REVIEWS

Silence and the Word, edited by Oliver Davies and Denys Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) xii + 227 pp.

Not least because of the influence of Herbert McCabe, to whom this volume is dedicated, negative theology has returned in certain theological circles in the British Isles. This revival, which now extends to the See of Canterbury, might be said to emphasize *both* the profoundly incomprehensible mystery of the Christian God *and* the attendant epistemological humility on the part of those who would speak about this God, a humility the divine mystery demands. At the same time as this renaissance of theological negativity (which may be epistemic negativity resulting from excess of presence, as the volume makes clear), the philosophical community has seen its own renaissance of negativity. It is at the matrix between negativities, one theological and driven by the vision of divine mystery in the fathers and medievals, and one philosophical and driven by a certain post-Hegelian angst to an unceasing process of negation and denial, that the volume might be best read, although this matrix does not exhaust the volume's contents.

In their preface, Turner and Davies make it clear that negative theology is not a sexy way to meet postmodern negativity on its own ground. "You have negativity? So do we!" Nor is it a rapturous area of experience reserved for a few mystics. Rather "negativity, or apophasis . . . belongs to mainstream Christianity and can be found in theological works not normally considered to be of a 'mystical' kind" (p. xi). In other words, "the concept of the apophatic illumines some of the deepest doctrinal structures of Christian faith and of Christian self-understanding in terms both of its historical and contemporary situatedness" (p. xi). Davies and Turner are looking not for postmodern serial denial, nor a religious experience beyond tradition, nor a "Christian atheism" but for an "apophasis [in] its matrix in Christian cultic belief and practice" (p. 2). Negative theology is just Christian theology, and if a Christian theology does not have an element of negativity it is doubtable if it is a Christian theology. Christian theology begins with a radical plenitude of the light and life of God, and therefore "speech . . . is burdened to the point of excess: as exhausted as it is full" (p. 3). Hence Turner and Davies want to return negative theology to the heart of the Christian orthodox tradition, setting theology's affirmations alongside its negations in one movement. That said, Davies and Turner would not be disappointed if a dialogue ensued between a Christian theological movement with its own kind of negativity internal to itself and postmodern adherents of "otherness, absence, and difference" (p. 4).

The volume begins with Denys Turner's excellent essay, "Apophaticism, Idolatry, and the Claims of Reason". Among the many aims of his essay, Turner explores the relationship between Christian theism and secular western atheism, suggesting that, if we look closely at the God in whom western secularist atheists do not believe, St.

Thomas Aquinas and Pseudo-Denys do not believe in him either! God is much more mysterious and interesting than the God in whom most atheists fail to believe. Turner also explores the way in which negative theology has a Christological core. Note this comment on Bonaventure's *Itenerarium*: "Christ is, in short, our access to the *un*knowability of God, not so as ultimately to know it, but so as to be brought into participation with the *Deus absconditus* precisely as *unknown*" (p. 23). Also most interesting is Turner's continuing effort to rehabilitate natural theology of a classical sort—a very interesting and, in this reviewer's mind, necessary project. Suffice it to say, everyone interested in questions of natural theology and St. Thomas's aims in the *Summa Theologiae* will want to read Turner's essay, one of the best in the book. Next, Paul Fiddes's "The Quest for a Place which is 'Not-a-Place': the Hiddenness of God and the Presence of God" follows a main theme of the collection in arguing for a hiddenness not of absence but of presence, the "hidden Ground" (p. 45) of the universe and the self. In Fiddes's view, we come to participate in the plenitude of mysterious presence that is the trinitarian relations in God. So we do not grasp God conceptually, so much as we live into the bliss that is God's life. Janet Martin Soskice rethinks the "God of the attributes—the God of omnipotence, eternity, wisdom, immutability and unity" in her essay "The Gift of the Name: Moses and the Burning Bush". This God has not been doing so well lately in modern theology, but Soskice makes the very interesting point that in a figure from the classical tradition, St. Augustine, the positing of the attributes does not precede, but follows, the narrative of divine action in history. In other words, "Augustine's God is 'omnipresent' because God is, simply, always present to Augustine" (p. 72), and so on. In other words, the classical attributes can be understood not as a philosophical hangover but as a theological elucidation of God's loving action in the economy of his love. Herbert McCabe's "Aquinas on the Trinity", besides including a hilarious meditation on why God sustains Mr. Pinochet in being, continues to mark some of the main themes of McCabe's long career of interpreting Aquinas. He emphasizes the deep mysteriousness of the Trinity and advocates an emphasis of the Trinity as a life of relationships more than a set of persons.

Bernard McGinn, one of only two American contributors to this very British collection, considers in "*Vere tu es Deus Absconditus*: the Hidden God in Luther and Some Mystics" the way in which Luther understood divine absence, hiddenness, and the dark night of the soul, and the way in which certain mystics, such as Marguerite Porette and Meister Eckhart, considered these phenomena. He suggests that in reading the grammars of "dereliction" we should not fail to note some crucial differences between the protestant reformer and the Catholic mystics. In perhaps the most challenging essay of the book, "The Deflections of Desire: Negative Theology in Trinitarian Disclosure", Rowan Williams suggests that, in seeking the locus of divine mystery in the godhead, we not always first consider the essence of God but the life of love of the hypostases. Through an intensive reading of the *Romanzas* of St. John of the Cross, Williams meditates on the way in which the "persons" of the Trinity desire the desire of one another, and not only what the other persons of the Trinity can "do" for one another. The Son loves the Father for "the Father's excess of love 'beyond' what is directed to the Son" (p. 119). Williams writes that "both the unity and the plurality of the divine life are something other than 'cases' of the sorts of unity and plurality with which we are familiar", and surely he is right. As he ponders this unity in plurality and plurality in unity by seeing "divine indivisibility [as] the interweaving of otherness, not a kind of atomism" (p. 134), I wonder if here Williams may have gone too far in dissolving the distinctions of the persons in emphasizing the circularity of the flow of divine self-giving. Readers should read this essay with especial attention, for at the least Williams demonstrates the profound difficulties we can face in discourse about the Trinity.

Mark McIntosh meditates on the way in which John Henry Newman thinks about faith and the mystery of God's life in "Trinity and Understanding in Newman". Akin to Paul Fiddes's essay, Newman, according to McIntosh, advocates a kind of knowing that derives from a certain participation in the life of God. Through the "personal formation of mind" that comes through living into the reality of God, the truth about God becomes not so much known as experienced, as we come to share in the Son's eternal dialogue with the Father. Graham Ward, in his difficult essay "Is the daylight forever?: language and silence", considers ways in which Derrida, while not the nihilist he is sometimes made out to be, needs to be theologically supplemented. The problem with Derrida, Ward suggests, is not that he is too postmodern, but that he is too modern, too determined by late medieval nominalism. By looking at the work of Michel de Certeau and Henri de Lubac, in light of Derrida but not restricted by him, Ward tries to chart a way of thinking how language works that is bound not by arid referentialism but released "in terms of creation and participation" (p. 177) and allegory. It is interesting that here Ward also begins to distance himself from some of the claims of other members of the "radical orthodoxy" movement.

David Ford grapples with the problem of the *Shoah* and theology in "Apophasis and the Shoah: where was Jesus Christ at Auschwitz?" After looking at the fiction of Anne Michaels and the theology of Bonhoeffer, he revisits the much-debated issue of how to avoid supersessionist theologies. In the last essay, "Soundings: Towards a Theological Poetics of Silence", Oliver Davies deconstructs the notion that there is one stable entity known as silence. Silence is rather a richly variegated term, and Davies spends much of his essay pondering different valences of silence in Russian and biblical Hebrew. Through engagements with Derrida, Dostoevsky, and Paul Celan, Davies comes to the conclusion that "silence as apophasis, not beyond but precisely within the liturgical and credal affirmations of Christian faith, is better able to engage in dialogue with the multiple silences of the world" (p. 222).

Almost every essay in this fine collection is worth reading, and some are worth intense study. Kudos to Davies and Turner for compiling a collection that shows that living into God means not dogmatic triumphalism but patient humility before the plenitude of a mystery of love that is always before us and behind us, holding us but never allowing us to kill her by holding too tightly to her with our merely human concepts.

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Augustine and Modernity by Michael Hanby (London and New York: Routledge, 2003) xii + 292 pp.

I am happy to have had the opportunity to review this good book, for I have learned a lot from it. Hanby's study is an ellipse centered on two foci, Augustine and Descartes. Its success is due to the brilliance of the contrast it draws between these two figures. The contrast is supported with a subversive genealogy. Hanby argues the reverse of a dominant narrative that finds in Descartes the fruition of an interiorized and dualist conception of the self originally sported by Augustine. Whether Hanby's genealogy is defensible is almost beside the point. The contrast between the two foci of the book is so forcefully drawn that both are genuinely illuminated in the

process. The reader is persuaded that if there is any Augustinian patrimony in Descartes, it is there as an inversion or perversion of an original good, a *privatio boni* essentially destructive of the Augustinian enterprise.

Although the book reads forwards from Augustine, conceptually the contrast and the genealogy supporting it are read backwards from Descartes. Descartes is frank enough in his admiration of the Stoics to provide Hanby with the formal germ of his contrast. He develops this germ to demonstrate structural similarities between Descartes and the Stoics. Descartes argues for a unitary view of the soul centered on the faculty of free choice of the will, equivalent to the Stoic *hegemonikon*. Divorced from all desire and love, it rather decides among various desires and loves presented for its judgment. There can be no question of a will that is itself divided among different, competing loves. In Descartes, the faculty of free choice is the essential self, an *autarchy* constitutively independent of any influence not identical with itself and so in a tensional, potentially competitive relationship with any cause that might seek to influence it, God included, who is reduced to just another claim on our willing and judgment. God's claim is structurally on a par with all other such claims. Ultimately God is an irrelevance to the only absolute left in this philosophy, the freedom of choice of the *cogito*'s "I."

Augustine's theory of grace and concomitant doctrinal commitments provide an alternative view of God and self, one which had triumphed long ago over another Christianized form of Stoicism. Pelagianism also split willing from loving and submitted all loves for judgment to a free will construed as absolute and independent of any love. Here, too, God is an external influence whose grace must be construed as a cause structurally equivalent to any other cause within the realm of created causality. Seemingly a defense of the goodness of the Creator who endowed us with free will, Pelagianism turns out to be a wholesale denial of the doctrine of creation insofar as this doctrine should posit the Creator as radically transcendent of the world of created causality and our being as always wholly dependent on God's. For Augustine, the will is not a faculty of choice independent of love and delight, but the locus of our participation in a love and delight which is a gift, namely, participation in the divine life of the Trinity, in the Father's delight in the Son He eternally begets. This participation is mediated to us through our ecclesial union with the God-Man. Building on insights from Jim Wetzel, Hanby notes that we become selves not insofar as we declare our independence from God, but insofar as we are caught up into a love and delight which is not ours to produce but can only be received "doxologically", that is, in gratitude and praise. Such a life of love and delight is freedom, not the abstract independence of a faculty of choice apart from all love and delight. Augustine's struggle against Pelagianism is essentially another form of his struggle against stoicism.

