

Nicholas Wolterstorff. *Thomas Reid and the Story of Epistemology*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Pp. xiii + 265. Cloth, \$54.95.

Interest in Thomas Reid has undergone a resurgence over the past several decades. Nicolas Wolterstorff's book is the latest addition to the growing Reid literature, and it is a most welcome contribution. As Wolterstorff would be the first to admit, his treatment of Reid is "partial" in at least two ways. First, unlike Keith Lehrer, whose *Thomas Reid* (London and New York: Blackwell, 1989) was an attempt to provide an overview of all of the main facets of Reid's philosophy, Wolterstorff focuses on Reid's epistemology. (Reid's views on perception and the mind are treated as well, but largely in service of the elucidation of Reid's critique of "the Way of Ideas" and his own positive epistemological views.) Second, as Wolterstorff tells the reader in the *Preface*, his book is not intended to be a close account of what exactly Reid *said* on epistemic matters. (Nor, as Wolterstorff notes, is there much engagement with the scholarly literature on Reid.) Rather Wolterstorff judges the need of the day to be for "a guide to reading Reid, so that his genius may come to light" (xi). Hence, his book is meant to be "an *interpretation* of Reid's epistemology"; his "goal is to discover the line of thought that [Reid] was trying to clarify and articulate" (*ibid.*).

In chapter 1, Wolterstorff sets out what he regards as the questions underlying the bulk of Reid's work—questions concerning the source of our ability both to "get entities in mind" and to form not just thoughts but beliefs about them (4). Chapter 2 sets out "the Ideal Theorists'" proposed way of answering these questions (*viz.* in terms of there being some mental entities that are the immediate objects of thought); and chapters 3 and 4 relate Reid's attack on the Ideal Theory. Chapters 5 and 6 are devoted to clarifying Reid's subtle and at times rather confusing views on perception. In chapters 7–10—what is really the heart of the book—Wolterstorff turns to a direct consideration of Reid's epistemological views, focusing on Reid's treatment of testimony-based belief, his conception of common sense, and his defence of the first principles thereof against sceptical attack.

Judged, as it ought to be, in terms of how well the author has achieved his goal, as described above, Wolterstorff's book is a great success. It is a fine and accessible overview of the central themes in Reid's epistemology.

That said, and at the risk of appearing ungrateful, I should note that it is not always clear that Wolterstorff has gotten Reid exactly right. As Wolterstorff sees, Reid regards the Ideal Theory as a "hypothesis"—as bare, unremunerative conjecture. But I do not think that even "[p]art of Reid's argumentation for his position on hypotheses is theological" (38). Rather, Reid is simply adopting, and remorselessly applying, the first of Newton's *Regulae Philosophandi*: "We are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearance" (see Reid's *Essays on the Intellectual Powers*, Essay I, Chapter V).

Similarly, Wolterstorff's describing Reid as an "occasionalist" (41, 54ff.) is, I think, misleading at best. For Reid's view of perception is *not* that, when there occurs a material impression on one's organs of sense, God intervenes, (directly) causing one to have the relevant thought(s). Reid does, of course, deny that when I perceive an apple, it *causes* my perception. But he *must* deny this, given that he holds that *only agents* possess genuine causal efficacy. As Wolterstorff at one place says, it is Reid's view that "[w]e are so constituted that, upon having sensations of certain sorts, we form beliefs about the external objects causing these sensations" (243; "causing" here, for the reason just given, would be regarded by Reid as "loose and unphilosophical," of course). Thus, it is *our constitution*, not God, which is directly responsible for certain perceptions' (conceptions, beliefs) following certain sensations. (God, in turn, is seen by Reid as responsible for our constitution, of course; but surely *that* does not render Reid's view occasionalistic.)

Finally, while it is true that, in critiquing the Ideal Theorist, Reid tends to favor speaking of ideas as "*imagistic* representations" (134), it is a mistake to infer, as Wolterstorff seems at times to want to do (133–6), that the essential difference Reid saw between his "sensations" and the Ideal Theorists' "ideas" is the imagistic nature of the latter. The key

difference, rather, is that ideas are supposed to be the immediate objects of thought (perception, memory, etc.), whereas Reid's sensations are what, given our constitution, trigger certain thoughts in us (the immediate objects thereof being worldly things and their properties). In short, Reid's sensations may be causally mediating, but they are not perceptually or epistemically mediating. It was the latter feature of "ideas," in Reid's view, that made them so "unfriendly to other existences."

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Marialuisa Baldi and Guido Canziani. *Girolamo Cardano. Le opere, le fonti, la vita*. Milan: Francoangeli, 1999. Pp. 589. L. 68,000.

William J. Bouwsma. *The Waning of the Renaissance, 1550–1650*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. Pp. xi + 288. Cloth, \$29.95.

The two books under review represent very different approaches to Renaissance philosophy. The collection edited by Marialuisa Baldi and Guido Canziani brings together an international team of twenty-two scholars to scrutinize in close detail a single figure from among the constellation of inventive Italians whose intellectual energies fuelled the Renaissance. *The Waning of the Renaissance* is a single-viewpoint survey of a European-wide canvas that covers England and France as well as Italy. The subject of *Girolamo Cardano* is a forgotten philosopher normally only remembered, if at all, by oxymoronic recognition of his brilliance as a mathematician and fame as an astrologer. William J. Bouwsma's book is a broad overview of the mainstream Renaissance. The names that fill his pages are, in the main, the luminaries of Renaissance cultural history, among whom the few philosophers of note to be cited (principally Bacon and Montaigne) are put in their place by illustrious cardinals of Renaissance literature and history such as Tasso, Shakespeare, and Cardinal Bellarmine.

Girolamo Cardano (1501–76) belongs with Pietro Pomponazzi and Bernardino Telesio as an innovator who proposed a new philosophy of nature. Born and educated in Pavia, he taught at the universities of Pavia and Bologna, until his fame as a physician took him to Scotland and England. Here his most prominent patient was the boy king Edward VI of England. Legend has it that, realizing that his patient's health was failing, Cardano cast a horoscope for him which predicted long life. By this means he bought himself time enough to leave the country without being called to account for the king's subsequent death. After arrest in Rome between 1570 and 1571 on suspicion of heresy (for casting the horoscope of Christ) he obtained release by recanting, and the patronage of Pius V. Cardano epitomizes what we have come to regard as Renaissance man: a figure accomplished in many arts and master of them all. Physician he certainly was, and philosopher, too, but neither designation adequately captures the range of his activities. For Cardano was the polymathic author of over two hundred books on a vast range of subjects: medicine, mathematics, physics, metaphysics, religion, astrology, and music. He was also a shrewd practitioner of the art of self-promotion, cultivating his own image in his autobiographical *De vita propria* (1575/76) and through the many versions of his *De libris propriis* (discussed here by Ian Maclean). His intellectual formation is a complex intertwining of seemingly contradictory strands. Cardano sits at the cusp of modernity, steeped in the thought patterns to which the Renaissance was heir, but anticipating many of the developments in seventeenth-century thought. The direct beneficiary of the humanist recovery of classical learning, and the critical evaluation of ancient thought that humanism inspired, he was a trenchant critic of Aristotle and of Galen. Most famous for his *Ars magna* (1545), a treatise on algebra incorporating the solution of third-degree equations, he also undertook a systematization of astrology, his *De fato*. Although hostile to Copernicanism, he was held in esteem by such diverse moderns as Robert Boyle and Charles Blount. His *Opera omnia* was printed as late as 1663.