

GOD AND MORALITY. By Jeffrey, Anne. Edited by Nagasawa, Yujin. Cambridge Elements: Elements in the Philosophy of Religion. New York City, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. 1– 75. Paper, \$18.00.

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This book brings together philosophy of religion and metaethics by discussing views on whether (and how) God’s existence makes a difference to morality; a hidden gem for epistemologists comes to light in Chapter 3 where Jeffrey discusses views on whether (and how) we might possess knowledge of moral truths. While the book will serve generations to come as an excellent survey of views regarding God and morality, Jeffrey’s goal is not to rehearse these. Her significant contribution to the discussion comes in the form of a cumulative case against a standard method in philosophy. Many draw out elaborate theories about the relationship between theism and morality from unsubstantial (or “thin”) conceptions of God. Jeffrey argues that this approach, though undertaken by most traditional and contemporary views, requires a revision. Rather than holding a thin traditional conception, Jeffrey suggests, we learn more about the role theism plays in metaethics by maintaining a substantial (or “thick”) conception of God. Surveying the field, she offers insightful criticisms on overlooked premises underlying standard views on what theism does for metaethics (and epistemology) which she presents with masterful clarity. She succeeds in revealing that a shortcoming is held in common by many views due to employing thin traditional theisms as placeholders for more substantial theisms. Jeffrey does not ignore the classics but does focus on contemporary literature as she highlights ways in which crucial premises are ultimately unsupported due to thin conceptions of God. While suggesting that adopting thicker conceptions of God is a better method as it enables more fruitful discussions, she also pacifies the philosopher’s worry that their discussions will be incorrectly categorized as theology if they adopt elaborate theisms. This is an excellent introduction for an advanced undergraduate course or for graduate students but can also be an efficient tool for scholars looking to catch up with arguments.

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