The story of the next eleven centuries is one, essentially, of the handing down of a Christianity debased in varying degrees by a stoicizing "contagion" (p. 127). Cassian is the primary carrier of stoicized Christianity in the West. His concept of *discretio* as the highest virtue represents the old stoic *hegemonikon* judging among *phantasiae* presented by various loves, passions, by evil spirits, or potentially by God, and if in Cassian and his spiritual heirs such as Gregory the Great and the Benedictines, the poison of stoicism is not fatal, it is not because it is not a fatal dose, but rather because the communal practice of asceticism within a larger ecclesial allegiance prohibits in practice the *autarkeia* of individual *discretio* from doing its worst damage. Other "Semi-pelagianisms"—as well as the so-called Augustinian reactions against them—represent so many forms of stoicized Augustinianism, that is, versions of Augustine's doctrine of grace that operate on terms that only make sense given Pelagian presuppositions: What is the relation between what the will is capable of on its own and the influence of grace upon it? Such questions assume already that

grace is something competitive with other causes in the temporal world and the will a faculty constituted precisely by its ability to choose among them. From Hanby's point of view, Augustine won the battle but lost the war. Among other carriers of this debased and stoicized Augustinianism, Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* (again, in themselves saved by the ecclesial context in which they are practiced) provided the Jesuit-schooled Descartes with all the structural features of the internal landscape he needed for the *cogito* to come unloosed from any foundation in faith whatsoever.

As Hanby notes humorously of one of the secondary sources with which he is in dialogue, there is "something in this characterization for everyone to hate" (p. 243, n. 130): all the modern day heirs of "carriers" of latent stoicism (Jesuits, Benedictines, etc.), not to mention historians of Augustine who will complain that the method is not careful enough with dates and relies too much on English translations, and the many secondary writers whom Hanby locates on a continuum between benignly mistaken to utterly deficient. But there is much here to love, as well, and nothing more so than the attempt to show how a de-Trinitized God, laundered of messy internal relations and divorced from the economy of the Incarnation, may be, with Descartes, infinite and philosophically respectable, but can never be "perfect". The Trinitarian God is not simply an infinite power, an infinite capacity for choice apart from any finality in the good and the beautiful, but rather a God fixed in a life of love and delight and desiring to share that life with other selves, created precisely for that sharing. Hanby shows what you lose when you separate philosophy from theology by construing a God who is pre-Trinitarian but not pre-creational. You lose the essential idea of creation itself, and so develop a deficient, rationalist notion of God that actually precludes a return to the God of orthodox tradition. Hanby's contrast serves to illuminate the beauty of Augustine's Trinitarian theology, the gifts of Trinitarian belief, and I am one reader who can see from his account that I have not taken these gifts seriously enough.

That being said, one might be permitted a few worries, and first among all would be that hidden within Hanby's denunciation of John Cassian is an implicit and undifferentiated denunciation of Eastern Christianity, which has been, after all, caricatured as "Pelagian" ever since the Council of Diospolis. Hanby's use of the word "latent" (e.g. p. 141) to characterize the stoic elements carried in various theologies, and especially his location of these as originating in "those Christians who draw upon a stoicism unchastened by Augustine's criticisms of pagan virtue" (p. 100; cf. 120), leans towards theologies Eastern in provenance, including Origen (as a source for Cassian, p. 108). Are we to think that these theologies are intrinsically deficient and saved, like Cassian, only accidentally by communal practices? That there are in none of them any internal and intrinsic corrective mechanisms, non-Augustinian but equally effective at avoiding what the West called "Pelagianism"? If not, it would seem as though the Eastern Christian world should have developed a Descartes even more readily than the Western. The only difference would be—Augustine. But that is precisely the position Hanby is trying to counter. Undercutting Eastern theologies as "unchastened" by Augustine ultimately undercuts Hanby's own major argument.

Also, the reader finds this book unnervingly difficult to read. Partly this is because the author so frequently states positions but defers explanation until a subsequent section. Partly it is because of sentences which routinely tumble over themselves like snowballs that concatenate unclarity as they go: "For this phrase [*pulchritudo doctrinae*] indicates the trajectory along which *De Trinitate* is tending: to the conclusion that self-knowledge, self-recollection, and self-love finally occur in the beauty of Christ's dual status as *exemplum* and *sacramentum*, which is to say, in the convertible love and delight of the Trinitarian *personae*" (p. 146, with so many other possible examples). Such sentences make it impossible to judge precisely what Hanby is saying. It is truly a brilliance, but a blurred brilliance, which inhabits this book.

Finally, Hanby's treatment of those he disagrees with leaves something to be desired. The take-no-prisoners approach seems more and more popular these days, but in this book it often merges into contempt that steps beyond mere criticism. Hanby issues wholesale criticism of Catherine LaCugna's portrayal of Augustine, for example, and perhaps this is deserved, but then not also to offer the reader an acknowledgment of the ways in which LaCugna's project has some major resonances with Hanby's own—as in her insistent emphasis on the recovery of a theology which is doxological—seems ungracious. Another scholar whose flaws are unremittingly documented in note after note "demonstrates quite a remarkable failure to come to grips with the depths of Augustine's understanding of gift" (p. 231, n. 11). Since she shares this with so many other major thinkers of the Western world, it is perhaps not quite fair to single out her failure as so "remarkable". My criticism is not simply the criticism of a sour tone extrinsically related to Hanby's project. Rather, if he hopes to develop, from the *De Trinitate*, a "new Augustinian theology" (p. 5), the project will eventually become incoherent with itself if it cannot also reproduce the tone of that great work, where Augustine invites his readers and potential critics to set out with him on the "Street of Charity". At his best, however, Hanby is capable of stunningly beautiful evocations of Augustine's theology. I am sure we can expect that in his next book he will have the confidence to permit such beauty to overtake fully the tone of his work.

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Levinas, Judaism and the Feminine: the silent footsteps of Rebecca by Claire Elise Katz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004) xvi + 199 pp.

Ever since the 1960s, Jewish feminists have distanced themselves from the work of philosophy on the erroneous assumption that philosophy is essentially an effort by men to establish male categories and beliefs as universally normative. Recently however, Jewish feminists have begun to consider the mutual impact of feminism and philosophy. Claire Katz's *Levinas, Judaism and the Feminine* contributes to this important step in Jewish thought.
Katz contends that the category of the feminine plays an indispensable, albeit neglected role in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. She develops this central observation of the role of the feminine in Levinas's work into a larger argument. First, for Levinas, Judaism is a source of the ethical concern for the other that offers a crucial corrective to the Greek philosophical emphasis on the self-preservation of the knowing subject. Second, Katz argues, one cannot understand Levinas's notion of the saying or alterity without also attending to Levinas's portrait of the feminine. Finally, Levinas not only derives his notion of the feminine or alterity from his Judaism but this notion largely defines Levinas's view of Judaism. Consequently, according to Katz, Levinas enlists Judaism's category of the feminine as the indispensable source of the category of alterity in order to describe an ethics that corrects the Greek forgetfulness of the Other for the sake of the universal. "Levinas's critique of Western philosophy is implicitly a critique of the Western construction of masculinity as virility and he is using a Jewish conception of the feminine as the image

of its interruption" (p. 5). A careful reading of Levinas's work shows that only a recovery of the feminine in Judaism can provide a repair of the Greek sponsored world of being.

According to Katz, Levinas's focus on the feminine issuing from the sources of Judaism is necessary to repair—not replace—the Greek philosophical tradition. Neither is she nor Levinas trying to sponsor a Judaism denuded of "virility"—what she identifies with the categories of the universal i.e., reason, justice and the political. Levinas "observes that the Bible recognizes this need for justice" (p. 9). Later she acknowledges that "not only does Judaism work to balance the particular and the universal, but the motivation for the Greek to express the universal, to express justice, comes from the bible itself "(p. 21). Judaism, from this perspective, offers a corrective to the Greek thought not simply because it provides a recognition of alterity but also because it balances the concern for the other with the mediations necessary for justice and the political.

The first set of chapters (1 and 2) links Levinas's philosophical work to Katz's portrait of Judaism and lays the foundation for the role of the feminine. After establishing the main elements of the argument above, chapter 2, "The Time of Creation", identifies the themes of individuation and separation in the account of solitude in *Time and the Other* and in Rashi and Heschel's reading of the Genesis account of creation. Katz argues that Levinas's view of solitude or individuation differs from Heidegger's portrait of the self whose authentic existence is fulfilled in the 'mineness' of death. For Levinas, solitude equals the presence of the ego in all its materiality and, while death's ungraspability suggests the reality of that which is other than solitude's materiality, alterity greets solitude only through an Other who can enter into the present time of the ego. This can be accomplished only in the face of an Other person and, therefore, the self only has a future or 'life' through an Other. Katz's review of *Time and Other* resonates with Rashi's and Heschel's reading of Genesis as a picture of reality wherein individuation does not mean self-subsistence but rather a particularity or identity only in relation to something else.

The second set of chapters (3–6) describes the role of the feminine or eros as the condition of the possibility of the ethical in Levinas's work and demonstrates how this notion of the feminine connects to Levinas's reading of the Jewish sources. Katz argues that for Levinas, the feminine is the other and as such gains a separate and positive identity not reducible to an impoverished version of masculine normativity. Chapter 3, "The Inauguration of Sexual Difference" interprets Genesis 1:28 as an account of how humanity is generated simultaneously with the creation of "male and female" and argues that this reading mirrors Levinas's account of the I's emergence as subjectivity through its originary experience of alterity through the feminine in eros in *Time and the Other*. For the Levinasian ego, the feminine is the other who "is other simply because she is not me" (p. 39). The encounter with the feminine in eros differs from the ego's experience of materiality and enjoyment, since this object of enjoyment "always slips away" (p. 48) and cannot be possessed. By itself eros is enjoyment and in it the I seeks to return to itself. As the originary experience of alterity, the feminine opens subjectivity to the future with an Other—but an other who is not the feminine but rather, the son. The feminine is the condition of the possibility of the ethical relation or what Katz calls the means by which the "I" can encounter the face-to-face. Children are the lifeline of subjectivity not because they guarantee a continuation of the identity of the father but because they permit the I to enter into a relationship with a future beyond its own solitude. Chapter 4 turns to a reading of *Totality and Infinity* and continues to develop the model of the feminine as the condition of the possibility of an ethical relationship in which she does not partake, now in her role as the one who welcomes the man "in the dwelling and [in providing]

access to fecundity via the erotic relationship"(p. 55). Moreover, Katz argues that Levinas's conception of the feminine and the dwelling derive from his reading of the "real" woman of the Hebrew bible.

