

REVIEWS

The Reconstruction of Religion: Lessing, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche by Jan-Olav Henriksen (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), x + 208 pp.

Jan-Olav Henriksen offers a clear account of how three philosophers constructed generic concepts of religion in the face of early modern questions about the historical veracity of the Bible and the authority of scripture and tradition. The core of Henriksen's treatment is the claim that Lessing, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche each responded to the questions of tradition and truth by turning to conceptions of religious subjectivity. In particular, each examined the ways subjects appropriate religion and the ways such appropriation functions, positively or negatively, in personal development. Henriksen treats each thinker in a separate chapter, though as the book proceeds he increasingly develops his primary points in comparative fashion. These points consist of 1) the three thinkers' "understanding of the historical content that forms the basis of Christian religion"; 2) their "understanding of the truth of [Christianity]"; and 3) "how Christians can be sure of their convictions, in a situation where pluralism, subjectivism and historical critique offer strong challenges to any religious commitments" (p. 6).

Henriksen's reading of modernity owes much to the sociologist Peter Berger's account of modernity and religion in *The Heretical Imperative*. Since in its pre-modern guise, as understood by Enlightenment thinkers, Christian authority was founded on the Biblical witness and its traditions, the modern imperative to authorize religion through reason rather than tradition demands an active "subjective appropriation" (and thus interrogation) of religious truth. For Berger and Henriksen, modernity is defined as a "critical reaction against any traditionally given content". This reaction weakens the authorizing force of history and community and places the burden of authorization on the individual, essentially making religion a matter of individual choice. Where heresy—understood as the questioning of traditional authority—is an option in the pre-modern period, in the modern period it becomes an imperative.

Henriksen sets himself two tasks. The first is expository and "comparative" and the second is constructive, that is, he is interested not just in what these thinkers said about religion, but in how what they said can be of relevance for us today. With respect to the first task, the book is solid. Lessing is presented as paradigmatic Enlightenment thinker, embracing a concept of natural religion that provides a universal criterion with which to think human commonality and to evaluate any given positive religion. He also, according to Henriksen, was one of the figures most responsible for construing religion primarily in terms of morality. But Henriksen views Lessing's major contribution as his staunch rejection of the possibility that "contingent historical truths" can serve as proofs for the "necessary truths of reason" and thereby his separation of the truth of Christianity from the witness of Scripture and the authority of tradition. For Lessing, religious truth is accessible only through

the subjective appropriation of the truths of reason. This sets up a dissonance in Lessing's thought between "religious particularity and moral universality".

With Kierkegaard, we find a very different approach to this problem, and, according to Henriksen, a much more satisfactory answer (if there is a hero in Henriksen's book it is Kierkegaard). For Kierkegaard, God's entrance into history in the form of Jesus Christ becomes a historical point of departure for an eternal consciousness. Like Lessing, Kierkegaard emphasizes the personal appropriation religious truth, but where Lessing views this as an operation of reason, for Kierkegaard, it is a matter of the passion of faith. Consequently, where truth is something human beings find within themselves for Lessing, it is something that must come from outside for Kierkegaard.

In contrast to both Lessing and Kierkegaard, Henriksen's Nietzsche argues that religion, and Christianity in particular, retards human subjectivity and development; consequently, Nietzsche is less interested than the other two in questions of the universality or particularity of religious truth. Yet Nietzsche, too, problematizes the relation of the individual to history, tradition and community thus increasing the importance of subjective experience and struggle. But, where Lessing and Kierkegaard each viewed the development of the subject in relation to otherness (for Lessing, reason; for Kierkegaard, God), Henriksen argues that Nietzsche's "annihilation of the metaphysical world" renders the notion of a "radical or distinct otherness . . . impossible". Henriksen seems sympathetic to some of Nietzsche's criticisms of religion, and even acknowledges that the prophet of the "superman" (as Henriksen insists on calling it) sees some positive elements in religion. Still, for Henriksen this most "postmodernist" of the three figures is the most unsatisfactory, largely because Nietzsche remains fixated on a problem Henriksen thinks both Lessing and Kierkegaard, in different ways and with differing degrees of success, solved, namely, that the uncertainties and dogmatisms of the tradition can be overcome with the "present appropriation" of religion.

The section on Nietzsche is not as strong as the other two, but, in general, Henriksen is a reliable guide, offering balanced and informative interpretations of each thinker. He compares the thinkers to good effect, sharpening through juxtaposition his treatments of natural religion, subjectivity, and irony and style (Henriksen's account of Kierkegaard's use of irony is one of the strong points of the book). He also writes in clear jargon-free prose (though at times the book is weighed down by redundancy). These strengths notwithstanding, I imagine that many readers will be disappointed that Henriksen offers us nothing really new on any of these figures. Secondary sources have shaped his own understanding of these figures, which he readily acknowledges both in his citations and in his extensive use of quotation from these sources throughout the book. One might wish that by the end of the book we were more familiar with the actual words of Lessing, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche (even in translation) than with the words of their readers. Given this absence of new scholarship, the book will be most useful for students diving into modern religious thought for the first time, or for more advanced readers looking for a brief review of these figures.

The limitations of the book are especially evident when we consider the "constructive" task Henriksen has set for himself. It seems that the title of the book refers not so much to the reconstructions of Lessing, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche (they were constructing religion—if they were reconstructing anything it was Christianity) but to how these thinkers might help *us* to reconstruct religion at the boundary of the modern and postmodern. Along these lines, one of the more fruitful avenues pursued by Henriksen concerns what he describes as "double consciousness" and the way he relates this idea to the use of irony in Lessing, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. The challenge, as Henriksen puts it, is "how to adequately combine the expression

of historically rooted religious truth and openness to its revision with a responsible attitude toward the results of reason and the scientific world" (p. 71). He argues, correctly, I think, that Lessing, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche each deal with this problem and he usefully connects it to Berger's heretical imperative. He also relates this modern imperative to double-consciousness to the problem of otherness, arguing that cultivating such consciousness is necessary for "facing the other as an other, without having to integrate it, make it known" (p. 196). But this reconstructive effort would have benefited from at least some engagement with, or even indication of, efforts by contemporary thinkers to address precisely these issues. Though Henriksen makes extensive use of secondary material on each of these thinkers, he does not discuss ways in which thinkers such as Ricoeur and Levinas (to cite just two who, it seems to me, are crucial given Henriksen's concerns) have appropriated and transformed the insights of the philosophical and theological constructors of modern religion.

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Faith and Beauty: A Theological Aesthetic by Edward Farley (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), x + 122 pp.

Edward Farley has produced a work on beauty characterized by enormous theological depth, simplicity of style and lapidary insight. His theological aesthetic is concerned to develop an understanding of the intrinsic relationship of beauty, or that which is intrinsically attractive, to faith, as the life of communal and individual response which arises with redemption. This project distinguishes itself from the more philosophical task of aesthetics which is concerned with the nature and structure of the work of art, but does not necessarily involve a treatment of beauty. His thesis is simply stated: "Beauty is intrinsic to the life of faith because it is a feature of the divine image which is distorted by sin and restored by redemption" (p. viii).

Farley begins with the receding of beauty which characterizes the postmodern landscape, but he also indicates the unattended instances of beauty which seem to stubbornly survive its contemporary dismissal. The iconoclasm of the Hebrew and Christian religions have also contributed to the contemporary recession of beauty and are at the root of lingering suspicions of its dangers to faith. Attitudes towards beauty as seductive and essentially decorative have hindered insight into its intrinsic relationship to faith. It is this situation which Farley hopes to remedy.

The author's method includes first of all selecting four Western historical developments of beauty and culling moments of insight which will be important for his later and properly theological development.

Four interpretations of beauty are especially prominent in the Western story of beauty: 'the great theory of beauty' as proportion or harmony (classical Hellenism and the Middle Ages), beauty as a sensibility (eighteenth century England), beauty as consenting benevolence (Jonathan Edwards) and beauty as a self-transcending and transcendental dimension of experience (Kant, Schopenhauer). (p. 118)

The first interpretation is "the great theory of beauty" as proportion and harmony as this was developed, as the author states, in classical Hellenism and the Middle Ages. From these periods Farley synthesizes the notion that beauty characterizes everything that is, i.e., which emerges into reality from out of the dissolution of chaos. But the beauty of proportion which is appropriate to the form of each reality is not static, but comes from a "livingness surging through the universe" (p. 20) which gives to each thing an enlivened intelligibility and erotic attraction. Beauty, in this sense, involves a dynamic relationship and response to what is real. This dynamic character of beauty is augmented by the Whiteheadian understanding: "Beauty as both synthesis and intensity of experience is the primordial and universal creativity of the world" (p. 25).

The problem that remains after the discussion of the first interpretation is the relationship of God to beauty. Both Classical Hellenism and the Christian Middle Ages agree that God is the ultimate source of the beauty of things. But is God beautiful? If there is no multiplicity in God and, hence, no proportion, can it be said that there is beauty in God? How can "ultimate simplicity give rise to the proportioned complexity of beauty" (p. 23)? Whitehead begins to grapple with this, but Farley will use both the insight and anomaly left at the end of this discussion to forge deeper insight into the relation of beauty and faith.

Beauty as a human sensibility is the second insight which Farley develops with incisive analytical skill. He combs the philosophers of the eighteenth century to develop this understanding. Beauty is no longer simply an external characteristic of things but also a human psychological response to reality—and at times mostly that. This era is developed positively as bringing out another element of beauty as human response. Standards of taste and a retrieval of the sublime are developed as counterpoints to an overly subjective understanding of beauty. Kant's transcendental philosophy secures the self-transcending element of human being. Farley will incorporate these insights into the redemptive human response in his theological development.

A highpoint of the groundwork which Farley performs is his discussion of Jonathan Edwards, whom Farley considers to have more centrally and pervasively developed beauty as a theological motif than any other writer in Christian history. In his development of secondary beauty, Edwards sublates into his own Christian cosmology the insights of beauty as proportion in existence and as a human sensibility. In summarizing Edwards, Farley states: "For what is the world but a harmony of goods—a totality in which there is a certain fitness between the contents of things and their designated ends. . . . And there is a human sensibility that pleasantly experiences the proportions, fittings, conformities and unities of the world" (p. 44).

