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### **Truth-Could it be True?**

**Peter Hicks**

Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996,  
230pp., pb, ISBN 1-900507-16-1

#### **RÉSUMÉ**

*Hicks aborde avec humour et simplicité les questions de la vérité et de la connaissance de la vérité. Il retient l'apport d'un large choix de philosophies, pour tenter d'élaborer une notion de la vérité plus riche et plus complexe que les idées réductrices habituelles. Le texte est écrit clairement, mais nous ne sommes pas convaincu que la notion de vérité développée par Hicks soit cohérente.*

#### **ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

*Um die Frage der Wahrheit und der Erkenntnisfähigkeit von Wahrheit geht es in dem humorvoll und unkompliziert geschriebenen Buch von Hicks. Er führt eine große Anzahl philosophischer Vorstellungen zusammen, um so die Wahrheitsfrage breiter und wesentlich umfassender beschreiben zu können als die übliche reduktionistische Wahrheitssuche. Der Text ist verständlich geschrieben, trotzdem ist der Rezensent nicht überzeugt, das das entfaltete Konzept für Wahrheit in sich schlüssig ist.*

This small volume promises to be a book about philosophy which uses no philosophical terms and presumes no prior knowledge of philosophy. It fulfills this aim admirably. The style is pacy and the book is full of humour and helpful illustrations. If only all philosophy teachers could communicate with such clarity!

The book is a broad ranging investigation into the realms of belief and truth. Must one be able to *prove* something before one can accept it rationally (and what does one mean by *prove* in this context?) Certainly not in any strong sense is the answer. Can one prove God's existence? Not in any watertight sense although theistic arguments do carry some weight as evidence. Most of the book is an attempt at a positive construction of a view on the issues of knowledge and truth. Hicks sees genuine insights in a range of philosophical positions on truth and aims to plunder the Egyptians to construct the beginnings of a richer and more complex view of truth than philosophers usually tolerate. He wishes to hold on to the insights of realism (of course the term and those that follow are not used) that

one cannot simply invent truth but must discover it. Yet pragmatists also have a point in thinking that truth must be livable. Rationalists overplay the place of reason but many post-modern philosophers over-react and devalue reason. It, along with experience, relationality, love, will and goodness are all thrown into the melting pot to provide a wholistic view of truth. Of course, so many threads are left hanging that philosophers will end up pulling their hair out in frustration but then this is not a book aimed at philosophers. I must confess to finding myself rather confused by Hicks at times. Perhaps I like neat boxes too much but a range of epistemological and ontological issues seemed blurred into one with the use of the magic word 'truth'. The word seemed to be used in different ways at different times and yet we were led to believe that a *single concept* was under discussion-just a very rich and complex one. It is all very well hurling insights from rationalism, empiricism, pragmatism, realism and a range of other 'isms' together but I remain to be convinced that such insights are genuinely compatible. To Hicks' credit he writes with great humility and openness to correction and this is something all readers can take with them.

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### **In Defence of Miracles:**

### **A Comprehensive Case for God's Actions in History**

**R. D. Geivett & G. R. Habermas, eds.**  
Leicester: Apollos, 1997, 330pp., £11.99,  
ISBN 0-85111-452-0

#### **RÉSUMÉ**

*Cet ouvrage réunit de manière très utile des essais formant un tout complet sur la défense des miracles. La première partie expose à grands traits la position opposée aux miracles. La deuxième défend la possibilité du miraculeux. La troisième présente la vision chrétienne du monde qui donne sens à l'idée de miracle, tandis que la quatrième partie présente des études de cas de miracles d'un point de vue chrétien. Les auteurs sont presque tous des philosophes évangéliques compétents et écrivent avec clarté et concision.*

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

*Der Text ist eine sehr brauchbare Sammlung von Aufsätzen, die sich zu einem konzentrierten Argument für die Möglichkeit des Wunderhaften verbinden. Abschnitt I nennt die Einwände gegen die Existenz von Wundern, Abschnitt II plädiert für die Möglichkeit von Wundern, Abschnitt III entwirft eine christliche Sicht, nach der das Rechnen mit Wundern Sinn macht. Teil IV beschreibt einige Beispiele von Wundern. Bei den Autoren handelt es sich durchweg um fachkundige evangelikale Geisteswissenschaftler. Sie schreiben jeweils konzentriert und verständlich.*

The editors' aim was to provide, as the title says, a comprehensive case in defence of the miraculous. Part I begins with a reprint of Hume's classic essay, 'of miracles' and a specially written neo-Humean argument against miracles by Antony Flew. The rest of the book is a defence of miracles (much of it a direct response to the opening essays).

Part II is composed of four essays arguing for the possibility of miracles. Richard Purtill defends the notion of a miracle as 'an event brought about by the power of God that is a temporary exception to the ordinary course of nature for the purpose of showing that God has acted in history' (p. 72). This is followed by what is, on the whole, a very good critique of Hume by Norman Geisler. Next comes Francis Beckwith's response to the claim that miracles fall outside the discipline of the historian (a claim I must confess to have always found rather peculiar). After a slightly disappointing start some telling points are made. Winfred Corduan argues that miracles are not impossible to recognise *in practice* (contra Flew) even though the task is problematic. Overall a good case is made for the possibility of the miraculous in section II.

Part III sets the theistic context against which miracles make sense. Ronald Nash explains how disagreements about the possibility of miracles really boil down to differences of world view. He explains the differences between theism and naturalism in this respect and then argues that naturalism is self-defeating. J.P. Moreland provides a provocative argument to the effect that there is nothing unscientific about positing gaps in the causal chain of explanation which God (or other minds) can be invoked as non-naturalistic explanations, to fill. Moreland's view depends on an anthropological dualism and a view of libertarian freedom neither of which he has space to defend here and both of which

are controversial (to say the least). David Beck reviews three standard arguments for God's existence and Stephen Davis defends the coherence of the claim that an 'immaterial timeless thing' (ie. God) can act. There is nothing in the notion of God acting miraculously that is unbelievable for modern people, he says. Douglas Geivett's essay on the evidential force of miracles is clearly written although it saw more power in natural theology than I do.

Part IV aims to provide Christian miracle case studies. Firstly David Clark presents an interesting response to Hume's argument that miracles cannot support the claims of any particular religion because the miracle claims of diverse religions cancel each other out (read the book to find out what he says). Robert Newman provides a standard argument for the miraculous nature of some OT predictive prophecy. This was theologically marred, in my view, only by the claim that the modern state of Israel fulfills Hosea 3:4–5. The logical coherence of the doctrine of the incarnation is very clearly defended by John Feinberg. He is heavily dependent on Thomas Morris (with good reason) but interestingly thinks that a compatibilist view of freedom would improve Morris' suggestions. Here he places apologetic value on determinism whilst Nash and Moreland lean heavily on indeterministic freedom as a key in the fight against naturalism. Thank goodness evangelical philosophers are not all clones! William Lane Craig presents an excellent defence of the historicity of the empty tomb tradition and Gary Habermas does an equally good job on the resurrection appearances.

There is little that is new in this volume but it is not intended to be ground breaking. Overall the book admirably fulfills its goal in exposing the naturalistic prejudice against the possibility of the miraculous and a thorough defence of special divine action provided. The authors are well chosen and write with brevity and clarity. I appreciated the well integrated nature of the text—each essay refers the reader to other relevant parts of the book when appropriate and repetition is minimised. I recommend this text for undergraduate level and beyond.

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