The final group of chapters (chapters 6–10) further develops her argument for the indispensable role of the feminine in Levinas's view of the ethical relation and that Levinas derives his understanding of the feminine from the sources of Judaism now re-described as maternity. Katz offers a reading of the Book of Ruth to mark the transition in Levinas's thought. While Katz contends that one can see Ruth as an example of Levinas's earlier description of the feminine as hospitality, Ruth's behavior suggests that her hospitality exceeds itself and morphs into the ethical. In *Otherwise than Being* Levinas transforms his notion of the feminine from the condition of the possibility of ethics through eros to its role as the ethical in maternity. Katz says, "the mother's responsibility begins before she even knows of the fetus growing inside her" (p. 142).

According to Katz, the role of the feminine as maternity not only provides an example of the ethical relation in its exemplary form but it also provides a principle of critique for what she identifies as virility or the refusal to attend to the Other. In chapters 7 and 8, Katz discusses and deepens Levinas's reading of the Cain and Abel and Akedah stories. From this perspective, Cain's disregard for his brother and Abraham's initial willingness to sacrifice his son can be read (in view of this hermeneutics of maternity) as failures to perform according to a standard of maternal concern for the Other. Katz's discussion of the category of maternity culminates in her reading of the way Sarah embodies the ethics of maternity through her willingness to die for Isaac and her death upon her fear that her son had died. As the embodiment of a maternity born of the joy of erotic play, Sarah "inaugurates a matrilineage" (p. 149) that continues through subsequent biblical exemplars of the ethics of the Other.

Katz's recognition of the feminine within Judaism as a source of repair for what is commonly perceived as the Greek focus on the universal over the individual deserves much applause. Nonetheless, Katz's identification of Judaism with ethics and the feminine in Levinas's work prohibits her from demonstrating how only a Judaism that balances between ethics and justice or the political can fully aid in the repair of the Western philosophical tradition.

Katz's work offers a number of valuable conceptual contributions to contemporary Jewish thought. First, Katz's identification of the feminine as the condition of the possibility of the ethical through eros and fecundity in Levinas helps readers of the Hebrew Scriptures appreciate how the feminine contributes to distinguishing Jewish patrilineal descent as elect and ethically driven from that of other nations impelled by self-preservation and the repetition of national or tribal identity. Second, while Katz does not establish the link herself, the model of parent-child relationship and/or fecundity expands the pool of ethical norms that Jews live by or what Maimonides labeled attributes of action (an attribute of God that we derive from an effect of God's action and provides a guideline for *imitatio dei*).

Readers may notice some outstanding philosophical issues in Katz's account. Her review of the ethical significance of fecundity and maternity does not explain how, if fecundity and maternity arise out of eros's desire to sustain itself, one's relationship to one's child does not simply continue the drive to return to the self. Katz attempts to support this view by a very narrow and limited reading of Rosenzweig's phenomenology of (theological) eros in the *Star of Redemption*. She assumes that the parent-child relationship is an ethical one that easily contributes to community and fraternity (p. 83). Nonetheless, one need only look at the tragedy of Antigone to be reminded of the conflict between family and community relationships. While at times Katz attempts to reverse the above analysis of fecundity's relationship to eros by

claiming that fecundity operates as an interruption of eros (p. 53), her discussion vacillates between these two analyses and consequently does not provide a secure phenomenology for the ethical meaning of the parent-child relationship. Katz's reading of Sarah offers an example of the problem at hand. While according to Katz, Sarah's love for Isaac defies Derrida's characterization of the impossibility of authentic sacrifice, Sarah's love for Isaac is at the expense of the welfare of Hagar and Ishmael and thereby demonstrates the very gap between an ethics of fecundity and one's ability to care for the wider community.

More significantly, Katz could do more justice to her own claim that it is only when Judaism balances its concern for the other and the justice necessary for all that it provides an authentic source of repair for the West's neglect of the individual. Katz too quickly adopts what she interprets as Levinas's identification of Judaism, ethics and the feminine. Levinas, Katz says, "equates religion with ethics. . . . And for Levinas, religion means Judaism. Thus for Levinas, Judaism is not a religion that just happens to be concerned with morality: it is a religion whose practice is synonymous with the ethical" (p. 80). As a result, Katz's analysis of Judaism, the feminine and ethics is divorced from an analysis of how these categories relate to the question of rights, law and the political. This neglect has a number of consequences.

Katz's willingness to accept Levinas's identification of Judaism, the feminine and the ethical can have negative consequences for feminism. By identifying the feminine, on the one hand, with the originary alterity in eros that remains outside of the ethical relation and then with maternity as the ethical par excellence, Katz neglects to describe how the feminine may have rightful needs of its own. It is noteworthy that feminism in general has long been an effort by women to overcome injustices against women by securing new rights. While Katz attempts to argue that Levinas's view of the feminine does not deny women a life of erotic love and or playfulness, she fails to identify how Levinas's view of the feminine permits women to identify instances of injustice against themselves through a language of rights and legal mediation.

Katz's identification of Judaism, the feminine and ethics also results in an uncritical and utopian privileging of the feminine. Should we not only appreciate Sarah's undying love for Isaac as an example of self-sacrifice for another but also recognize the limitations of this undying love for those whom Sarah cannot attend to in the same way—i.e., Hagar and Ishmael? Do they not have a "right" to voice their neglect as the casualties of Sarah's maternal concern? Additionally, while Katz recognizes that persons can choose to neglect the natural maternal/parental obligation, she does not account for how one becomes actively attuned to the ethical and/or how one returns to the ethical after having departed from it. Katz's analysis of the ethical waxes utopian in its failure to account for the ways societies deal with deviations from this standard.

Judaism is more than ethics and as such has resources for establishing rights for women and mediating between the concern for the other and the rights of those in the wider community. As a theological, legal and ethical tradition Judaism navigates between its community's responsibilities and rights. And as feminists like Rachel Adler have taught us, Judaism negotiates between rights and responsibilities through the careful inter-relationship between study, narrative and law. Jewish hermeneutics cannot be reduced to a quest for the ethical or the feminine but must also be understood as the exchange between self-interest, concern for the other and the needs of the wider community. Finally, as a liturgical tradition, Judaism offers means by which Jews may re-position themselves ethically after having deviated from covenantal obligations. Katz too quickly renders Judaism half the tradition that it is and thereby offers an account of Judaism's relationship to philosophy and politics that is incomplete. To the extent that Katz's reading of Levinas's Judaism is a fair representation, she ought to be more willing to critique Levinas's identification of Judaism, ethics

and the feminine in the name of her very valuable effort to see Judaism's contribution to the repair of Western universalism.

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Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation, by Richard J. Bernstein (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002) xi + 289 pp.

Richard Bernstein's book on "Radical Evil" is continental philosophy at its best and at the same time an exploration of its limits. It is a philosophical interrogation of evil overshadowed by the reality of the Holocaust. The central thesis of this book is: "the ultimate ground for the choice between good and evil is inscrutable" (p. 235). But it would be unjust to the complexity of this book simply to summarise it by this thesis. In fact, the thesis of the inscrutability of the choice between good and evil is derived from an examination of Kant's discussion of radical evil in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Kant, who coins the expression "radical evil", is the point of departure for Bernstein's philosophical interrogation and an examination of totalitarianism by Hannah Arendt completes it. But, as Bernstein admits, it was Arendt's "thoughts about Kant and radical evil" that led him back to Kant "and to follow the vicissitudes of the encounters with the multifaceted aspects of evil in subsequent thinkers" (p. 205). This presence of Arendt's struggle with evil, in her study on totalitarianism and the banality of evil, is important to understand the intention and direction of the philosophical interrogation in Bernstein's book. Bernstein refers frequently (pp. 1, 11, 163) to Arendt's famous reaction to the Holocaust (expressed in an interview 1964) in which she spoke of the moment when she first realised that the Holocaust had happened: "It was as if an abyss had opened. . . . This ought not to have happened . . . we cannot reconcile ourselves. None of us ever can". It is with this background of the impossible evil of the Holocaust that the 'thesis' of the inscrutability of the choice between good and evil has to be read. The thesis of inscrutability is at the same time a moral and political intention: that we do not "explain away or justify" (p. 184) the reality of evil.

As in some of his earlier books, like *Praxis and Action* (1971) and *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (1983), Bernstein approaches a philosophical question by discussing a series of thinkers. The aim of these individual encounters is "to learn" (p. 225) from these thinkers how to give an appropriate answer. Therefore *Radical Evil* consists of eight hermeneutical inquiries into the philosophies of Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Nietzsche, Freud, Levinas, Jonas and Arendt. Bernstein then concludes his individual examinations with ten theses on the problem of evil (pp. 225–235). Kant, Hegel and Schelling form the first of three parts. Kant, in whose philosophy Bernstein anchors his own 'thesis' of the inscrutability of the choice between good and evil, is challenged by Hegel. Bernstein absolutely rejects Hegel's view on evil, which he sees best expressed in Hegel's dictum: "the wounds of the Spirit heal, and leave no scars behind" (p. 46). After Auschwitz, so Bernstein writes, such Hegelian idealism is impossible. "There are wounds that leave permanent scars. There are evils that cannot be sublated" (p. 75). Nevertheless, Bernstein does not criticise Hegel for explaining away evil (p. 68), he only rejects the idea of an absolute sublation (*Aufhebung*) of evil. With respect to the understanding of moral evil, both Kant and

Hegel subscribe to the same position: that it is "the willful assertion of individual egoism" (p. 70). Furthermore, both thinkers remain within the classical question of theodicy; that is, how God can be justified despite evil. It is exactly the question of theodicy that Bernstein sees transcended by the reality of the Holocaust and therefore the thinking through of evil after Auschwitz. The impossibility of theodicy introduces one of the digressions in this book. God seems to be a spectre that haunts Bernstein's philosophical interrogation of evil. And in this sense, the book can also be seen as the struggle concerning how philosophy can continue to avoid speaking about theology. The last thinker of this first part is Schelling. Schelling is introduced as threshold figure that clears the space for Nietzsche and Freud. Thus Bernstein writes about how Schelling transforms our understanding of the problem of evil: "From a backward-looking perspective, he brings a certain tradition of theodicy to a close. This is the tradition that is primarily concerned with 'justifying' evil and showing how the existence of evil can be reconciled with a religious faith in the existence of God. But from a forward-looking perspective, Schelling breaks with this tradition, and clears the way for new types of psychological questions concerning evil—questions that are central for Nietzsche and Freud" (p. 80).

The second part of the book is concerned with the moral psychology of evil and it contains a brilliant discussion of Nietzsche's phrase: "beyond good and evil" as well as an exposition of the meaning of "*ressentiment*". Bernstein disappoints those who expect that Nietzsche should be labelled an anti-Semite and nihilist. Contrary to these prejudices, Bernstein demonstrates convincingly that Nietzsche's critique of morality in *On the Genealogy of Morals* does not advocate nihilism in the sense of a relativistic fatalism. Nietzsche, according to Bernstein, seeks to overcome morality, but at the same time admits that even the 'slave morality' of the judeo-christian tradition bears a will. Taking Nietzsche's aphorism, that "man would rather will nothingness than not will" (p. 121), Bernstein argues: Note, however, that Nietzsche immediately adds, "but it is and remains a will. . . . This is the most consequential 'but' in the entire *Genealogy*, because without such a will, we would have already succumbed to 'suicidal nihilism'" (p. 127). By suicidal nihilism Nietzsche means an indifference to the suffering of human beings. It is meaningless suffering that Bernstein points out is the real nihilism that Nietzsche fights. Compared to the excellent discussion of Nietzsche, the following section on Freud is less mesmerising. Bernstein just emphasises that we have to learn from Freud that every civilisation can regress to the state of barbarism (p. 160). In the section on Freud one might have expected that Bernstein would draw attention to the problem of how evil is linked to the phenomenon of group-behaviour and the mass. But, in general, Bernstein focuses the problem of evil at the level of subjective agency rather than taking also into account its structural and collective dimensions.