More important than secondary or inferior beauty, however, is Edwards' development of primary beauty. What is primarily beautiful is the benevolence of the human heart towards all things. Edwards uses the term "true virtue" to describe this benevolence to being in general and he considers this to be primordial or primary beauty (p. 45). Primary beauty as undeterred benevolence towards all things finds its primordial and primary instance in the mutualities within God as triune. Being in the image of God, human beings immediately experience the beauty of benevolence in themselves and others, but it is always in a finite mode, clouded by sin and in need of redemption.

Benevolence is not simply subjective feeling; it is engagement and relational communion with what is real. Edwards goes beyond the Cartesian dichotomy between subject and object and the Kantian impenetrability of the noumenon. Farley concludes this section:

But if primary beauty is heartfelt benevolence to being in general, beauty is not simply one of various human powers, faculties or sensibilities; it is the deepest and most central way in which the human being is transcendently engaged beyond itself. It is just this engagement, the benevolent disposition towards the good of all things, that constitutes the triune being of God Godself, the original righteousness of Eden, which is corrupted by human sin, and the compassionate life of true virtue. (p. 48)

But if beauty is intrinsic to faith then it must have something to do with redemption. It cannot simply be an element of original creation corrupted by sin. Solving this problematic will be Farley's original contribution to this understanding of beauty. But since faith is response, the author needs to develop further the understanding of beauty in human self-transcendence. Farley examines philosophers who ignore beauty and those for whom it is intrinsic to human transcendence. An important understanding of will in Schopenhauer and the distinction between self-preoccupation and self-transcendence will ground Farley's understanding of the origins of evil as the idolatrous and humanly deforming preoccupation with things as opposed to beauty as compassionate self-transcendence beyond self-preoccupation (pp. 59–62).

In the next section of the book Farley shows how the themes so far developed have played a part in various theological aesthetics of the twentieth century. He concludes:

... these theological paths to beauty pass over what seems to be a crucial issue—namely, whether and how beauty constitutes, or is present in, the life of faith. . . .

The following axiom poses an additional consideration to these approaches: *Theology's route to beauty should be determined initially by the way in which beauty appears in the life of faith.* (p. 83)

Chapter 7, "The Beauty of Human Redemption", considers this axiom and is the core of Farley's development. The author's thesis is that beauty is primordially a matter of the human being as *imago Dei*. This beauty has been fractured by the phenomenon of human sin and evil. Redemption implies the restoration of this primordial beauty, which is hence intrinsic to faith as the human openness and response to the power of redemption.

Self-transcendence, egocentrism, and competitiveness are natural to the survival of the human being and are consistent with the *imago Dei*. But when these are co-opted by the idolatrous desire irrevocably to stave off human frailty, the world and its human others cease to be something in themselves and are simply means for satisfying this skewed passion. Compassionate benevolence is compromised and disfigured. This is the ugliness of sin. But sin and ugliness, in this sense, are not simply the absence of beauty. They become a positive force in the disfigurement of both the perpetrators of sinful ugliness and the victims of it.

Ethical self-transcendence is able to move beyond the interests of the self and endure the vulnerable face of the other as other and not as threat. The response of faith "is a 'founding' in and by God that undermines the anxious need for idols and their security. The fundamental effect of this 'founding' is to draw the human being out of the self-preoccupied immanence that cripples its capacity to engage a genuine other" (pp. 93–94). This bridging restores the compassionate benevolence of the person, which is both the restoration of his or her beauty and the enlivening engagement of beauty in the world. In this way beauty is essential and intrinsic to faith and is at the center of redemption.

Farley's development is far more nuanced than I have been able to indicate in this short space. This is a small book, but it is daunting how the author has packed every

page with insight. To comment on just his understanding of pathos, chaos and frailty, for instance, would demand another review. Or his use of thinkers such as Levinas, Whitehead or Edwards would likewise constitute another project. I utterly enjoyed this book. It fills a lacuna in the theology of beauty and cuts through the morass of difficulties with beauty raised by contemporary aesthetics. This is done both with intellectual integrity and exciting insight.

There are just a couple of elements which I thought could have been handled differently and, that is not to say, better. The author is quite selective in his choice of texts and authors. At the end it seems clear that the author's initial and very original theological insight was the guide in his choice. But a constant refrain of the author is how beauty has never been considered intrinsic to faith in Western theological developments. This is certainly the case in the authors chosen as dialogue partners, with perhaps the exception of Edwards. But the compassionate benevolence and the redemptive quality of beauty could have found great resonance and further support from the works of Augustine or Bonaventure, for instance. And the Whiteheadian insights with regard to beauty and eros could have been greatly advanced by reference to the works of Robert Neville and David Hall, to name just a couple. Karl Rahner's Trinitarian insights on multiplicity within God could have structurally enhanced Edwards' insights on the topic.

Although the author considers the work of art at the end, I think it would have been a great service to relate his development to an understanding of sacramental art. My impression is that Farley would consider artworks to be secondary beauty in the sense of reshaping or giving further form to the primary and relational beauty of compassionate benevolence. But cannot the artwork be the very emergence of a moment of a person's life as compassionate benevolence, without which the compassionate benevolence could not exist in quite the same way? This is the sense in which I use the phrase "sacramental art". In this sense cannot the artwork be a moment of the intrinsic beauty of faith? Reading this book, for instance, was an experience for me of the beauty intrinsic to the faith of Edward Farley. Can this not be called a moment of the primordial beauty of his compassionate benevolence? I think development of his insight in this direction could be of great service to those interested in the vital connection between faith and the arts.

But to end, let me repeat my enthusiasm. This is a wonderful book which goes a long way in restoring the idea of and passion for redemptive beauty to our world. It is in itself a moment of that redemptive beauty.

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A Theology of Compassion by Oliver Davies (London: SCM Press, 2001), xxii + 376 pp.

I sometimes tell my students that humans are unique in the sense that our freedom gives us the capacity to be less than human. According to the Christian tradition, I explain, to be human is to be created in the image of God, and so affords the possibility of being a friend—of God, of other humans, and of the rest of the creation. Yet this possibility is entirely a gift that we are, as history abundantly witnesses, perfectly free to reject. In *A Theology of Compassion*, Oliver Davies makes an analogous,

albeit considerably more sophisticated argument: To be truly human is to be compassionate, to risk oneself kenotically for the sake of the suffering or distressed other when one could just as easily do otherwise. "The discovery that the self is paradoxically most realized in its radical self-dispossession, and that this condition is an essential part of what it is to be a *creature* of the triune God, is the unifying theme of this book" (p. xii).

A Theology of Compassion is a remarkable book, as much for its ambition as for its execution. I read it as a complex interweaving of two books, one a sophisticated, critical treatment of the history of human efforts to think philosophically about being, or ontology; the other a thoughtful attempt to develop a Christian theology (and especially a theological anthropology) of compassion in the light of the postmodern turn and its persistent critique of ontology. Davies argues that from the perspective of the Christian tradition these two matters are inextricable, for "the question of what it means to be human has been intimately linked with the question of what it means to be" (p. xv).

In keeping with these closely linked *topoi*, the book is divided into two main sections. The first, "The Metaphysics of Compassion", simultaneously outlines Davies' constructive project and considers some of the ways philosophers and theologians have understood being and the existence of the self in relation to other selves. Here Davies narrates the self-giving lives of Etty Hillesum, Edith Stein and an unnamed woman from Bosnia, to display a basic tenet of his argument: "The world begins for me when I perceive something which is not myself" (p. 29). To be truly human is to be receptive to the subjectivity of that perceived other, to sense her suffering, and to act on her behalf, even to the extent of placing oneself at risk for her—that is, to be compassionate.

Yet compassion is easier thought and performed in some contexts than others. This part of the book is developed around an impressive, far ranging, survey in which Davies shows that some of the ways philosophers and theologians have thought being and subjectivity place the self on a trajectory toward receptivity to the other, and therefore true humanity, while some lead toward an almost inevitable thinking of the other as alien to or even as a threat to the self, which is a denial of humanity. It would probably not do to use the words "heroes" and "villains" with respect to so detailed and careful a reading of the philosophical canon, but Davies clearly understands that the work of certain of the postmodern thinkers (Nietzsche, Deleuze, Derrida, and especially Emmanuel Levinas) as essential to his project. These are in a significant way theological thinkers, and postmodernity thus "appears to be a movement of protest and renewal, which stands in a long European protesting tradition that has repeatedly questioned the prerogatives of power and priestliness" (p. 136). Postmodernity opens up a space in which being can be thought as kenotic receptivity to the other.

The book's second section, "A Theology of Compassion", treats the questions of being and compassion in light of the Jewish and Christian understanding that God speaks. This speech calls for responses, both reflective and active, the formulation of which is the task of theology. Theology is a poetic enterprise, and one of its central tasks is to "find new and positive ways of telling the world what being a Christian 'is like', communicating in any way we can its freedom and joy" (p. 176).

Christians, of course, believe that God has spoken paradigmatically in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus' presence elicits a response of faith, which is "distinctly kenotic, finding its content and substance in the kenosis of radical discipleship, as a reflection of the divine and human decentering of the self in the hypostatic union" (p. 212). Jesus' life displays a basic truth about God and the creation, which is that God is compassionate. God's compassion, moreover, is at the core of God's being, and hence (by analogy) the being of the universe. In an extra-

ordinary exegesis of Exodus 3:14, Davies turns to midrashic commentaries, "in which we find the identification of the name YHWH with God's quality of compassion" (p. 243). It is this compassion that the Christian community is called to make present to the world. The church bears witness to the final victory of God's compassion, demonstrated in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, which by the presence of the Spirit makes possible "a visible life of discipleship and service, acted out in the world" (p. 278).

