay, we advance beyond these to the ideal of an absolutely organized experience, — as if all phases of actual and imaginable experience were expressions of a universal meaning present to one universal subject. The question whether there is an absolute reality (God), is equivalent to the question whether there be such an absolutely organized experience. And that there must be, Professor Royce satisfies himself by two considerations; namely, first, that its bare ideality, held *true*, implies its reality; and, secondly, that its non-existence, supposed *real*, presumes it. I take this substantially to mean that the very fragmentariness and error of our actual experience must, to account for themselves, postulate an absolutely complete and perfect experience. And of such experiences absolute reality (God) is the necessary correlate.

Professor Mezes objects that this reasoning does not prove that there is a real being worthy of the exalted name of God. Professor Royce's all-inclusive being is, so far as the argument leads, devoid of spirituality.

Next, Professor Le Conte, abandoning the "subtle method of Professor Royce in reaching the conclusion of the personal existence of God," sets forth the argument of cosmic theism. As against Professor Royce's emphasis of thought, he emphasizes power and love as divine attributes. Professor Le Conte accepts the orthodox view of moral evil, and endeavors to vindicate our hope of immortality. Like the preceding speaker he is clear, forcible, and even eloquent.

Professor Howison has the last word. He makes criticisms and raises questions. The distinguishing note of his paper is that God must be conceived primarily from the point of view of conscience. The so-called Absolute Idealism of Professor Royce gives too intellectual an interpretation to the ultimate reality. Besides, the notion of "absolute experience" is a suspicious one. I have not space to follow Professor Howison into details. But his recapitulation in a series of questions (pp. 81-84) offers abundant material for reflection upon the issues raised by the various speakers.

All these thinkers believe in God; no one of them is satisfied with the other's proof of that belief. This makes the pamphlet suggestive, if unsatisfying reading. One lays it down with the feeling that much is still needed to clear up our notions regarding the nature of the Divine Being. If we all knew what we meant by the word God, there would, I suspect, be much less disagreement as to the question of the existence of God.

J. G. S.

Arnold Geulincx und seine Philosophie. Von J. P. N. LAND, Professor an der Universität Leyden. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1895. — pp. x, 219.

Geulincx could not have found a better biographer and expositor than Professor Land of the University of Leyden, the editor of his collected works and the author of numerous treatises on his life and writings. The volume before us was prepared at the request of a "German colleague" (his name is not given), who has assumed the editorship of a series of popular monographs on the leaders of philosophy, resembling *Blackwood's Philosophical Classics* and similar excellent collections. But owing to a misunderstanding with the publisher, Professor Land felt obliged to sever his connection with the German enterprise, and to publish his work under his own auspices. It is safe to say that the author's reputation and the merit of his book will procure for it the recognition it deserves.

Geulincx' life and system are clearly and logically set forth according to information obtained from the very latest manuscripts. Due regard is paid to the proper proportion of the parts, and though the book contains quite a number of typographical errors, it is well printed. The presence of an index would, in my opinion, add to the value of the little volume. It would also have been wise (considering the original purpose of the work, and in view of the fact that the author regards Geulincx as a more independent follower of Descartes than is usually supposed), had Land devoted a special chapter to the consideration of the relation between the two. He combats the theory that the philosophy of the disciple is merely an exaggeration of the principles of the master. It cannot be denied that the former is not a slavish imitator of the latter. Of course, the two systems closely resemble each other. Geulincx' contempt for scholastic learning, his doubts, his principle of self-certainty, his doctrine of innate ideas, his