The last part of the book is divided from the previous parts by the abyss of the Holocaust. In this part Bernstein takes up the problem of theodicy again by investigating Levinas and the problem of asymmetrical and nonreciprocal relationships. Levinas' ethical response to evil introduces the concept of responsibility, which is another line of thinking that Bernstein develops. The concept of responsibility then is the main topic of the inquiry into the philosophy of Hans Jonas. The two sections on Levinas and Jonas are much shorter than the previous ones and Bernstein leaves us with a number of questions about the understanding of the other (*l'autrui*) when the other (*l'autrui*) is my murderer and the problem of the relation between aesthetics and violence. Furthermore, Bernstein is fully aware of Levinas' distinction between *l'autre*/*l'autrui* (p. 261, note 2). Although Bernstein unfolds the theological idea that God depends on human beings in the legacy of Levinas, he avoids discussing why God becomes important again for philosophy after Auschwitz. It is an idea that he already traced in Schelling. It was in the context of Schelling's meta-

physics of evil (Heidegger), where Bernstein explains the concept of God. In particular, that in God there must be something which God himself "is" not (p. 78). In the concluding section on Arendt, with whom Bernstein was in personal contact while she taught at the New School of Social Research in New York until her death, once more Bernstein demonstrates his outstanding power to fascinate the reader. The core of this section is the change in Arendt's understanding of evil. Arendt, who refers to Kant's expression of radical evil to characterise totalitarianism, seems later to correct herself. In a discussion with Karl Jaspers, who warns about any mythological or aesthetic attempt to characterise evil, Arendt has to admit that the notion of radical evil opens itself up to such treatments. By taking up the advice from Jaspers to speak of the triviality and banality of evil, she gives the problem of understanding evil a new direction (p. 215).

But does this mean that Bernstein has to give up his main thesis of the inscrutability of the choice between good and evil? Is this to admit that if there is no radical evil, because evil is trivial and banal and therefore explainable, then a sufficient explanation of the phenomenon evil must be possible? Bernstein's answer is that radical evil "is compatible with the banality of evil" (p. 231). It is one of the great insights of this book that, on the one hand, the banality of evil pushes us to the limits of the concept of radical evil, but on the other, the phenomenon of evil also pushes us to the limits philosophy—not only to the limits of philosophy from the continent.

Should theologians read Bernstein's book? Yes, of course. Not only because Bernstein is, together with Charles Taylor, a philosopher who writes in very clear manner about the most difficult philosophical issues. Theologians ought to read Bernstein also because he provides one of the best antidotes for all pseudo-religious mystifications of evil.

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Genealogy of Nihilism: Philosophies of Nothing and the Difference of Theology by Conor Cunningham (London: Routledge, 2002) xviii + 303 pp.

Following the instincts of Hamann and Jacobi, this book by Conor Cunningham, in the Radical Orthodoxy series, argues that theology's dialogue with modern and post-modern philosophy is essentially a dialogue with nihilism—understood not so much as a term of moral provenance as a specific logic that can be traced through various manifestations, culminating in the postmodern philosophies of today. As such, the book does not pretend to offer a comprehensive history—though one will find here many a good précis of various philosophical positions. Instead, it is heuristically guided by the attempt, firstly, "to isolate certain crucial historical moments in the history of nihilism, moments which at times reveal clearly an intermittent development of prior influences", and, secondly, "to isolate in all these moments a certain peculiar logic at work" (p. xii).

Although the book proceeds along phenomenological lines, taking the form of a history, Cunningham suggests (in somewhat Hegelian fashion) that one might equally begin with logic; in this case, with an *aporia* that arises within thought as soon as it becomes self-aware: when thought demands an account of itself and in so doing

seeks to posit a ground for itself. The *aporia* arises because the ground that thought posits can be either "another thought or something other than thought" (p. xii). If thought takes the first option, however, it would succumb to an infinite regress; for thought would have accounted for itself only by positing additional thoughts. But if thought takes the second option, it "would rest upon its own absence", indeed, upon "thoughtlessness", which would return thought precisely to the unreflective state it initially sought to escape. The first logic (which answers the question of thought simply with another thought, and so with another something) Cunningham identifies as *ontotheology*. The second logic (which answers the question of thought with something other than thought, and so with something other than something) he terms *meontotheology*, since what "is" is here grounded in what "is not". One is thus presented with two competing logics—the logic of an ultimate something and the logic of an ultimate nothing—that have determined the history of philosophy hitherto.

Since Heidegger, certainly, the first logic and its "fateful" consequences have been the subject of greater attention. But here the tables are turned; here the genealogy of Heidegger's own thought is unveiled. For, together with more recent French variants, it is but a postmodern manifestation of the second logic, which has its roots in antiquity and more or less defines the history of philosophy from Spinoza onwards. Thus, "Lacan and Deleuze ground sense in non-sense; Derrida grounds the Text in the Nothing, which is said to reside outside it; Heidegger grounds Being in *das Nicht*; Hegel, finitude in the infinite; Fichte, I in Non-I; Schopenhauer, representation in will; Kant, phenomenal in the noumenal; Spinoza, Nature in God, and God in Nature" (p. xii). But if this philosophical tradition exhibits the "realised *logic* of nihilism", the ontotheological tradition, it is argued, "leads to nihilism" (p. xiii); and it is in support of this double thesis that the genealogical part of the book, part I, "Philosophies of Nothing", bears its particular relevance.

After Nietzsche, it almost goes without saying that a philosophical genealogy is never a neutral undertaking but serves a certain deconstructive purpose. To this end, Cunningham seeks to show that the philosophies of nihilism are never pure—as if, e.g., Heidegger's *Nichts* were the pure other of something. For, strangely, nothing always seems to function *as* something, *viz.*, as providing something "out of nowhere"; and it is this "provision", which Cunningham identifies as the peculiar "provenance" of nihilism, that reveals the logic of nihilism to be fundamentally a "logic of alternating absence" (pp. xiv–xvii). In other words, the something that the nothing provides, far from being substantially different from nothing, is precisely the appearance *of nothing*, so that its "being" is ultimately as dubious and fatuous as that of its meontological origin; and it is in view of this *univocal* ontology, this lack of any ultimate ontological difference (in spite of Heidegger's claims to the contrary), that Cunningham offers in part II an alternative "theological logic", more precisely, a "theo-ontology"—which is "ungovernable by the logic of alternating absence, and irrefutable by it" (p. xvii), because it is governed instead by the theological logic of *analogy*.

Part I begins with Plotinus, for here the One is said to be beyond or "otherwise than" being and thus, in some sense, interchangeable with nothing. No doubt, the same could be said of Plato, inasmuch as the Good is expressly *epekeina tes ousias*. But, according to Cunningham (following Gadamer), "'Plato's one is not at all a Neoplatonic *hen* (One)'", because the One of Plotinus is not only beyond being, but *also* beyond thought; whereas the one of Plato (the Good) remains "the unifying one of the many, which grounds the Logos" (p. xv). And on this account Plato may be exculpated from the history of nihilism. But there is a further difficulty in Plotinus that makes him the logical starting point for this history. For that which emanates from the One is but the mirror of its own nothingness. Initially, this would not seem

to be the case, given that the One precisely needs being, needs the many, needs difference, in order—by a productive distancing from them—to be the One, which is beyond them. Yet given the strict demand of simplicity, i.e., the impossibility that anything that emanates from the One infringe upon its sovereign unicity, being cannot *be otherwise* after all; for it cannot be anything ultimately other than the non-being of the One, which alone *really* is (pp. 4–5). And so the production of being remains a production immanent to the One, which it never really leaves and to which it "is always already returning" (p. 5). Indeed, each is but a nothing that underwrites the nothingness of the other, so that one is left with "a god and a world in the foundational absence of both (dreams of which Spinoza is made)" (pp. 8–9). Such is the logic that continues to inform the subsequent history of nihilism, a history which construes being not on analogy to Being (which celebrates real difference), but according to an ultimate univocity of non-being (which speaks of difference but finally disallows it).

The chief culprit in the history of nihilism is thus an alleged univocity, whether of being or non-being; and following John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, it is this culprit that Cunningham goes on to identify in the work of Scotus and Ockham. The trajectory of this concept develops first out of the Neoplatonist Avicenna, however, in whom essences begin to have their own being (*esse proprium*)—a being that comes to gain "ascendancy . . . over being in reality, or even being in the mind" (p. 10). What is more, their logical being, as possible being, is ultimately unmoored from any necessary connection to the actual Being of God (as is *not* the case for Aquinas, who expressly rejects the notion of an independent *ordo essentiarum*). As a result, priority shifts "from existentiality to an essential realm . . . [and] ontological difference [is reduced to] a difference of essence; *this* essence rather than *that* essence" (p. 10). And given that essences have their own logical being independently of God, being in general becomes "the proper object of metaphysics" (p. 10). But not only are essences now possible irrespective of God, and thus in some sense necessary; because Avicenna's God has no essence, these essences are also, invariably, God's own possibility, so that the difference between God and world is, ironically, for all of God's transcendence, once again erased (p. 12).

According to Cunningham, the deleterious consequences of Neoplatonism continue to appear in the Christian middle ages, beginning decidedly with Henry of Ghent, whose "work can be characterized as an 'Avicennian attempt to salvage Neoplatonism'" (p. 13). At first glance, this would seem to be an unfair characterization, given Ghent's doctrine of the analogy of being—not to mention the pervasive and, for the most part, positive assimilation of Neoplatonism throughout the Christian tradition (in Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius, and Augustine to name but a few). The problem, however, is not that Ghent posits an analogy of being, but that he does so without challenging Avicenna's notion of being as the proper object of metaphysics. A further problem is "Ghent's adoption of Avicenna's manner of conceiving essences absolutely" (p. 14). For here too essences are accorded a certain independent being (*esse essentiae*), forming an "infinite pool of possibles" over against the divine will (p. 14); all of which paves the way for the voluntarism of Scotus and Ockham. But because this separation stands to threaten divine simplicity, possible essences—together with those essence that are, in fact, actualized by God—must be shades of nothing, so that there is no true analogy of being after all.

From Avicenna and Ghent, the transition to Scotus is natural; for it is from Avicenna that "Scotus inherited his notion of being, his definition of essence, and even of possibility with regard to these essences"; from Ghent he inherited "the view that the infinity of God was a positive perfection, that matter was also positive, and that the human being had a plurality of [substantial] forms" (p. 16). But there are notable differences. Among them is Scotus' denial that possibles have their own proper being.