A Theology of Compassion is a dense, difficult, and occasionally confusing book that is nonetheless well worth reading. If one of the marks of a good book is that it leads the reader to ask questions—to be drawn into conversation, if you will—then this is a good book indeed, for it raised in my mind several significant questions, two of which I will mention here. The first has to do with Davies' nearly interchangeable use of the word "compassion" and "kenosis", and with his insistence that the universe is in some sense ontologically compassionate. He refers to kenosis as a decentering of the self in the presence of another, and rightly understands compassion as action taken in response to being moved by the suffering or distress of another. But it is not clear that on a metaphysical-theological level, these notions are interchangeable. For if compassion is a response to suffering, its existence would seem to require suffering, and if compassion is intrinsic to the being of the universe, then that would mean that suffering, too, is intrinsic to being, something created by God. It is not clear that Davies believes this to be the case—in fact, I am almost certain that he does not—but his failure to give an account of the fall as *some kind* of event in time and space leaves the reader wondering at this point, not just about his understanding of sin and salvation, but of the eschaton, and the ways in which the eschaton differs from the present age.

My second question is related, in the sense that it has to do with Davies' concern to make metaphysics, and especially the matter of ontology, a determinative theological category. Davies insists that a central task of theology is apologetic, to *explain* Christianity to those beyond the bounds of the baptismal community. I wonder whether this understanding of the theological task inevitably falls prey to the liberal penchant for the abstract and universal at the expense of the historical and particular. He says that Christians "are under an obligation today to seek for paradigms which can dynamically project 'the idea of Christianity' into the general experience of humanity in a way that a particular paradigm of the self, or that a rationalism humbly reflecting upon its own constraints, cannot" (p. 176). But in what sense is Christianity an "idea" that can be abstracted from a particular history and the life of a particular historical community? It is not clear what is behind Davies' claim that the "universality of Christ as centre of the world renders any sectarian reading of salvation, founded upon historical and cultural contingency, deeply unsatisfying" (p. 229). What other access do we have to Christ than God's self giving in the historically and culturally contingent life of Jesus of Nazareth? What would it mean to think "salvation" in a way that does not understand the very word as part of the historically and culturally contingent vocabulary of the Jewish and Christian communities? Would it still be salvation? These are not questions to which I have ready answers, but they are certain to occupy a considerable part of my thinking in the days to come. Which means that Oliver Davies' book is, to my mind at least, a success.

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Love's Grateful Striving: A Commentary on Kierkegaard's Works of Love by M. Jamie Ferreira (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 2001), xi + 316 pp.

Works of Love, at least among academic readers, is arguably Kierkegaard's least-loved work. Thinkers from Buber to Barth to Adorno have condemned the text, characterizing the theo-ethic it sets forth as dualistic, "ananthropic", "acosmic", "non-mutual", "unlivable", "disinterested", "gruesome", immaterial, appropriative, necrophilic, masochistic, instrumentalist, and "unethically individualistic". Indeed, the Kierkegaard of *Works of Love* offers the understandably unpopular arguments that genuine love cannot be recognized as such, that the genuine beloved is fully substitutable, that social and economic distinctions are ultimately negligible, that love is most free when it is commanded, and that love can best be seen in one's relationship with a dead person. These positions have fueled the accusations catalogued above, which Jamie Ferreira argues are not so much *unfounded* as they are decontextualized. In *Love's Grateful Striving*, Ferreira looks to challenge the dominion of these undialectical interpretations, and to recalibrate the delicate system of rhetorical counterbalances structuring *Works of Love*.

Rather than concentrating simply on the anti-dualist, concrete, or communal moments in *Works of Love* (a method which would only provide an uncritical "yes" to the critics' uncritical "no"), Ferreira considers the work as a whole—agreeable and disagreeable passages alike—exploring systematically the textual locations, rhetorical strategy, and intended audience behind Kierkegaard's various assertions and reversals. As a commentary, her book parallels Kierkegaard's; each of the sixteen central chapters of *Love's Grateful Striving* corresponds directly to one (or three, in one case) of the eighteen "deliberations" composing *Works of Love*. Ferreira tends to stay close to the text of the particular section at hand, although she is careful to point out moments of interrelation between and among deliberations. She frequently supplements this analysis with material from other Kierkegaardian sources, both pseudonymous and signed, calling upon a parable or contemporaneous journal entry to help illuminate a difficult passage. Also, as a means of situating the work ethically and theologically, Ferreira often invokes Kierkegaard's ancestors and descendants, especially Luther and Levinas.

The result of this meticulously executed methodology is a treatment of *Works of Love* that manages to remain stubbornly dialectical, keeping immanence and transcendence, Law and grace, and difference and identity in constant, unresolved interplay. Ferreira balances Kierkegaard's condemnation of "worldliness" with his equally vitriolic condemnation of "escapism" (p. 97), his injunction to deny differences with his injunction to nurture them (p. 112), and his denigration of the "crowd" with his "unqualified affirmation of our need for companionship" (p. 103). She holds his critique of reciprocity in tension with his insistence on absolute equality, and his insistence on equality over against the "heightened inequality" between self and other (p. 221). She moderates his attack on "selfish" self-love with his advocacy of "proper" self-love (p. 31), his suggestion that we be "blind" with his demand that our eyes be "wide open" (pp. 107–112), and his insistence upon love's hiddenness with his insistence upon love's revelation (p. 24). Ultimately, each of these "indispensable counterweights" (p. 65) allows Ferreira to preserve the dialectical integrity of Kierkegaard's most troublesome pair: interiority versus exteriority.

According to received opinion, Kierkegaard's excessive attention to "inwardness" serves as a questionable ethical foundation. If Kierkegaard's Christianity concerns itself only with the "single individual"'s "God-relationship", then a "Christian" ethic can only support indifference to the concrete problems and specific needs of the other.

This is the charge Ferreira seems most concerned to refute: that Kierkegaard offers an “otherworldly” status quoism in place of a materially transformative ethic. She therefore insists that his appeal to the “hidden inwardness” of conscience be read only in light of his constant refrain, “Christian love is sheer action” (p. 65). These opposite positions are best elaborated in two parables that surface repeatedly in Kierkegaard’s and Ferreira’s works. The first tells of one man who gives a “charity” dinner for the poor people in the land, and another who gives the same dinner, but proclaims it a “banquet”. Although the first man’s dinner is a work, an infinite spiritual difference renders the second man’s a work of *love*. Just as the parable of the banquet demonstrates the importance of love’s inwardness, the parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates the importance of love’s *outward* expression. Ferreira often calls upon this “merciful” Samaritan, whom Kierkegaard praises for his attention to the *material* needs of the suffering man, *not* “for having given spiritual instruction to the wounded man, for reminding him how much he was loved by God, or for providing him with spiritual reading for his stay in the ditch” (p. 34). For Kierkegaard, then, it is true that love cannot be decisively measured by external signs, but it is equally true that love-as-inwardness “*craves*” outward expression.

While balancing and contextualizing provocative utterances is important work for its own sake, Ferreira also looks toward the contributions that a re-equalized *Works of Love* might make to contemporary ethical, philosophical, and theological questions; most notably, to the burgeoning conversations surrounding “the gift” and the status of reciprocity. In *Works of Love*, the “distinctive character” of love’s gift is that it puts the *giver*—not the recipient—into “infinite debt”; the one who loves can never stop loving, satisfied that he has done his duty. At the same time, Ferreira explains *via* Levinas that this debt’s *infinity* secures it as *fulfillable*; precisely because no work of love can ever cancel my debt to the other, I may “at a given moment perform a perfect act of love” (p. 126). This perfect act, for Kierkegaard, is helping another to “stand alone”. It therefore must be characterized by two withdrawals: the giver must conceal himself as giver and the gift must conceal itself as gift. If this were not the case—if, for example, my newly independent neighbor knew that he owed his independence to me—then the gift of freedom would become a gift of indebtedness. The giver must therefore hide herself Socratically, withdrawing “in such a way that the gift seems to the recipient to be his or her own” (p. 156). At this point for Ferreira, Kierkegaard’s Lutheran inheritance becomes crucial: the human giver and his gift should not announce themselves as giver and gift because, technically, *God* is the only giver—and grace the only gift. As Ferreira explains it, each of us is like the child in the Kierkegaardian parable who buys a gift for his parents with the allowance they have given him: “any gift we give to another is only possible because we have already been gifted” (p. 117).

Ferreira does mention half-heartedly that the notion of “infinite debt”, along with Kierkegaard’s rejection of calculation and repayment, eludes the Derridean critique of economic circularity. She also, more energetically, distinguishes Kierkegaard’s bracketing of reciprocity from Levinas’s *foreclosure* of it; for Kierkegaard, love cannot *seek* repayment, but is in no way invalidated by it. Ultimately, however, Ferreira is most concerned to short-circuit such speculative endeavors entirely. In a much-needed ethical re-orientation, she states simply: “The program is as follows: remove, as far as possible, concern for the giver and the giving so that we are not asking questions about them. Focus on the other’s need.” A mere stalling tactic, the philosophical attempt “to make sure the gift is ‘pure,’ to make sure that the receiver gets a ‘pure’ gift, still manages to keep the attention on us, the giver” (p. 166).

To return briefly—at the risk of reinscribing precisely the self-concern against which Ferreira rails—to the question of reciprocity, the point is not that love *precludes* reciprocity, but that it must function irrespectively of it. The best known (and most

loathed) example of love's independence from reciprocity in *Works of Love* is, of course, Kierkegaard's suggestion that love can best be discerned in relation to a dead person, since he cannot respond or repay. Ferreira is careful to establish the recollection of the dead as a "test", rather than a "model"; Kierkegaard is not suggesting we treat living people as if they were dead. Rather, he likens this "test" to watching a partnerless dancer; it is easiest to discern the steps when "there is only one" (p. 212). Without wanting to hold Ferreira to Kierkegaard's suggestion, however, the problem with the dancer metaphor is that it assumes the dancer dances just as well (or better) by himself as he does with his partner, which means that the dance, or the love, ultimately comes from the self-alone. Love may be able to *withstand* reciprocity, but it is not created, furthered, or sustained by reciprocity. Although Ferreira takes pains to demonstrate the importance of community in *Works of Love*, it seems that intersubjective relation is ultimately *added on* to coherent (although, to be sure, God-related) individuals. It may not be "good" for man to be alone (p. 103), but it is *possible*.