Rather, "Scotus insists that they are nothing", even if they "retain a type of diminished being (*esse diminutivum*), that of *esse objectivum*, which they have only in being known in the divine intellect" (p. 17). The importance of this move is more apparent in Ockham, who goes so far as to eradicate even this diminished trace of being, since for him there is no metaphysical community and the ideas (of possible creatures) are "nothing but a pure and absolute possibility" (p. 19). More importantly, as "nothing", they do not participate in the divine essence but are instead radically separated from it—thus giving rise to the void that will later determine the nihilistic destiny of modern and postmodern philosophy. For this world of concrete things, as the world of actualized possibles, has suddenly become the actualization of nothing. Indeed, without any " 'ontological backing' " in the divine essence, the things of this world, rather than adumbrating a divine depth, are suddenly transformed into a host of simulacra floating upon a void; and whatever reality they have is now left for the finite mind to determine according to a "logico-epistemic modality" that fixes possibles in the intensional grip of representation (p. 24). The result is a complete inversion of the standard theological picture; for "The possible is no longer defined by the actual, but is now more defined than the actual" (p. 24). And from this prioritization of logic over metaphysics, of possibility over actuality, it is only a small step to modernity: to Descartes' thought experiment and his—hitherto inconceivable—*annihilatio mundi*.

The next step in the history of modern philosophy, i.e., of nihilism, is Spinoza (pp. 59ff.); for here, even more so than in Descartes, the world becomes an illusion. The more that the world is rooted in the one substance, i.e., the more that it is systematically deprived of all substances, the more it is forced to surrender its own reality. The ironic result is a world *without substance*: for the world is nothing but the manifestation of the one substance's attributes, and the one substance is nothing but the ontological nothingness of its own attributes. In other words, each is nothing but the other, and Spinoza is nothing but Plotinus. It is Kant, however, who turns out to be the master magician, whose three *Critiques* are interpreted as three "disappearing acts" (p. 74). In the first, "the world becomes mere appearance", in the second "we lose nature", and in the third we "lose the visible object". In the final analysis, however, all of these "conjurations" are "really aspects of a single monistic feat of dissolution" (p. 74). For all experience is ultimately reduced to a "perpetual dialectic between the transcendental subject and object" (p. 92), each of which is but the mirror image of the nothing (= x) of the other. The magic show of modernity then culminates in Hegel, who *à la* Spinoza "allows for the provision of the infinite (God) and the finite (Nature) in the distinct absence of both" (p. 110). For here "Terms such as substance, subject, infinitude, and finitude are merely sites of disclosive disappearance; they are 'vanishing points' " (p. 110), because "everything is ontologically no-thing" (p. 120).

Turning to post-modernity, which simply continues and exacerbates the nihilism of modernity, Cunningham first treats Heidegger (and Celan), who "furthers the impulse . . . to provide *everything* without giving *anything*" (p. 125). The pretense of Heidegger's philosophy, of course, is to free philosophy from its "ontic incarceration" (p. 134) and lead it to a revelation of Being *as* history. But what arrives in the event of history is precisely *nothing*, and it is this nihilistic gesture that finally does justice to the rose "that blooms without a why" (pp. 140f.). Indeed, the preserve of philosophy is now simply this silent gesture, this speaking without saying anything (the "language of the stone"), toward a giving without a ground; and this is why Heidegger manifests in utter clarity, in almost teleological finality (of a philosophy divorced from faith), the overt logic of nihilism: the logic of nothing *as* something. Cunningham then closes out his history with a brief chapter on Derrida, who simply recapitulates Plotinus and Spinoza: for here again one is left with a dualism that is really a monism, only now between the text and Nothing, which is said to reside

beyond it. And inasmuch as language points to nothing beyond itself, nothing (the only true signified) comes to infect the entire economy of signification, conducting every (illusory) moment of presence (and meaning) into an ultimate absence (and meaninglessness)—all of which is but the play, the *Schein*, of *différrance*, which transcendentally governs both all and nothing.

After emerging from the cave of nihilism and its singularly boring repetitions, one is finally confronted in part II with the difference and splendor of theology, compared to which nihilism can offer only the phantasmagoria of the void. For whereas the philosophies of nothing systematically deprive things of any depth, reducing the world to a plane of immanence and ineluctable violence (since, ironically, the ultimate vanity of things allows them to be mastered), theology restores to things their proper depth, showing them to be transfinite reflections of the infinite and therefore (following Gregory of Nyssa) incomprehensible essence of God. In ruling out reductive description, theology does not forsake knowledge, however; on the contrary, it confers it: for it sees creatures in the truth of their beauty, i.e., as analogous to the beatific vision, in which the one "who is the most knowable", i.e., most beautiful, is also "comprehended least" (pp. 220f.). Of course, this is none other than the vision of love; and it is this that theology offers vis-à-vis a host of postmodern philosophers, who—in the words of Emily Dickinson—"could not see to see".

Without question, part II is the most enjoyable part of the book—and will be so even for those less familiar with Badiou, Blanchot, Deleuze, Lacan, Sartre, and Žižek. Indeed, it stands as a reminder that theology (as Barth rightly perceived) is ultimately a matter of delight in the surpassing beauty of what one already believes. And yet, *contra* Barth, such delight depends upon a doctrine of participation, formal causality, and the *analogia entis*! For it is these connected doctrines, as Cunningham keenly shows, that restore the beauty of being, liberating it from its postmodern incarceration in a realm of pure immanence. Moreover, it is these doctrines that allow theology to reassert the difference of creation—vis-à-vis the dualisms of philosophy, which are ultimately monisms—as the intimate distance of love. Whether or not one agrees with *Genealogy of Nihilism* in all its details, its basic insights are undoubtedly correct; and for this, as well as for its moments of inspiration, it should be requisite reading for an understanding of the metaphysics of "radical orthodoxy", as well as for any theological response to modern and postmodern philosophy.

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Wie Machbar ist der Mensch? Eine philosophische und theologische Orientierung, edited by Holger Zaborowski (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 2003) + 228 pp.

The hidden focus of the texts presented in this important anthology is the relation between particularity and universality. The need for such a book arises out of the discussion about the validity of genetic technology as regards humanity's self-manipulation of its biological substance. What criteria define a human being as human being? The term humanity seems to serve as a red flag warning against the technical manipulation of genetic material. This begs the question as to the arbitrariness of what could be considered as the human in different cultural context.

The texts gathered together in this anthology were all composed in the era following the Second World War. German theologians and philosophers wrote most of them. Some of them are translations out of an original French version (those by Paul Ricoeur and Emmanuel Levinas). The editor attempts to present an objective selection (in his brief introduction Karl Kardinal Lehmann, Bishop of Mainz appraises the volume on account of its objective presentation) precisely by offering a variety of views as regards human self-manipulation, which are often contradictory. At one extreme Karl Rahner refers to theology in order to celebrate the "experiment human being" (*Experiment Mensch*). In doing so Rahner employs a vocabulary that makes one wonder how this self-confident discourse about the powers of technological progress have an uncanny relation to the Nazi era. Rahner refers to the word "*Lebensraum*" (p. 146) when he sets out to appraise the achievements brought about by technology. This word *Lebensraum* was used by the Nazis so as to justify the German invasion of Eastern Europe. It literally means "room for life". In the Nazi context it clearly denotes to be conquered space for "Aryan life". Rahner, of course, employs the word so as to emphasize that modern technology enables an expansion of human life.

This, however, brings us back to the question as to what constitutes the human. According to Rahner, this is clearly the Christian. He argues that Christianity does not only provide the most valid account of what constitutes humanity but that it also strongly demands of the human to manipulate its genetic material. Rahner goes even so far as to write that the Christian notion of charity can only truly manifest itself in and through human self-manipulation (p. 158). In his account, Christianity emerges as "religion of absolute freedom" (*Religion der absoluten Freiheit*, p. 158). One problematic of Rahner's argumentation has to do with the way in which he conflates what he understands by religion (i.e. Christianity) with humanity. What about human communities who refuse to be Christian and are thus likely not to adhere to a "religion of absolute freedom" which demands human self-manipulation?

From Rahner's perspective Christianity, civilization and humanity form a seemingly inseparable trinity. As a result only those seem to be truly human who think and act according to the maxim of Rahner's "empowerment to freedom" (*Ermächtigung zur Freiheit*, p. 150). In a Kantian manner, Rahner contrast the free as the rational with the natural as the enslaved. The latter characterizes the non-human and the former defines true humanity as Christianity.

Rahner's theological celebration of human self-manipulation has a highly philosophical (in the sense of Kantian) force. Robert Spaemann, by contrast, emphasizes the practical component of any discussion about technological interference with human genetics. Most importantly, Spaemann does not make a particular cultural and religious formation (Christianity, for example) the foundation stone of his understanding of humanity. Rather than equating the free viz. the rational with the human, he makes a case for recognizing biology as an element that all human communities have in common. The infinity of human diversity has in common a biological basis. If we attempt to combine the particular with the universal, we are advised to proceed not along the lines of a certain cultural formation. Instead, we have to pay attention to the common life- (i.e. bio-) issues we all have in common. The title of Spaermann's essay "Are all human beings persons?" (*Sind alle Menschen Personen*?) thematizes the relation between particularity and universality, which goes to the core of the problematic of human self-manipulation.

What makes the issue of the technological change of genetic material so troubling has precisely to do with the political and ethical implications of a manipulation of that which has so far been the element implicitly linking the diversity of human cultures: our biological constitutes as it is framed by birth and death. Spaemann thus defines personhood not by culturally conditioned notions (such as freedom or ratio-

nality). Instead he characterizes a person by his or her biological membership within humanity. By genetically engineering parts of humanity so as to overcome our common biological condition (as defined by birth and death), we are erasing the foundations of a universal element that interconnects the particulars of human diversity.

A variety of essays gathered together in this anthology question the ethical and political foundations for choosing a cultural criteria (such as reason or freedom) as basis for a universal definition of personhood. In this way Hans Urs von Balthasar's "Towards a definition of what constitutes a person" ("*Zum Begriff der Person*") takes up Martin Buber's stance, according to which human life is not defined by a self-enclosed cultural entity but by intercultural connectedness. In a similar way Max Müller distinguishes between a philosophical approach, which focuses on rationality as a self-enclosed cultural entity, and a more open-ended and diverse literary sensibility. The latter attempts to extend the life expectancy of our limited and fragile biological existence, precisely by memorialzing it in the confines of aesthetic form. In this context, Müller contrasts metaphysics with Greek tragedy and Greek historiography. The latter memorializes the life of particular persons, whereas the former questions the rational validity of "the unconditional demand for life of the finitely conditioned being" (*des unbedingten Seinsanspruches des endlich bedingten Seienden*, p. 71).

In a related way Levinas's and Ricoeur's respective essays about the criteria of personhood focus on an ethics as well as an aesthetics of fragile particularities whose very fragility interconnects human universality. Levinas defines the person not by self-enclosed freedom but receptivity, or in other words, speech. In a different but related way, Ricoeur questions a hermeneutics of suspicion on account of its essentialist notion of authenticity that precludes an encounter between mutually different entities and identities. The notion of a self-enclosed person thus preempts transformation and revelation and thus opens the doors to a justification of human self-manipulation.

In addition to presenting a variety of important texts, Holger Zaborowski introduces each essay with a helpful introduction. This timely anthology helps to clarify the interrelatedness of theological, philosophical and biological issues as they encounter each other in discussions of human self-manipulation. A fundamental change in our common biology has implications far beyond the reach of technology. It would undermine the basis of human interconnectedness. An anthology such as the one edited, by Zaborowski offers a helpful guide as to the philosophical and theological range of these implications.

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The Ark of Speech by Jean-Louis Chrétien (London and New York: Routledge, 2004) v + 170 pp.

With the emergence in 2002 of *The Unforgettable and the Unhoped for*, Jean-Louis Chrétien finally (and more or less instantaneously) broke into the Anglo-American ranks of academic theology. Andrew Brown's fine translation of *Arche de la parole* marks the

fourth of Chrétien's works to be published in English, and confirms Chrétien as one of the most compelling of an increasing number of thinkers who inhabit the fraught intersections of phenomenology and theology.

Implicitly rejecting Derrida's grammatological critique of metaphysics as phonologocentric, Chrétien grants ontico-ontological priority in this text to speech. Anterior to any particular human act, humanity itself—and all of creation—*is* as a response to the speech act of creation. Speech, for Chrétien, thus has an ineluctable universality about it: the *whole world* is welcomed into being in, through, and as speech. The emblem of this truly catholic hospitality, more invoked than explicated in the work that bears its name, is the ark. Before Noah gathered the animals onto his cosmic lifeboat, Chrétien suggests, Adam gathered them "for human speech and . . . in this speech" by giving them names (p. 2). Before Noah's ark, then, was the ark of speech. Chrétien draws two important distinctions between these figures. First, the ark of speech does not just rescue some of creation; rather, it receives and shelters everything that is (p. 77). Secondly, unlike Noah's, Adam's ark does not operate by means of coercion: "Noah must take the animals with him when he *makes them* board ([*les*] *fait monter*) the ark, whereas the animals themselves had spontaneously come before Adam so as to be named" (p. 2; emphasis added).

It is, for Chrétien, the impossible yet ineradicable task of all human speech similarly to welcome all of creation; all descendants of Adam are called to give voice to the voiceless and speak the unspoken. For this reason, Chrétien considers the speech act *par excellence* to be prayer, which answers the divine call by listening to creation and offering it to God in praise and supplication. Precisely because humanity belongs primordially to *la parole*, we can and must "make everything enter (*faire entrer toute chose*)" (p. 7) its *arche*, carrying all of creation back to the Speaker who creates and sustains the world. Beginning from a "phenomenology of prayer", then, Chrétien lays out the tools human speech needs to build the ark it always already inhabits. And at the risk of reifying that which finds almost circumlocutionary articulation in the course of his analysis, these can be assembled under the (provisional, fluid, interdetermined, etc.) headings of: singularity, silence, wound, beauty, and gift.

Distinguishing genuine speech from the platitudes that inspire "airport novels and hit songs" is the figure of "the unheard-of" (*l'inouï*) (p. 13). For Chrétien, speech can only speak that which has never been—and, properly speaking *cannot* be—heard. In turn, the act of listening must be ready *not to understand* the unheard-of it hears. Willing to be shocked and transformed by the "singularity of the event that calls for . . . speech" (p. 14), I allow myself as a listener "to be dispossessed of what I thought I knew by the words of the other" (p. 12). The "reciprocal openness" sustaining this "learned ignorance" strips me of my noetic particularities so that I do not mediate the other's concerns through my own (or those of my favorite soap opera star). At the same time, however, the uniqueness of every speech act singularizes me—as the irreplaceable one who can stop chattering long enough to hear that which speaks from silence.

Because silence alone gives rise to speech, "right from the start, and for all time, silence and speech belong to one another" (p. 39). This equiprimordiality, however, does not hold throughout Chrétien's construction—which, it should be noted, is never referred to as an "ark of silence". Silence is always ultimately at the service of speech (which is ultimately at the service of itself): "even silence explains itself, and ends up talking about itself" (p. 57). Chrétien has very little time for radical (that is, silent) silence, denigrating as "periods of disintegration" those epistemic expanses during which silence is privileged above all speech (p. 69). He effects an unbridgeable rift, for example, between "Christian mysticism" and the neo-Platonic self-abandonment with which it is frequently rendered contiguous. For Plotinus and Proclus (whose varied descendants, we learn, include John of Damascus, nineteenth-century

French "orientalism," and Karl Jaspers), the creature is dissolved and negated in absolute silence, rather than transformed through a silence that speaks. Ultimately, the only cure for this "idolatry of nothingness" is "the incarnate Word" (p. 71)—only the revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ saves human speech from "the suffocating nothingness to which Greek philosophy in its final stage would like to offer them up as a holocaust" (p. 69).

Precisely because it is secured through its participation in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the *logos*, human speech, as exemplified in prayer, is always "wounded speech" (*la parole blessée*). Whether offered for oneself or another, prayer is wounded by the very event that provokes it: "a *cry* forces itself onto listening, it seizes us . . . in spite of ourselves . . . but it says, properly speaking, nothing. Speech lives off the stifling of these cries, it forbids them so that it can speak itself" (p. 11). Founded and foundering on tears, prayer is, moreover, wounded by its addressee, "wrestling like Jacob all night long in the dust to wrest God's blessing from him" (p. 37). As it offers the wounded world to a wounded God through wounded words, then, speech is always and only blessed through *blessure*.

This perpetually open wound of speech continually opens immanence out to transcendence. And for Chrétien, that which is best able to inflict and sustain this wound is beauty. A "gentle" or "violent" insistence of the unfamiliar into the everyday, the event of beauty divests "man" of all he knows and masters (p. 78). Depending on our receptivity to the shock of its arrival, beauty therefore holds out the possibility of "saying *adieu*"; that is, of referring the soul out to God (*à Dieu*) and conditioning its dispossessed transformation (its *adieu*). Finally, transported by beauty from creation to the Uncreated, we do not abandon the earth, but rather carry it with us, offering it all back to God. This is for Chrétien the highest function of human speech: to gather the whole wounded world in its ark and deliver it in prayer to the creator. Given through speech as the one who speaks, "man's" greatest task is to voice and offer up the silences, sufferings, and doxological murmurings of the cosmos through the ceaseless, reciprocal donation of the "cosmic hymn".

The most pressing question that Chrétien leaves unaddressed, however, is how this "canticle of redemption" might operate politically. Who is aboard Chrétien's ark, and who is left to drown? To this perhaps facile inquiry, Chrétien would insist that, unlike the ark of the flood, the ark of speech is "the ark in which nothing has been forgotten, left out, abandoned, except that which is not: evil" (p. 146). Bracketing for a moment the troublesome question of how humans go about discerning good from evil, we recall that in addition to being universal, the ark of speech must also be nonviolent: "I cannot offer a thing . . . in speech and through speech unless it lends itself to being offered in this way" (pp. 127, 132). Yet how are "we" to "make everything enter the ark of speech" (p. 7) if we *make* everything board an ark of our own construction, or, to switch metaphors, if we force everything to sing a song we have *already written*? (As usual, writing breaks in to disrupt things here.)

In response to any charge of coercion, Chrétien would presumably reaffirm the phenomenological openness he continually commends to the singular arrival of the other—a suspension of one's own presuppositions and a "readiness" to be radically unsettled through the encounter with the *inouï*. But for Chrétien, the silence of such dispossession always gives way to speech because the whole world subsists only through the incarnation of the Word. Any speaking of the unspeakable, then, must necessarily be voiced in a Christian register. If we affirm that "the only song that irreversibly says *Yes* is the Paschal song" (p. 146), then however "suspended" our knowledge may be in the phenomenological encounter, it will always re-establish itself on its own terms, gathering the utterly unknown into a song we already know. This is not to deny the perpetual newness of even the oldest of liturgies. It is merely to say that if our speech is secured solely through the Word, then there are things *we will*

not hear—like other claims to revelation (e.g. those hopelessly nihilistic efforts of "pagans", "pantheists", and worshippers of "individual or collective idols" (p. 37)), or cries and silences that cannot be brought to speech.

Belonging to Chrétien's strained universality, then, is a denial of the unspeakable and unpresentable as such. This is understandable, for the very reliance Chrétien illuminates of speech upon the unspeakable ("speech lives off the stifling of these cries") betrays a threatening rupture in the inviolable anteriority of speech. Phenomenologically speaking, what first calls thinking to "say *adieu*" is not speech, but a *cri* (always, of course, bound up with the pesky cut of e-cri-ture). In speaking the unspeakable, speech effectively covers over the abyssal condition of its own possibility—a survival strategy that Chrétien enacts most clearly in his aesthetic analysis of the Passion. Here he argues that the "ugliness" of the crucifixion can *only* be considered in the light of the resurrection, through which beauty itself is resurrected with Jesus (p. 102). What would it mean, however, to dwell a bit longer with the senseless provocation of Good Friday? That is to say, how wounded are we willing to be when hearing the cry of the *inouï*? What unshakable truths—from doctrinal particularities to the primacy of speech itself—might the truly unspeakable shake? As if anticipating its own limits, *The Ark of Speech* begins by asking, "How far does hospitality go"? A genuine openness to the other just might divest theology of more than it is willing to lose . . . but therein lies the blessed *blessure* of its "phenomenological turn".

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Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics, Past and Present by Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004) vi + 324 pp.

This is a collection of twelve essays, evenly divided between the authors, that were either originally presented at conferences and appear in print for the first time here or have been significantly revised since their prior, independent appearance. It would be a mistake, however, to discount this work on the grounds of its occasional character, and that coming from the pen of two authors. Although the collection ranges over a vast terrain of thinkers and issues, this is no rag-tag collection, useful merely because it does make accessible in one place the important work of two considered thinkers.

Rather, this volume is best read as a continuation of the effort, articulated with such prominence by Oliver O'Donovan in his *The Desire of Nations*, to invigorate Christian political theology by means of a *ressourcement* of the patristic and medieval tradition of politico-theological discourse that is to a significant degree neglected by modern political and public theologies. Moreover, it is worth recalling that one significant target of Oliver O'Donovan's work at least has been post-liberal theologians who appear not to respect or appreciate the achievement that liberalism marks. In this regard, who can forget his startling claim advanced on behalf of Christendom, which in his reading encompasses early modern political liberalism through 1791, that it is rightly interpreted as a sign of the advance of Christianity, that early modern

liberalism is a positive development, the fruit of the Gospel's (as yet incomplete) success?