This secondary status of reciprocity, the insidious individualism it seems to resurrect, the persistent dualism between "Christianity" and "the world", and the redemptive reliance of erotic love upon non-preferential love may continue to trouble Kierkegaard's more communally- or materially-minded readers. Upon a careful consideration of *Love's Grateful Striving*, however, such readers will find it impossible to arrive at any conclusion too quickly; as Ferreira tirelessly demonstrates, even the text's most disturbing rhetorical flourishes have their contexts and counterbalances. Moreover, by unsettling layers of hermeneutical dust, Ferreira allows her reader to see Kierkegaard's work as a work of love—a grateful response to the radically anterior gift that enables the giver to give. Although Kierkegaard signed his own name to *Works of Love*, Ferreira therefore implies that these deliberations should be read as Socratic offerings. Continually pointing away from himself, the giver means only to point to the Giver, who in turn points away from Himself and charges the grateful soul to work lovingly *in the world* saying, "what you do for them you do for me" (p. 80).

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Gnostic Apocalypse: Jacob Boehme's Haunted Narrative by Cyril O'Regan (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), x + 300 pp.

This book inaugurates the second, genealogical portion of Cyril O'Regan's ambitious, multi-volume project begun in *Gnostic Return in Modernity*, and like the latter will certainly prove to be an enduring contribution to scholarship in such diverse fields as theology, philosophy, and literary criticism. Whereas in the first volume, which follows and improves upon the work of the nineteenth-century theologian F. C. Baur, O'Regan provided a methodological framework with which to address the thesis of a Gnostic return, in this volume he begins his investigation of particular figures, "candidates for Gnostic ascription", with an appraisal of the speculative shoemaker from Görlitz, Jacob Boehme (1575–1624). Needless to say, to anyone familiar with the opacity of Boehme's language—which is somewhat understandable given that it arose Joseph Smith-like from visions reflected in a pewter dish—this is a daunting place to begin: an ostensibly Christian discourse that blends such heterogenous ele-

ments as Paracelsian alchemy, Neoplatonism, Kabbalah, and biblical apocalyptic. As O'Regan himself avers, "hacking one's way through symbolic forests and wading one's way through mythological swamps is not every scholar's idea of interpretive amusement" (p. 8). Yet the hermeneutical adventure proves to be necessary, because it is precisely here that O'Regan, following Baur's thesis, locates the return of Gnosticism in modernity—a return that has haunted it ever since, giving rise to an entire line of Protestant discourse, which is neither orthodox nor liberal, but of a distinctive third kind. Thus, against the view of those who, like Foucault, banish Boehme from "the precincts of modernity", O'Regan argues that Boehme's thought has an effective history not only "to the side of the discourses of modernity, but to a significant extent within them" (p. 23).

That this is true in the case of Hegel, O'Regan has already demonstrated convincingly in *The Heterodox Hegel*, and no doubt the same case can (and in a subsequent volume will) be made with regard to Schelling, particularly from the time of his 1809 essay *On Human Freedom* and with a view to his later, trinitarian doctrine of the potencies (as articulated in his lectures on the *Philosophy of Revelation*). But as O'Regan points out, the haunting does not stop with German Idealism, but continues to be felt in such different twentieth-century theologies as those of Tillich, Altizer, and Moltmann (and I would add, via Schelling, Franz Rosenzweig, even though he stands under the more obvious influence of the Kabbalah). In any case, however far the thesis of a Gnostic return can be stretched (for example, whether or not it should include Barth's "theopanism", as Erich Przywara and Gustav Siewerth have suggested, despite Barth's rejection of trinitarian Gnosis in *KD I*, 1, p. 505), the presence of Boehme's discourse in modern philosophy and theology turns out to be far more pervasive than conventional genealogies will allow. Thus, one must speak of a "haunting that is thicker, more historically embodied . . . less 'ghostly,' but, arguably, more 'ghastly'" (p. 23). And it is in this "ghastly" light that the particular exigency of the book becomes manifest. For while the book will be of untold benefit to philosophers and literary critics (who may be interested in the genealogy of German Idealism or perhaps the new religion of Harold Bloom), one must bear in mind that O'Regan is first and foremost a theologian, a curator of Christian grammar, and like Irenaeus before him he intends to perform an exorcism. In this respect, the book does not feign impartiality; indeed, as O'Regan stated in his introductory volume, he sees himself on the side of the "mourners rather than the celebrators of Gnostic return". But he is not precipitous in his judgment; on the contrary, he is painstakingly attentive to the distinctiveness of Boehme's narrative, particularly to the ways in which it "enlists" and masters pre- and post-Reformation discourses. Furthermore, while the Gnostic ascription of Boehme's discourse may be a foregone conclusion (given the book's title), O'Regan devotes an entire chapter to Boehme's "orthodox reserve", i.e., the ways in which Boehme's discourse might remain within the bounds of a generous orthodoxy. Yet the conclusion is inescapable: even the most magnanimous orthodoxy cannot fail to note the "metaleptic" swerves of Boehme's discourse, that is to say, its systematic "disfiguration-refiguration" of the standard Christian narrative, which entails nothing short of "a massive transformation" of the standard Christian picture (p. 54).

The book is divided into three parts. Part I gives an introductory account of Boehme's narrative grammar, focusing in chapter one on the six-stage account of divine becoming, which involves a kenotic and erotic cascade from the quiescent and apparently lifeless eternity of an "Unground" to a preliminary grounding in the Logos of an immanent Trinity, to a completed "fall" and turbulent grounding in "Eternal Nature" as a true, non-divine other. It is here that the relevance of Boehme's discourse to every subsequent theogonic narrative is immediately apparent—not to mention its swerve from the standard Christian view of God as the always already

actualized plenitude of Being; for it is here that suffering and the possibility of evil are introduced as necessary moments in the story of divine becoming, the story of how God's body, the New Jerusalem, is formed out of chaos, out of "the crucible of pain and alienation induced by Eternal Nature" (p. 42). It is, in short, the story of God as a "project", indeed, *the* project (p. 30). It is also here that O'Regan adduces another significant swerve, namely, the addition of Wisdom to the immanent Trinity as an independent hypostasis, thus forming a Quaternity, which links Boehme to the sophiological speculations of Soloviev, Berdyaev, and Bulgakov (though in the case of the Russians, it can be argued, orthodox Christian grammar retains its narrative priority). In chapter two, O'Regan discusses the pre-Reformation context of Boehme's thought, in particular, his indebtedness to Paracelsian alchemy, which he appropriates and extends, as well as his relation to Meister Eckhart, whose negative theology he appropriates but radically transforms, overturning the Neoplatonic trope of the *bonum diffusivum sui* with an erotic rather than an agapaic model of divine creation.

In Part II O'Regan then develops the theme of narrative transformation with a detailed account of the further, metaleptic swerves Boehme's discourse makes, first from the post-Reformation discourse of the Spiritual Reformers, Sebastian Franck, Caspar Schwenkfeld, and Valentin Weigel (chapter 3), and then from Christian narrative grammar as such (chapter 4). As he clearly shows, while there is much that links Boehme's thought to that of the Spiritual Reformers (for example, their shared rejection of predestination, forensic justification, and Luther's doctrine of the *verbum externum*), none of them could ever have agreed to Boehme's derivation of the Trinity from a prior Unground, nor to his notion of creation *ex Deo*, nor to his peculiar christology or anthropology. Thus, in chapter four O'Regan discusses the distinctive swerves that move Boehme toward "a total disfiguration-refiguration of the biblical narrative" (p. 103). These consist principally in his doctrine of the Trinity (or, as the case may be, his Quaternity), his "peculiar view of divine essence and attributes, his view of the agon at the heart of eternity, and, finally, his view of the body of God, also the 'heavenly Eve' or Jerusalem" (p. 107). In drawing out his thesis, O'Regan also notes three corresponding, material elements that effect Boehme's transformation of the Christian narrative: (1) his voluntarism; (2) his logical and temporal prioritization of eros over agape; (3) his transvaluation of kenosis (which in this case is not simply morphological but essential, as a consequence of the first two points, and moves not in the direction from more to less, but from less to more); and (4) his transformation of the Cross into an agonistic symbol of divine becoming. All of which points to Hegel and his speculative Good Friday with the exception that Hegel "erases" the apophatic dimension (along with an immanent Trinity, however deficient) that Boehme—and Schelling, one might add—retains. In this respect, among others, "Boehme is simply more rooted in the Christian tradition" (p. 131). And for this reason O'Regan rounds out Part II with a reflective chapter on the orthodox restraints of Boehme's discourse—a discourse that is otherwise "unbounding" from the Christian tradition at every conceivable turn.

Having bracketed the discussion until now, in Part III O'Regan proceeds to raise the question of Gnostic ascription, specifically, the question of what legitimates the classification of Boehme's discourse as a form of Valentinian Gnosticism. Thus, in chapter six, he adduces the significant correspondences between Boehme and classical Valentinian genres, which consist, principally, in their shared grammar of "divine perfection-fall-reconstitution of perfection across a complex six-stage narrative that represents a metalepsis of the biblical narrative" (p. 156). But if Boehme repeats Valentinian genres, it is also clear that he develops them; for example, whereas Boehme's narrative is expressly theogonic, Valentinian narratives are not. Accordingly, drawing upon the conceptual analysis that he prosecuted in volume one,

O'Regan shows that Boehme's narrative represents "an erotic, kenotic, and agonistic deformation of classical Valentinianism" (p. 212). But, ironically, the fact of this deformation does not lessen the case for Gnostic, indeed Valentinian, ascription, but rather strengthens it; for it is precisely such *metalepsis* that Irenaeus identified as the hallmark of Valentinian discourse. Furthermore, as O'Regan points out, Boehme's narrative "is deviant in ways suggested by the classical Valentinian paradigms themselves" (p. 157). But the case for Valentinian ascription is not, therefore, concluded. Indeed, the bulk of Part III bears the burden of showing the superior explanatory power of Valentinian ascription over the rival taxonomic claims of apocalyptic, Neoplatonism, and Kabbalah (constituting chapters 7, 8, and 9, respectively). The reasons for this are clear. For example, without denying the factual presence of apocalyptic elements, one must reject an apocalyptic classification because of its inability to account for the theogonic and extrabiblical narrative of divine self-realization. Likewise, without denying the presence of a genuine apophaticism, one must reject a Neoplatonic ascription because Neoplatonic thought not only undergoes radical revision, but is made to subserve an entirely alien narrative of divine becoming. Finally, in spite of the fascinating similarities between Boehme's discourse and the Kabbalah, because Boehme's engagement with this tradition is a relatively late occurrence, it too can be no more than a "taxonomic supplement" (p. 193). All of which speaks in favor of the Valentinian hypothesis; for while the rival taxonomies cannot account for one another, it is the distinctively Valentinian mark of Boehme's thought that it "enlists" and masters the apocalyptic, Neoplatonic, and Kabbalistic discourses it includes.

At one level, therefore, this book carries out the requisite exegetical labor to establish the thesis of a Gnostic return; it also lays the groundwork for future volumes on Hegel [*sic*], Schelling, and Romanticism, to name but a few. At another level, it is an exercise in the "discernment of spirits" by Irenaeus *redivivus*, a provisional identification of the Gnostic tropes that have haunted modernity—and Christian theology in particular—since the beginning of the seventeenth-century. In this respect, this book is more than a contribution to scholarship; it is an act of ecclesial service. It is, moreover, timely, given the widespread tendency in modern theology to honor theologies that promote a passibility of the divine as such (well beyond the suffering of the Word in his humanity), and even view creation itself as a tragic moment in the story of divine becoming. In any event, the adherents of such theologies owe O'Regan a debt of gratitude for helping to clarify their position: they can now declare themselves for Valentinus *against* Irenaeus.

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Karl Barth on the Christian Life: The Practical Knowledge of God by Joseph L. Mangina (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2001), xiv + 255 pp.

The number of recent correctors to past readings of Karl Barth (one thinks of McCormack, Hunsinger, Webster, and Biggar, for example) continues to grow. There should be no doubt that there are more to come and that many of those that do will now have to refer to Joseph Mangina's corrections to the traditional view of Barth's

understanding of subjectivity if they wish their work to be precise. This book, which began as a Yale dissertation, is now published as part of Paul Molnar's *Issues in Systematic Theology* series. Mangina's thesis is that the received interpretation, among English-speaking theologians, of Barth's understanding of the human subject falls along two lines. Barth is either the steel-spined opponent of human experience with an overdrawn picture of divine transcendence which results in a God too far, or Barth is a *redivivus* Monophysite or Christomonist whose Christology negates human autonomy and results in a God too near in the wrong way (p. 3). Both extremes fail to see that Barth really does talk about human subjectivity in a manner that is fully capable of theological weight and that survives the criticism of the self made famous by Descartes. Even further, Barth's ultimate achievement is that he unfolds the meaning of subjectivity across the span of his dogmatics and is not content to treat it as merely an entry within dogmatics.

The first chapter examines Barth's break with liberal theology and argues that his break with Wilhelm Herrmann made it possible to reject the Cartesianism of neo-Protestants. This Cartesian self, the one that praises self-transcendence and wants to escape contingent identifications, got its comeuppance with Barth's refusal to define the God of the Bible from below. However, once God got into human skin God redefined the meaning of human finitude. Mangina thinks that critics of Barth keep missing this crucial point: God has disclosed God's self to humanity in a way that engages the whole person (*den ganzen Menschen*). Mangina tracks this idea through three examples: Barth's 1911 speech "Jesus Christus und die soziale Bewegung", the eschatological realism of the lecture "The Strange New World Within the Bible" and the *Romans* commentary, and, third, Barth's use of the term "acknowledgement" (*Anerkennung*) in the *Dogmatics* which is "a formal category for describing the response to God across the entire range of human existence" (p. 43).

Barth's way of speaking of participation in the triune life of God is the focus of Mangina's second chapter. Under the influence of Orthodox theology the West has recently rediscovered the notion of participation. While such development might be welcome, Mangina argues that Barth would find it problematic as long as *theologia gloriae*, like *theologia crucis*, has the potential for abstraction. Mangina's discussion begins with a description of *pro me* put forward by the Reformers but reassessed in the modern era. The phrase once referred to the character and action of God with the result that one could have objective assurance of salvation. However, in the neo-Protestant tradition the phrase became a short hand for a kind of existential truth with the result that epistemology rather than assurance comes to the fore. Mangina argues that Barth's turn away from the modern program in CD IV/1 and IV/2 is made explicit in his treatment of three "transitional discussions" in the doctrine of reconciliation ("The Verdict of the Father", "The Direction of the Son", "The Promise of the Spirit"). These establish that "the knowledge of God is a participation *in* God" where knowledge does not mean simple cognition or assent but is an active response to God's grace" (p. 58).

The third chapter answers how Barth treated knowledge of self in light of the problem of sin. Mangina notes that when modern theological anthropology speaks of sin it very often does so because the great claims of the tradition (command, transgression, punishment) are so out of step with what we "really" know about humans and why they get into trouble. In contrast, Barth is modern in the sense that he unfolds his anthropology not by explaining sin but by describing it. Mangina looks for proof of this by focusing on Barth's exegesis of certain Old Testament narratives that reveal Barth's "Christologically particularist framework" (p. 103). The point here is that as sin involves the whole person so does the redemption offered by God.

Chapter 4 proves very interesting. Because he refuses to split being human into dualisms, Barth had to give an account of what the affective life looked like when

viewed as a whole. Mangina takes up the idea of religious affections and argues that while Barth roundly rejected the expressivist view of language found in Schleiermacher ("Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech"), this does not mean that Barth was unaware of the whole nature of human life. In moving beyond expressivism, Barth describes the qualities specific to human agents and shows that human affections correspond to God's action. The two affections Mangina works with are prototypical of Barth: gratitude and joy.

The final chapter responds to charges made by some critics (Hauerwas, for example) that Barth gives too little attention to sanctification and Christian ethics. Mangina brings forth evidence that Barth places a remarkable emphasis on the growth and change that occur in a human life across time. By reading the lectures published after Barth's death, collected under the title *The Christian Life*, that were to be incorporated into CD IV/4, Mangina is able to show that Barth relates human agency to the life of passion (*Leidenschaft*).

One could be fairly convinced that Mangina's interpretation of Barth is correct and one can be equally grateful that Mangina's straightforward style gets the job done. The most annoying problem with this book is the tepid conclusion. More of it could have helped us think through the implications of his insights. The reader comes to the question "what next" but finds that Mangina has marched on toward the index.

How might Mangina's work be enriched? A quick point to make is that what we do not have enough of in this book is a discussion of the human soul. Mangina points out that Cartesian philosophy did away with it but what role does the soul as an element in the complete human agent play in Barth's theology? Second, the book needs more illustrative material. We need to see how Barth's view of the self shows up in his practical, pastoral, personal or political writings. How, for example, did his thinking affect his point of view on the church and ministry? One could argue that historians or sociologists might better do this type of analysis. But since he opens his first chapter with Barth's speeches to the Social Democrats in 1911, it would be helpful to have had some reference to Barth's later political theology. The barrenness of the modern self appeared prominently in Nazi Germany and perhaps reference to the Barmen Declaration's insistence that "we reject the false doctrine that with human vainglory the Church could place the Word and work of the Lord in the service of self-chosen desires, purposes and plans" would be an appropriate field to begin such a commentary. Indeed, there is perhaps no greater manipulator of the modern self than the modern nation-state (from either the political left or right). Fourth, the discussion of religious affections might have been even more enlightening if Mangina had traced grace and gratitude through the Reformed tradition, perhaps with a glance at Calvin, or if Mangina had pursued religious affections that give a greater contrast to each other than joy and gratitude. To be sure, joy and gratitude are central to Barth's theology but one must remember that another of Barth's favorite words was loneliness and that he used *Einsamkeit* to describe hell. Finally, Mangina might also have pursued the idea of men and women. What will happen when we reread Barth's anthropology of gender in the light of Mangina's contention that Barth's doctrine of God engages the whole person?

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The Act of Faith: Christian Faith and the Moral Self by Eric O. Springsted (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), xiii + 271 pp.

A great deal has been written of late that calls into question the privileged position that modernity gave to epistemological questions. Much of this literature also convincingly argues that this epistemological priority was deeply flawed to the extent that it operated with a severely truncated notion of human reason. What has not been explored as adequately, and what Springsted's timely and masterful volume examines with such care, is how modernity also radically transformed our understanding of the act of faith. Whereas previous generations of Christians had considered faith to involve the commitment of the entire human person to a certain way of seeing and living in the world, modern Christians came to regard faith primarily as an deficient form of knowledge that required epistemological justification. The burden of Springsted's work, therefore, is to compare this truncated modern view of faith with a more robust and longstanding view of faith that he traces from the Old and New Testaments through Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Newman and Weil.

Springsted begins his argument by helping us see the pervasiveness of the modern view of faith. He does this by contrasting Pascal's "Wager Argument" with W. K. Clifford's famous essay on "The Ethics of Belief". The latter powerfully articulates what most moderns have come to accept as common sense: that belief, if it is to be more than mere credulity, involves the neutral survey of possibilities and examination of evidence. For this reason, certain fundamental beliefs—such as in God's existence—must first be established with at least some probability before one can reasonably place one's faith or trust in that God. If sufficient evidence is lacking, inquirers are duty bound to withhold their belief. Such assumptions about faith have become so commonplace that they have shaped not only the agenda for modern philosophy of religion, but also the way we read texts that arguably present a quite different understanding of faith. For example, Springsted notes how countless readers and commentators on Pascal's "Wager Argument" have wrongly assumed that his point is to show the reasonableness of faith, to show that faith is a "good bet". Yet such a reading misses the mark, for Pascal's gambler, while acknowledging the reasonableness of the wager, still cannot bring himself to make the wager. Because Pascal realizes that the obstacle is not the intellect but the heart, he encourages the gambler to follow the example of many before him: engage in the practices of the church as though he did believe. As Springsted goes on to show in the rest of the book, for Pascal and most of the Christian tradition, knowledge and understanding of God are best understood not as the precondition for faith, but as the by-product of a relation with God grounded in faith.