Thus, what is striking about the present collection is the way in which its critical focus appears to shift from a defense of early modern liberalism to a vigorous and sustained critique of the political architectonic of modern liberalism in both its early and later manifestations. The authors state in the introduction that their effort is intended as a "corrective to a consensus with and without the church that regards the prevailing liberal-democratic institutions of the West as wholly normative . . ." (p. 1). Accordingly, the liberal commonplaces that play such a prominent role in much contemporary Christian political reflection, such as republican freedom, self-government, popular sovereignty, and individual and communal rights, come in for a sustained challenge.

To be sure, the by now familiar claims that politics is defined primarily by the act of judgment, the parameters of the body politic are delimited by a body of law, and that the Christian community embodies a distinctive politics are all found here. However, the thread that unites the essays is the consistent use of the patristic, Augustinian, and medieval heritage to challenge the platitudes and shibboleths of modern political liberalism. This critique unfolds in two sections.

The first section, "Moments in the Theological-Political Tradition", includes seven essays that explore theological distortions of the tradition that contributed to the development of modern liberalism. In an essay examining the politics of the Book of Revelation, Oliver O'Donovan challenges readings that perpetuate a liberal vision of politics as a matter of sheer power and that oppose freedom and necessity. Over against such readings, Oliver O'Donovan argues that John's vision is one whereby political order does not rest on the extension of power but on true speech/the proclamation of the Word, and that within political space so constituted, freedom and necessity are not properly juxtaposed. Oliver O'Donovan's second essay, on book nineteen of Augustine's *City of God*, takes issue with the popular reading that suggests Augustine was an early theorist of the secular. In doing so, Oliver O'Donovan avoids both idealist and realist readings of the Augustine and offers instead a vision of Christian politics that neither relies on a theory of "the state" and its "progress" nor backs away from Augustine's refusal to recognize worldly polities as truly political or just. The result is a politics of forgiveness embodied in a Christian community that makes its way in this world of disorder by making use of what order there is. In his final essay of the first section, Oliver O'Donovan takes up Grotius' account of distributive justice. Countering those who cast Grotius as a distinctly modern and secular figure, and thus as a key player in the losing of the political from its theological roots, Oliver O'Donovan argues that Grotius is rightly read as a theologian, and that his account of justice, far from being a capitulation to a modern, subjective notion of right, was in fact an effort to hold the line against secular subjectivist encroachments in favor of reconnecting right with its proper objective, theological foundation.

Joan Lockwood O'Donovan's contribution to the first section begins with a treatment of the medieval debates concerning poverty and property. She traces the theological developments that resulted in dominion/Christian lordship being misplaced from its patristic home in a Platonic, participatory metaphysics as it became associated with possession, subjective right, contract, self-interest and will in late medieval thought, thereby paving the way for the likes of Hobbes and Locke and effectively closing off the civic from the evangelical, as is characteristic of modernity. In a complementary essay on the medieval economics of usury, Joan Lockwood O'Donovan further develops her critique of modern, subjective, proprietary rights as the fruit of the displacement of a communal and participatory economy by a voluntarist economy inhabited by individual bearers of abstract, subjective rights. A

third essay in this vein considers the emergence of liberalism's emphasis on democratic freedom. Her analysis of later medieval and early modern conceptions of freedom suggests that while theologians did begin to develop accounts of individual rights and freedom that bear some resemblance to modern notions of the same, such accounts remained anchored in the community and, more importantly, in a theological foundation that resisted full-blown republican and democratic developments. The last essay gathered under the first heading considers Erasmus' political ethics and in particular his account of political authority and concomitant critique of the use of force. In a turn to the contemporary, Joan Lockwood O'Donovan suggests (and only suggests, leaving it undeveloped) that there is a parallel between Erasmus' "cultural christocentrism", with its failure to recognize God's providential care by means of political authority and law, and the work of contemporary theologian John Milbank.

The second section, "Contemporary Themes: Liberal Democracy, the Nation-State, Localities, and Internationalism", turns more directly to contemporary concerns and issues. Oliver O'Donovan, in an essay on government as judgment, contributes to the contemporary debate over judicial activism in order to argue that Christianity, in contrast to modernity, gives primacy to the judicial act, thereby rendering the act of legislation subordinate to that of judgment (which is in turn subordinate to a divine foundation—law). In an essay on the political theology of Barth and Ramsey, he advances what may strike many as a counter-intuitive argument; namely, that it is Barth who in the course of his critique of the state's coercive power (specifically, its standing army) renders politics distinctly secular (a move O'Donovan attributes to a Lockean, contractarian influence in Barth), while it is Paul Ramsey who, even as he acknowledges the legitimacy of coercion, provides a theological framework for a politics that is open to Christ's advent. Finally, in an essay on "sense of place", Oliver O'Donovan takes up the issue of the relation between locality and universality, and asserts that Christianity should reject any universalism that would sacrifice place to an abstraction. This does not, however, render Christianity hopelessly parochial. Instead, he argues for a concrete universalism that is not set against or intrinsically antagonistic to locality and place, but by means of the theological concept of "election" connects them in a catholic matrix.

Joan Lockwood O'Donovan's contributions to the second section are two. In one essay, she takes up the concept of "subsidiarity" in Catholic social teaching and argues that insofar as that concept arises from a properly theological understanding of political community and authority, it is at odds with contemporary notions of rights invoked with the intent of securing self-sufficient individuals and communities. Her second essay considers contemporary theories of nationalism, suggesting that all such conceptions, be they romantic, civic, or functional, lapse into incoherence and conflict precisely to the degree that they attempt to conceive of the nation apart from its properly theological foundation, understood in terms of political authority exercised as a divine vicarate and centered in a body of law.

Insofar as the O'Donovans seek to advance contemporary theological engagement in the political, this volume is successful. Whether or not one finds each of the moves compelling, the sustained critique of modern political concepts as well as the genealogies of those concepts that they offer are worthy of engagement. Where the reader might be less than completely satisfied concerns the title. It is not immediately evident how the title, "bonds of imperfection" pertains to this collection. Here we recall the critical focus of Oliver O'Donovan's *Desire of Nations*, for in spite of the sustained critique that this collection offers of how modern political bonds are conceptualized, there is a clear if subtle polemic running through the text that refuses to let go of those bonds. At various points, even as they critique political liberalism, the authors finally refuse to renounce the bonds of liberalism and consistently reject

theological politics that will not accommodate the coercive liberal state. Repeatedly we are reminded that simply rejecting the theological legitimacy of coercion granted to (non-ecclesial) political authority is symptomatic of a failure to appreciate the distinction between God's salvific and providential activity. In other words, Christian politics cannot be about only the bonds of perfection—the ecclesial politics of salvation—but must also attend to God's providential work of imperfection, the work of political authorities in exercising the judgment that is meant to preserve a certain order, a kind of peace, in this world. Although this is a venerable distinction in the tradition—and on those grounds the O'Donovan's feel no need to explicate or defend it—both the distinction and way they correlate it with political space remain points of contention, the exploration of which exceeds both this book and this review.

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Edward Schillebeeckx: A Theologian in His History. Volume I: A Catholic Theology of Culture (1914–1965) by Erik Borgman, translated by John Bowden (London and New York: Continuum, 2003) xii + 468 pp.

Edward Schillebeeckx is, without a doubt, one of the most important Roman Catholic theologians of the second half of the twentieth century. This Flemish Dominican, who from 1958 to 1963 taught dogmatics and the history of theology at the Catholic University of Nijmegen (The Netherlands), became known world-wide at the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65). However, he undoubtedly established his fame with his remarkable Jesus-trilogy, which he issued, originally in Dutch, in the seventies and eighties: *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (1974, E.T.: 1979), *Christ: The Christian Experience in the Modern World* (1977, E.T.: 1980), and *Church: The Human Story of God* (1989, E.T.: 1990). In 1989, The Dutch province of the Dominicans commissioned Erik Borgman to write the intellectual biography of Schillebeeckx, in an attempt to show how Schillebeeckx' theology is rooted within a changing cultural, social and ecclesiastical context. This has resulted in a remarkably well-written overview of Schillebeeckx' theological work and twentieth century history of the Roman Catholic Church and theology (up to Vatican II). The first part of this theological biography appeared in Dutch in 1999, and is now translated by John Bowden, himself a well-known Schillebeeckx interpreter.

   This first volume deals with Schillebeeckx' life and work from his birth in 1914 to the end of the Second Vatican Council. In the first chapter, Borgman narrates how Schillebeeckx grew up in Flanders during the period between the two World Wars, and how he became a Dominican (instead of a Jesuit). Special attention is given to the way in which the Flemish cultural and socio-economic circumstances, and the education Schillebeeckx received from his family, in the Jesuit college and in his Dominican formation (philosophy in Ghent and theology in Leuven) influenced his socio-cultural and intellectual horizons. Dominicus De Petter's philosophical approach, confronting Catholic Thomistic philosophy with modern philosophical tendencies, was especially significant for the formation of Schillebeeckx' epistemological presumptions, as well as his reading—at the instigation of De Petter—of Karl Adam's theology, which favoured human existence as the starting point to speak about God.

The second chapter reports Schillebeeckx' first attempts in the forties to relate contemporary culture to theology, resulting in an explicit "theology of culture": first by developing a theological view of culture, and secondly by consciously doing theology as a part of culture. Influenced by existentialist philosophy, expressing the postwar sense of life, Schillebeeckx sought to establish a "Christian humanism", rooted in an explicitly theological anthropology: human beings are "always already bound up with God", engaged in a "quest for fulfilment in God" (p. 89). Being truly human, therefore, ultimately consisted in being Christian. It is in this period (1945) that Schillebeeckx went to Paris to study at the Dominican formation centre Le Saulchoir and at the Sorbonne; he followed lectures with Chenu and Congar, and was confronted with the thought of Camus and Sartre.

Chapter three opens with a section titled "Between Cultural Challenge and Church Pressure", indicating the tensions with which Schillebeeckx' project of a theology of culture had to deal. The attempt of Church hierarchy to distinguish clearly between church and world drove Schillebeeckx to a renewed interest in church, liturgy and tradition, as already incorporating the theology of culture. This resulted in his doctoral dissertation (presented at Le Saulchoir in 1952) on the sacraments as the place of the encounter between God and world, and then to reflections on the church and the special mission of the laity realising the church's task to "permeate the order of life within the world with a Christian spirit" (p. 147). Along the same lines Schillebeeckx also developed a Mariology, featuring Mary as the image *par excellence* of the believer.

In the fifties, Schillebeeckx established—according to Borgman—his "Louvain Theological Synthesis". While lecturing at the Dominican formation house and, briefly, at the Higher Institute of Religious Studies in Leuven, Schillebeeckx engaged in an attempt to re-appropriate in an open-constructive way the thought of Thomas Aquinas. His attempt to deal with the challenges of contemporary culture for a theological view of reality, resulted in a theology in which the world as God's creation, grasped within a sacramental economy of salvation, becomes a central notion. In contrast with textbook-Thomism, a correct perspective on the dynamics of Thomas' theology is able to "break through the dominant division between 'nature' and 'supernature' which blocked the development of a theology of culture" (p. 195). On the basis of course notes, collected by Schillebeeckx at the end of the fifties when going to Nijmegen, Borgman in the fourth chapter consecutively sketches Schillebeeckx' theological epistemology, Christology, eschatology and doctrine of creation. The final section of this chapter is devoted to his theology of marriage, profiled as "a human reality to become a sacrament" (p. 267), a theological reflection clearly conceived of within the same theological project.