Having set up the contrast, Springsted devotes the first section of his book to tracing the intellectual underpinnings of this shift in our understanding of faith. The story is a complex one, and Springsted brings texture and nuance to it, directing our attention not only to the contributions of Locke, Hume and Kant, but also to those Christian theologians who chose in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to begin putting theological questions primarily in terms of natural philosophy. Over time the result, says Springsted, was the rise of a new dominant vision, one marked by "the triumph of the spectator over the participant and the triumph of third person language over first person language". In short, this new vision exalted a certain distanced rationality that resulted in faith losing its personal and historical dimensions. As a result, faith was reduced to belief in certain propositions about God or to belief

in what God had revealed, while jettisoning almost completely the third and traditionally most fundamental aspect of Christian belief: believing in God as trusting in God and loving God.

Much of this is relatively familiar territory, but Springsted's purpose is not simply to recount the history of Western epistemology. Rather, he employs this account to help us recognize the dramatic changes effected by this shift, particularly in how we have come to understand the human person. Previously, the human person was always already a moral self, formed by his or her most fundamental commitments to ends larger than the individual to see and act in a moral space opened up and sustained by those commitments. The modern self, by contrast, is also a moral self, but a self who occupies a much different moral space, one shaped not by self-involving commitments to something more encompassing than the individual but by a distanced rationality in the service of self-engineering. As a result, "the problem of faith in the modern world is then not strictly intellectual", but "one of competing moral selves and moral spaces". This point is crucial to Springsted's argument, for he understands that the primary obstacle for his readers is that they will interpret his argument as primarily about two different intellectual traditions regarding how to understand the act of faith, which readers can then go on to assess neutrality and from a distance. But Springsted wants his readers to understand that this issue goes much deeper, that what is at stake is the kind of moral spaces we imagine ourselves to inhabit, and as a result, the kind of moral selves we will become.

Springsted's notion of moral space, which he defines as "what we can imagine that we can and should do and what we should be in life", is an imaginatively fertile concept. He employs this concept not only to tease out the particular ways in which modern society is defined by the shift from what he calls a human world to an anthropocentric one, but also to offer focus to his careful readings of Scripture, Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin, which comprise over half of the book. Although he is careful to avoid suggesting that these figures operate with a singular and shared understanding of the act of faith, he convincingly argues that each has more in common with the others than any of them have with our modern understandings of faith. In contrast to the modern preoccupation of reasoning *to* faith from a posture of indifference and objectivity, the Christian tradition, Springsted argues, understood that Christian faith entailed a self-involving commitment to reason *with* and *from* faith, where faith was understood both as trust (*fiducia*) and as a willingness to open up oneself to be instructed. In this longstanding Christian tradition, faith was "thinking with assent", where this assent was not merely intellectual, but an assent of the whole person to a way of life that was itself a participation in the life of God. This tradition was never entirely abandoned in modernity, as Springsted notes by his passing references to Pascal and Kierkegaard, as well as his more sustained and suggestive treatments of Newman's understanding of "conscience" and Weil's notion of "attention".

Springsted's work is an extraordinarily rich combination of conceptual analysis, close readings of key texts, and careful reflection on both in the service of Christian communities struggling to embody a robust understanding of faith. As a result, this book should be required reading for anyone wrestling with the fallout from the various critiques of modernity's fixation with matters epistemological. By pointing the church back to many of its key figures and texts, while offering it fresh readings of them that are not dictated by modernity's prejudices, Springsted offers a most compelling case that the act of faith at the heart of the Christian life must be understood primarily in moral terms rather than epistemological ones. Although Springsted does not attempt in this volume to work out all the possible implications of recovering a more full-bodied understanding and practice of faith, he offers the dis-

cerning reader more than enough suggestions to keep her reflecting fruitfully on these matters for quite some time.

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Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov. Orthodox Theology in a New Key by Paul Valliere (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), x + 443 pp.

Not long ago Eastern Orthodox theology was well known in the west only to a handful of ecumenists and historians. Today the claims of Orthodox theologians are widely appreciated by their western counterparts, both Protestant and Catholic. The Orthodoxy now regularly invoked in the west has a definite theological profile. It is firmly committed to the finality of the seven ecumenical councils, regards the Greek fathers from the Cappadocians to Gregory Palamas as a generally uniform, substantially complete, and permanently binding theological tradition, has little interest in social, political, or economic questions, and—a feature especially inviting to some western theologians—is implacably anti-western in its account of all the main issues of Christian belief.

It has not always been so. In this welcome book, Paul Valliere shows how a quite different Orthodox theological tradition took shape in nineteenth century Russia, and despite great hardship flourished in Parisian exile until the end of the Second World War. The theologians of the “Russian school”, as Valliere calls it, were committed to the doctrine of the ancient councils and the teaching of the fathers, but were equally committed to going beyond the fathers—not only to dealing with modern questions the fathers never suspected, but to thinking in a more adequate way about the central theological matters with which the fathers were chiefly concerned. These theologians were openly engaged with modern philosophy, especially in its idealist strains, and had a passionate and richly articulated social vision. And they were deeply ecumenical, refusing to regard the western churches, whatever their shortcomings, as the enemies of Orthodoxy, and determined to overcome in church life and theology what Vladimir Soloviev called “the self-satisfied alienation of the east.”

The three figures whom Valliere selects to represent the modern Russian tradition make an interestingly varied group. Aleksandr Bukharev (1824–1871) had a prominent but unhappy career in the Russian Orthodox Church as Archimandrite Feodor, was defrocked (at his own request) in 1863, and spent the last years of his life as a lay theologian. Bukharev was a voluminous writer, but his work remains untranslated and he is virtually unknown among western theologians (though there are a couple of French studies). Valliere hails him as “Russia’s, and Orthodoxy’s first modern theologian” (p. 106), especially for his volume of essays *On Orthodoxy in Relation to the Modern World* (1860) and his massive commentary on the book of Revelation (*Studies on the Apocalypse*, published posthumously in 1916, under the supervision of Pavel Florensky).

By contrast Vladimir Soloviev (1853–1900) is the best known of Russian philosophers. Intellectual histories of the nineteenth century generally treat him as a late idealist, a Slavic footnote to Hegel and Schelling. Valliere offers a detailed account of Soloviev’s writings on ecumenism, the development of doctrine, the Jews, and eschatology, as well as of Soloviev’s earlier speculative treatises. In this way he shows the

depth of Soloviev's religious and theological interests, and the remarkable independence of mind with which he articulated a trinitarian and Christological understanding of God and the world, the church and human history, for which idealism was mostly just a useful tool. Soloviev sees the Orthodox Church and Russia as destined to occupy a pivotal place in the establishment of the "free theocracy" which will fully realize the divine-human unity eternally grounded in Christ. He can be intensely critical of the eastern Christian tradition, and especially of the Russian Orthodox Church and theology of his own day, for its sweeping failure to live up to this high calling. At the same time his vision of an Orthodoxy—and a world Christianity—which would emerge from the church's present misery afire with "the love that seeks not its own", the love of that which is not self, may be the most remarkable projection of the Christian future in modern theology.

Perhaps most noteworthy for theologians is Valliere's extensive treatment of Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944), to whom he devotes almost half the book. Bulgakov is arguably the most profound and original theologian Orthodoxy has produced in modern times, even though he came to dogmatic theology late in life, after a complex career as a political economist (initially of Marxist conviction), social analyst, and philosopher of religion during some of Russia's most tempestuous times. For its sustained concentration on the central issues of Christian faith, its speculative boldness and creativity, its breadth of interest—especially with regard to social and economic questions—and its sheer size, Bulgakov's theological accomplishment may bear comparison with those of Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Whether such suggestions will prove out is a bit hard to tell, though, since Bulgakov remains little read by theologians, even though most of his major works are now available in western language translations (including a growing number in English). Interest in his theology is apparently on the rise, however, and Valliere's detailed map of his life and work will surely help many find their way.

Valliere's narrative also helps explain why Bulgakov in particular has been so little read up to now. The "Russian school" did not fade away, but was effectively displaced in the Paris emigration by an approach deliberately opposed to it: the "Neopatristic" theology (in Georges Florovsky's term) which has since become the standard intellectual profile of Orthodoxy in the west. That a controversy about "sophiology" is the one thing most interested observers know to associate with Bulgakov is testimony to the success of his Neopatristic opponents in putting their own stamp even upon his theological legacy. Bulgakov still awaits wide theological assessment in no small measure because he and his Russian school colleagues were "on the losing side of a bitter in-house debate" (p. 384) about the nature and future of Orthodox theology, now fated to seek its way in western exile.

Valliere offers an informative account of this sea change, and especially of "the Sophia Affair" of 1935–36, which included the condemnation of Bulgakov's teaching by the Moscow Patriarchate and one wing of the expatriate Russian church (a gesture explicitly supported by Florovsky and Vladimir Lossky). In this Valliere makes no attempt to hide his theological (and, one suspects, moral) sympathies with Bulgakov and Metropolitan Evlogy, Bulgakov's ecclesiastical defender (see p. 289). Rowan Williams's discussion of this episode in his recent Bulgakov anthology (*Sergii Bulgakov: Towards a Russian Political Theology* [Edinburgh, 1999]) is a bit more even handed, though there is no disagreement between them as to the facts.

In Bukharev Valliere finds the first advocate of the theological idea which will mark the Russian school: the humanity of God (Russian *bogochelovechestvo*). Soloviev made this idea explicit and central in a large-scale philosophical view of the world (especially in his *Lectures on the Humanity of God*), and Bulgakov takes *The Humanity of God* as the title for his chief dogmatic work, a trilogy on Christ (*The Lamb of God*), the Holy Spirit (*The Comforter*) and the church (*The Bride of the Lamb*).

In the first place “the humanity of God” refers, of course, to Jesus Christ as the Word incarnate, but beyond that to God’s commitment in Christ to the whole of the cosmos he has made, God’s saving involvement with the world as it is, and not merely as it once was or as we would like it to be. Faith in the humanity of God provides both religious motive and conceptual guidance for an approach to theology at once grounded in Orthodox dogma and prepared to meet modern thought and life on its own turf. While Christian theology’s engagement with modernity in the west has often led to the loss of Christianity’s dogmatic substance, in the Russian school the dialogue with modernity came from the heart of Orthodoxy’s incarnational and trinitarian faith. On Valliere’s account this opened the way for a traditionalism which recognized the limits of tradition, a dogmatic theology open to wide-ranging speculative reinterpretation of dogma, and “a humanizing as well as a deifying ministry”, a Christianity with “a more humane ecclesiastical culture” (pp. 361, 14). An Orthodox Church true to its own teaching will, in Bukharev’s phrase, leave “no room for the unreasonable and inhuman zeal of inquisitors.” Valliere comments: “Inquisitors look for heresy and apostasy everywhere, while the church should look for the incarnation everywhere” (p. 97).

This is a lucid and gracefully written book, of a sort which very few people are in a position to write. Its analysis depends on the reading of an enormous amount of primary material in Russian, a language which only a handful of theologians know. But not many Russian scholars, who know the language and could situate these authors in their intellectual and social context, have any grasp of, or interest in, theology. As befits a scholar with his rare combination of skills, Valliere evidently wants to address two different audiences. Though he is throughout concerned with theology, Valliere writes as much for Slavic studies scholars as for theologians.

This may explain why, though his quotations are all in English, his references are only to the original Russian, leaving the many readers (including me) who have to depend on western language translations to forage for his citations on their own. In fact he seems unaware that all of the works of Bulgakov to which he devotes extended attention (and several to which he does not) are available in French translation, thanks mainly to the labors of Constantin Andronikof and the publishing house L’Age d’Homme in Lausanne. (Two—*The Philosophy of Economy* and *The Bride of the Lamb*—have appeared in English since Valliere’s book was published.) Valliere does mention that the first two volumes of Bulgakov’s *Humanity of God* came out in French in the 1940s (p. 281, n. 7). The initial translation of *The Lamb of God* was, however, incomplete. It silently omitted—perhaps not surprisingly, given the controversy over Bulgakov which Valliere describes—the entire first section of the work, on “The Dialectic of the Idea of the Humanity of God in the Patristic Age” (cf. Valliere, pp. 296–299). Bulgakov there sharply criticizes the Christology of the church fathers, especially Cyril of Alexandria, and flatly insists on the inadequacy of patristic concepts for coping with the dogma of the incarnation. We surely have the treasure of the faith in earthen vessels, he observes, but we need not—indeed cannot—for that reason be satisfied with pots now centuries old. (The missing section was restored when a second edition of the French translation appeared in 1982).

Valliere’s bibliographic stringency obviously need not detract from the theological value of the book; still less need the dual audience. Of late Bulgakov and other Christian intellectuals of the Russian “silver age” have received more attention in Slavic studies than they have in theology (just as much of the path-breaking work in medieval theology is now being done by medieval intellectual historians, and not by theologians). Western theologians interested in modern Orthodox theology can only profit from these discussions.

At the same time theologians who read Valliere will frequently fail to share his preoccupation with the issue which governs his presentation. Few western theologians

are likely to pick up Soloviev or Bulgakov in search of still another way to negotiate the relationship between Christianity and modernity (though they may yet serve this purpose in Russia and eastern Europe). Interest in the Russian school is perhaps more likely to come from theologians who approach the doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation with evangelical passion and speculative boldness, and who want to see these central Christian teachings do real work in every area of a comprehensive theological vision, not least the relationship between God and the world and problems of culture and ethics.

The Russians may most readily attract, in other words, theologians committed to what Valliere calls "evangelical kataphasis" (of which he claims, in an excusable concluding flourish, that "the thinkers of the Russian school were unsurpassed masters" [p. 401]). Hence the suggested comparison with Barth and Balthasar. But Valliere sees no significant community of theological interest between Barth and the Russian school (cf. pp. 14–15), and he never mentions Balthasar, one of the few western theologians who claim to have learned something from both Bulgakov (in particular about an inner-trinitarian kenosis as the necessary background to incarnation and cross, in the opening chapter of *Mysterium Paschale*) and Soloviev (especially in the third volume of *The Glory of the Lord*). The infrequent theological connections Valliere makes to the modern west are not with theologians engaged in the trinitarian and Christological kataphasis which captivated the Russians, but with liberal Protestants: Tillich on faith (p. 236), process theology on the God-world relation (p. 332).

To be sure, Valliere treats at some length the views of his three figures on the Trinity and Christ, the Holy Spirit, kenosis, redemption, the church, and much else. In the long run, though, his tendency to approach every issue by asking how it reflects the Russian school's "engagement with the modern world" rather dampens the theological interest of his presentation.

Consider, for example, Bulgakov's trinitarian theology. Valliere observes that Bulgakov ascribes a maternal function to the Holy Spirit in the inner life of the Trinity (the Spirit, Bulgakov writes, "is as it were a hypostatic motherhood proceeding from the Father to the Son"), and with due caution notes the feminist resonance of this idea (pp. 327–328). But locating a maternal element in the procession of the divine persons goes back at least as far as the seventh century (though it was traditionally attributed to the Father rather than the Spirit). Bulgakov's argument for his own version of this idea, in the passage which Valliere cites from *The Burning Bush*, employs in part an ontology of gender which stems from modern Romanticism (talk, of a sort often repudiated by feminists, about a "masculine principle" and a "feminine principle"). But it seems to depend mainly on the traditional trinitarian notion of the Spirit as the bond of love who unites the Father and the Son, an idea Bulgakov warmly embraces, in striking contrast to later Neopatristic theologians, for whom it is one of many poisonous Augustinian errors about the Trinity.

In fact Bulgakov's trinitarian theology, spread throughout his philosophical and dogmatic works, includes numerous novel or striking ideas, and is rather more revisionist in content than Valliere suggests (p. 329). He views the Trinity as "one tri-hypostatic personality", denies that relations of opposition have any conceptual role to play in trinitarian theology, insists that each of the divine persons is "determined" by his relations to both of the others, and not just to one (so that all relations in the Trinity are, as he puts it, "triple, not double"), and argues that each person has his eternal being in a kenotic "self-devastation", an ecstatic "exit from self" for the sake of another, while simultaneously wanting to exclude all causal ideas (origin, procession, production, and so forth) from the understanding of the Trinity. Bulgakov's interest in an Orthodox theology engaged with modernity surely encouraged him to entertain unconventional ideas, as Valliere regularly points out. But Bulgakov does not invoke the attractiveness of revisionist trinitarian positions to modern people as

a *reason* to think they are true. Still less does he plunge repeatedly into the trinitarian depths “in order to celebrate the mystery of mutuality in difference” (p. 329). Bulgakov does not, I think, expect fidelity to any such abstraction, modern or otherwise, to vindicate his trinitarian theology. On the contrary, his arguments are for the most part deeply entangled (and sometimes, it seems, lost) in the vast technical debate about the Trinity in the Christian tradition, and it is there, he supposes, that they must prove their worth.

The theological limitations of this book do not diminish its great value for anyone even slightly interested in the thinkers it treats, and the world from which they came. Wider theological attention to the Russian school is long overdue, and for that Valliere has issued an eloquent and attractive invitation.

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Driven Back to the Text: The Premodern Sources of Levinas's Postmodernism by Oona Ajzenstat (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2001), x + 390 pp.

Levinas scholarship has been divided into two competing interpretations: those who read his work through the Jewish sources and those who do not. This division seems to be the result of some of Levinas's own comments in several interviews. Levinas claims that he wishes to keep his philosophical writings separate from his confessional writings, or writings on Judaism. He even calls attention to the fact that he publishes these two bodies of work with different presses. The assumption that was made when Levinas scholars read or heard these comments was to think Levinas meant that these two bodies of work had no relationship to each other.

Oona Ajzenstat's book, *Driven Back to the Text*, may finally dissolve the tension between these two camps. Contrary to the belief that Levinas's Judaism is of no, or minimal, philosophical significance to his thought, Levinas himself tells us that the Bible is one of the pre-philosophical experiences that was an early influence on his philosophical thought. Though several excellent books have been written on the subject of Levinas's Judaism, and certainly even more articles on the topic, Ajzenstat's book stands apart from these others by virtue of the systematic method she uses to make her complex argument. Ajzenstat's thesis is not merely that Levinas's work is influenced by Judaism—that thesis, it seems, should be obvious by this point. Rather, Ajzenstat's claim is that Levinas has been “driven back to the text” by the events of the Holocaust; his project is therefore essentially and profoundly Jewish. Ajzenstat demonstrates that many of Levinas's philosophical ideas—in particular his conception of responsibility, the core of his ethical thought in his most mature work, *Otherwise than Being*—derive from Jewish sources. Ajzenstat's analysis reveals that the boundary between Levinas's philosophical thought and his writings on Judaism is ever more blurred, in spite of the wish that they be kept separate. Additionally, the effects of Ajzenstat's claim are also quite serious. If Ajzenstat is correct, then contemporary continental philosophy, which has been influenced by Levinas's work, must reckon with the implication that many of its guiding ideas are fundamentally Jewish.

Ajzenstat's book is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces us to the structure of Levinas's thought. This chapter is crucial, since it lays out the fundamental elements of Levinas's philosophical thought. It is written clearly enough to serve as an introduction to Levinas's project. Thus, Ajzenstat succeeds not only at introducing Levinas to readers who might not have read his work before, but also at explaining many of the more obscure concepts in his work. Many of the concepts Ajzenstat examines seem clear initially, or they are used frequently enough in secondary literature that it appears as though everyone understands what they mean (see for example her discussions of "diachrony", ethics before politics, and "the face"). The next three chapters examine the biblical foundations of Levinas's work (chapter two); the Kabbalistic influences on Levinas's work (chapter three); and the Talmudic influences on Levinas's work (chapter four). The book ends with an eloquent chapter on the relationship between the Holocaust and Levinas's work.