In the last chapter, "A Dutch Council Theologian" (1958–1965), Borgman tries to develop a full picture of the time and world, both culturally and ecclesiastically, of the Second Vatican Council and the role Schillebeeckx played in it at the invitation of the Dutch primate cardinal Alfrink, both in the preparation period and during the council (although, because of Ottaviani, never as an official *peritus*). On a global level, this changing context and, on a personal level, his transfer to Nijmegen, challenged him to develop further his theological position. Borgman gives special attention to Schillebeeckx' contributions to the Council's work on the church, as reflected both in *Lumen gentium* (including some paragraphs on the "black week" of November 1964) and, its relation to the world, in *Gaudium et spes*; and to Schillebeeckx' ambiguous reaction to Paul VI's encyclical on the Eucharist (*Mysterium fidei*, 1965). It is the Pastoral Constitution on Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), however, that intrigued Schillebeeckx the most, as that document reflected his project of a theology of culture as he wanted to renew it: "Just as according to mediaeval theology nature was taken up into the sphere of grace, so in his view in modern times human exis-

tence with its existential experiences needed to be taken up into the church and faith" (p. 346). After *Gaudium et Spes*, the church can only be authentic to itself when it is able to "giving credible form to God's salvation in the world in its structure, its speech, and its action" (p. 358). In this regard, this period prepared the shift in Schillebeeckx' theology to be realised from 1965.

Borgman defines his work on Schillebeeckx as "contextual historiography", following the adage of J. B. Metz that "theology is biography". As a matter of fact, in doing so, he applies Schillebeeckx' own theological method to depict him as "someone who above all *does theology*, and in doing it, and in constant conversation with the tradition and with the present situation of culture and philosophy, the church and theology, develops a view of reality as a whole, and of religion, church and the individual as part of it" (p. 6). In this regard, one legitimately may affirm that this volume not only provides us with an outstanding intellectual biography of Schillebeeckx, but also with a theological work in line with Schillebeeckx' theological intuitions: both content and method bear witness to the master. As a consequence, because of the changed context at the transition to the third millennium, Borgman's study of Schillebeeckx is also a positioning of Borgman's own theological project vis-à-vis Schillebeeckx's project. Borgman often points, e.g., at what he calls the fundamental ambiguity of Schillebeeckx' early theology of culture: the consistent focus on the church when dealing with a theology of the world. This positioning becomes very explicit in the postscript to this volume, in which Borgman pleads for taking up anew the challenges of the current context for theological reflection: the outcome of this new theological endeavour will differ from Schillebeeckx' theology, he affirms, while nevertheless continuing Schillebeeckx' main intuition that concrete history is the place where the liberating God is revealed. Borgman's own theological accents make this intellectual biography a very challenging theological enterprise in its own right, allowing for a specific discussion on the reception and evaluation of Schillebeeckx' theological intuitions in a contemporary "theology of culture". Therefore, it is with impatience that one awaits the publication of the second volume, dealing with the Schillebeeckx of the trilogy, in dialogue with the late-modern culture of the seventies and the eighties.

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Religion, Theology and the Human Sciences by Richard H. Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) xiv + 334 pp.

How "modern" is the modern western world? Despite the fascination that many have with "post" labels, that remains a key question. The pressure put by globalised neo-liberal economic structures on the formation of persons certainly suggests an intensification of a dominant modern strain of public technocracy, a bureaucracy maintaining its "presence", and a default meta-valuation of "choice" as the privatising weapon of mass distraction. Underlying the otherwise celebratory tonality of the Hegelian-inspired secular-eschatology, Francis Fukuyama in 1989 did permit the tones of something darker to be heard: a boredom with "the End" and its homogenisation of tastes. Astute economists are attentive to precisely the dark underside, re-

fusing temptations of glib formulaic predictions that, in the meantime, waste people and places for the sake of a self-satisfying (at least for those already benefiting) grand vision. The problems with articulating a neo-liberal economic vision, then, has become more serious than talk of potential "boredom" and cultural kitsch production would suggest. Indeed, Fukuyama himself had in the 1990s exhibited more awareness of the range cast by a disturbing presence that may well bear the potential for *endlessly* perpetuating conflict as it surfaces: a self-absorption that may recycle conflictual competitiveness (September 11 may have tragically borne out this claim). It seems that the "post"-modern western world still struggles with the concerns that plagued the house of Alexis de Tocqueville when he admitted that liberal individualism was threatened by its own systemic creations—the loss of civic responsibility (not resisted in the UK with moves towards the privatisation of "public services"), the evaporation of public trust, the increasing professionalisation of all professional life, the suspicion of new ideas, and their suppression particularly through intensified bureaucratisation (contemporary western societies can at least manage the "new" by privatising their valuations; but also one should observe the suppression of dissent in post-9/11 USA!). Radical attention is required to the very shape of persons articulated by the modern (neo-)liberal voice.

Roberts' rewritten essays from 1989–1998 are a collected series of critical observations on the "systemic crisis" generative of "a derogate post-humanity" itself created by "the cultural impact of the 'triumph of capitalism'" in Thatcherite and Blairite (and therefore primarily British) society and religion (pp. x, 11, 1). The dominating mood is one of passionate protest—and thus the book's hoped for "sense of hope" is somewhat understated (p. x). The critiques are levelled in the main against the new social reality being created largely in response to economic forces "now seemingly free from any fundamental critique" (p. 3): trends towards a commodified and "industrialised model of mass-production of higher education" (p. ix) (colourfully Lord Conrad Russell called this "battery higher education" (p.88)) and in the (Anglican) church towards an ethos controlled by the managerial paradigm. Roberts writes knowledgeably (in some ways, informed by Marxism and Christianity) in what is, as such, no piece of *academic* work, if by that is meant a seriously abstracted piece of research relevant only to academic specialists (that Roberts' labour-intensive verbosity, use of allusion, and utterly unnecessary slippage into German terms whenever German writers are not even in view, is a highly technical performance that demands expert readers is, however, another matter). In fact, the constructed boundaries of disciplinary professionalisms and the supposedly operational morally neutral space of much sociological and educationalist theory are refreshingly and penetratingly slipped over by Roberts' wide-ranging lambasts.

Notice theology is not mentioned here, despite the book's title setting it in central place. The tones that theology brings to the various conversations are generally muted, apart from an occasional theological quip. This may well be the main weakness of an otherwise richly suggestive and insightful book. A theologically interesting *visio* of the *humanum* is lurking in places, enough for Roberts to make *critical* observations, but is insufficiently displayed for it to be both tested and developed for the sake of rendering a constructively alternative vision of social spaces. As such, it may be asked just what this book can offer in replacing the bureaucratic ethos that it appears so offended by.

What Roberts' work does clearly announce, however, is that any theology that hides its light, whether by self-protective choice or by being otherwise positioned, is not worth its salt. He laments the privatisation of religion, theology's vacation of the public spaces and its retreat into uncritical and conservative sentimentality or nostalgic fantasy for ages past. Consequently, he launches vibrantly acrimonious, occasionally even acerbic, critiques of Karl Barth and John Milbank for (*apparently*) doing

just that. Not only would that be to deny the public performance of theology, but would make the "sacred" (now divorced from the "secular") something that can be managed, that can powerfully resist change and thereby provide an illusory security in an ever more complex cultural and social environment. That kind of power*ful* theology would, to draw on the image used in Roberts' earlier collection of papers on Barth, no longer be the self-exposed and self-critical *Theology On Its Way*.

Just what theology can say, how it can say what it says, and why it says what it says is unclear from these essays. In other words, Roberts does not attend to what the *way* is, or delineate the more appropriate accounts of power that Christianity can enact at its best. (Suggestively, at New College in early 2004, he admitted having lost interest in theology during the 1990s.) This gives his references to "theology", and even "religion", a certain air of abstraction, despite his desire to "move from disembedded theological reflection to contextualised ethnography" (p. 9).

There are hints of something more theologically suggestive. The essays on Anglican polity observe recent modelling of ecclesial authority on "civil" models, and consequently Roberts' critique implies that the church should develop accounts of power and authority more appropriate to what is its proper business. Had Roberts attended more carefully to the nuances of Barth's theology of the "real" and Milbank's theological denial of secularity, he would have been able to make the case that, at least for their versions of Christianity, the resources for public theology are *internal*, and therefore inseparable from the concrete performance of the sets of particular narratives that are cardinal to the shape of Christian identity. Instead, by failing to take that step Roberts himself all too often appears to project a particularly non-specific understanding of "religion". The point Barth at his best could make is that it is not that theology speaks in sociological, political and other voices so as to "fit in" better with other disciplines' positioning of it, but that it generously yet critically converses precisely because these varyingly perform something of the diversity of creaturely life. After all, this theological sense could remind the churches of the difficulties involved in "hearing" that the Word of God took the fullness of human living to itself in a way that was and is subject to all the constraining conditions of human historical existence.

So has Roberts been able to use language of "religion" effectively in any sense, then? His phrase "globalised religion" is a tautology—since to speak of "religion" is already to succumb, in a sense, to a global nomination of those religious particulars in the cast of the single entity "religion". In other words, any discourse about "religion" will itself be totalising by reading the various particularities in a way that reduces them to some banal common-denominator and loses the sense of the contextualities of speaking, while becoming selective (in a Procrustean manner) in choosing the criteria for assessing what counts as religion. Unlike Hick's, Roberts' agenda is less that of one seeking to promote inter-religious dialogue, even if that be at the expense of unmarking distinguishing expansive particularities, than that of attempting to encourage theologians and the various religious practitioners to engage in public conversation, and a highly critical one at that, with societies that have marginalised and largely silenced their voices in the public domain. His promotion of "an ecumenism of religions" (p. 213), then, is more of an attempt to restore culturally, politically, and economically interrogative "embodied time" to religions. While keen not to miss points of incommensurability, Roberts discovers that there is enough commonality to stress that what it can particularly do is offer a means of confronting some of the more extreme fragmentations of postmodernity. Global religion represents a crucial tension between universal and particular without, presumably, succumbing to the reification of particularity, or to the manipulation of consciousness for its interests. It, in short, celebrates diversity whilst honouring and seeking to artic-

ulate universal exigencies. Identity, he declares, is to be promoted as a self-transcending identity of subversive emancipation.

This sociologically rich collection repays rereading. Yet while Roberts sounds like a de Tocqueville at his most concerned, it is unclear just how far he could be a de Tocqueville at his most visionary. Is this a critical project within a broadly reformist neo-liberal frame, or something demanding of difficult thinking and conversing on just what "the human" is that is to fully emerge? There are hints that it may not be the former, but, I would humbly suggest, more work needs to be done on the identification of the latter.

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