Ajzenstat's scholarship and discussion in these three central chapters is careful. Rather than exploring all the possibilities of the Jewish influences on Levinas's work, she takes us through a few carefully chosen passages in both the Jewish texts and in Levinas's works in order to expose the roots of Levinas's philosophical ideas in the Jewish sources. Ajzenstat's discussion of "Here I am"—*me voici/hineni*, and the passages from Ezekiel that Levinas uses as epigraphs to *Otherwise than Being* are particularly helpful. But it is the chapter on the Talmud and History that is the most compelling. Here Ajzenstat offers us a close reading of Levinas's first three lectures to the Colloquium of French Jewish Intellectuals: the first lecture became the essay on Rosenzweig, "Between Two Worlds"; his second and third lectures were published together under the title "Messianic Texts". This chapter demonstrates the tension in the relationship Levinas has to Hegelian thinking. On the one hand, Levinas concedes Hegel's primary points. On the other hand, it is Hegel's totalizing thinking that Levinas finds so dangerous and that he ultimately must critique. This chapter takes up most seriously and illuminates what is at stake in the question of the Greek and the Jew. Ajzenstat is no simple reader of this question. Like all the other seemingly simple binarisms she addresses, Jew/Greek shows that this too must be understood in all its nuances. Is Levinas a Greek or Jew? One might answer simply, "yes", implying that the answer cannot be one or the other. The relationship between the two, especially with regard to language and translation, is complex. The Bible must be translated into Greek so that the Jews can teach what they know, but if all Hebrew is translated completely, then the Jews disappear (p. 271). In the end, Ajzenstat demonstrates convincingly that Levinas's conception of responsibility is fundamentally messianic. His philosophy is rooted firmly in Judaism. Thus, whatever philosophical theory appropriates this conception of responsibility is also appropriating a conception of Judaism (pp. 252–266, but especially p. 265).

The final chapter on the Holocaust demonstrates the influence the Holocaust had on Levinas's philosophical thought. Levinas's idea of responsibility is deeply connected to the complexity and the horror of this event. The Holocaust, Ajzenstat writes, is not the source of Levinas's thought, but it is the arena in which that thought is situated. It does not tell Levinas what to read or how to read, but it instructs Levinas on what not to read and how not to read it. Ajzenstat begins with four stories that relate directly or tangentially to the Holocaust: Elie Wiesel's *Night*; the short story of Yossel, son of Yossel Rakover, retold in Levinas's essay, "Loving the Torah more than God"; Vasily Grossman's *Life and Fate*, retold in "Beyond Memory"; and Levinas's own experience in France in "Wholly Otherwise". Ajzenstat's aim is to understand what Levinas's project means in a world after the Holocaust. What kind of ethics could Levinas's embrace in a world where we have experienced the death of God, or the death of theology, as the result of the events in Nazi Germany and places like it? How do we address the very real question that people in fact do kill

and do reject responsibility in spite of Levinas's claim that the face of the other says "thou shalt not kill" and commands me to be responsible for my persecutor? It is in this chapter that we find answers to many of the most perplexing questions in Levinas's thought, e.g., how do we understand the relationship between ethics and politics? How do we understand the descriptive problem that murder in fact happens on a daily basis? It is precisely by using the Holocaust as a focus for Levinas's thought that Ajzenstat convincingly makes her point.

It is because Nazi Germany "worked" so well that we need an ethics that will not work. The presence of Levinas's ethics is not intended to imply that there is no need for politics or that the world itself can be or even should be pacific. It is precisely because Levinas does not give us a prescription that we need politics and we need justice. They do the work that ethics cannot and should not do. The fact that Levinas promotes an ethics of difference after the Holocaust is of the utmost importance. An ethics of difference allows us to see precisely what is the same and what is different between the perpetrator and the victim so that justice can in fact be brought to the perpetrator. My sense of response does not decide if someone is Nazi or Jew. My sense of justice takes care of that. Thus, I am responsible for the Nazi perpetrator because I am responsible to everyone—ethically. However, my ethics would have no meaning if I also did not respond to the victims of those events by bringing to justice the perpetrators. How is this done? By seeing how people are different in spite of being the same. Our problem with evil often moves us to define the evil doer in non-human terms. As Ajzenstat reminds us, Eichmann could not have been tried in a human court if he was cast out of the human race by description (p. 313). In her examination of the problem of justice, Ajzenstat discusses most clearly the complex, antagonistic, and seemingly contradictory relationship between ethics and politics.

Ajzenstat's book takes us from ancient Jewish sources through modern times—from the Bible to the Holocaust—in order to demonstrate the profound relationship between Levinas's Judaism and his postmodern philosophy. Her book offers a sophisticated reading of Levinas's work that both introduces Levinas to those who have not yet read him and also advances a deeper level of reading him for those who are already familiar with his work. This book is a significant contribution to Levinas's scholarship.

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On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life by Eric Santner (Chicago, IL: The University Chicago Press, 2001), viii + 168 pp.

Eric Santner presents readers with a provocative meditation on some surprising affinities between the thoughts of Sigmund Freud and Franz Rosenzweig. While Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, and Rosenzweig, the foremost Jewish theologian of the twentieth century, might seem worlds apart, Santner shows convincingly that their projects share some remarkable similarities. It is true that Freud is usually considered an atheist, and Rosenzweig, to use a phrase used to describe Spinoza, a God-intoxicated man. But Santner contends that Freud and Rosenzweig were both most centrally concerned with what Santner calls "the psychotheology of everyday life", by which he seeks to reveal the theological dimensions of Freud's

work and the psychological dimensions of Rosenzweig's. This study does not merely offer readings of Freud and Rosenzweig. It attempts nothing less than to provide a "psychotheological" reading of modernity, and indeed the human condition, themselves.

While offering fresh insights into the theological implications of Freud's work, this book perhaps more importantly adds to a growing literature on Rosenzweig and his place within German culture and philosophy. Showing how Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* and Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption* derive from the same cultural concerns, the four main chapters that make up the book offer a lyrical meditation on the vagaries of early twentieth century German speaking Jewish culture and thought broadly defined. Drawing on Peter Eli Gordon's *Rosenzweig and Heidegger* (forthcoming), Santner reflects on Rosenzweig's parody of Schiller's metaphysical vision in his poem "Das Ideal und das Leben" ("The Ideal and Life"), which calls us "to throw off the fears of earthly existence" (p. 143). Rosenzweig's view of revelation, Santner contends, resonates with Hölderlin's suggestion that words liberate us and in fact can enliven us (or to use the Santner's term "undeaden" us). So too, Santner claims psychoanalytic interventions are a "modality of poetic performance".

The underlying premise of Santner's meditation is a broad reaching yet very particular definition of "modernity", which he understands not historically but existentially. "Modernity" in this text represents nothing less than the human condition, which is one of "exposure" and "trauma". The especially "modern" aspect of this condition concerns the depth of the individual's crisis in relation to the law. Simply put, Santner maintains that the individual is traumatized by the law by which he means not just religious or civil law but any and all kinds of ideology. The subjectivity of each individual is in fact defined by his oppression by the law and by (what is the same thing for Santner) its ideology. Santner suggests not only that Freud and Rosenzweig both describe the human condition as such but also that they understand "successful therapy" and "revelation" respectively as paths toward redirecting the law ethically. This redirection Santner labels "messianism".

Written largely for a literary studies audience, *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life* makes an important contribution to contemporary discussions of modern German thought by reminding its readers of the theological dimensions of much of modern thought. At the same time, however, *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life* is also an instance of the eclipsing of theological thought by contemporary academia for the book's meditations are premised on the very notion that psychology and religion (or "psychotheology") are two means of gaining access to what is in fact the same underlying human structure. Students of modern religious thought will recognize the form of this argument as one that marks the modern study of religion, beginning perhaps with Schleiermacher who, in writing to religion's "cultured despisers" (perhaps as Santner writes to Freud and Freudians), argued that religion is *the* structure of human experience itself, reflected in the most exalted of human endeavors, including perhaps first and foremost art and poetry (whether artists and poets are aware of the "true" meaning of their work or not).

To be sure, Schleiermacher's vision is a happy one ("a feeling of absolute dependence"), while Santner's is, to use his own term, a "traumatized" one. But in this Santner's claims are not unlike the claims of much of twentieth century theology and would find particular resonance with the "death of God" theologies of the 1950s. Santner makes a particular contribution to these theological discussions by showing the uses to which both Freud and Rosenzweig put the Jewish tradition. He rightly points out that Judaism, for both Freud and Rosenzweig, uniquely understands the meanings and ethical significance of human finitude.

But this conclusion with regard to Rosenzweig is particularly ironic in that "Judaism", for Rosenzweig, reflects not only a universal structure of human ex-

perience but also a particular people called as God's chosen. Much to many of Rosenzweig's interpreters' discomfort, Rosenzweig called the Jewish people a "blood community", which meant just this: that in the end "Jewishness" is not *only* a reflection of the structure of human experience but also, and more essentially, a *divine* gift to the world. The meaning of Jewish law is *not* the meaning of *any* law but rather points to *particular deeds* that *particular people* (Jews) are obliged to perform. Rosenzweig's thought, like his contemporary's Karl Barth's, is an attempt to move beyond the liberal apologetics initiated by Schleiermacher that want to reduce to a general human structure what is in fact (they contend) of a supernatural order.

This does not diminish the goal and accomplishment of Santner's study, which is to force its readers to think seriously about the "psychotheological" dimensions of everyday life. But it does beg the basic point of Rosenzweig's philosophical and theological work, which sharply criticizes the attempt of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Jewish and Christian thinkers to make of revelation only a human matter. In a 1914 essay, Rosenzweig in fact defines "atheistic theology" as the denial of the "hard mark of the divine that actually entered into history and is distinct from all other actuality". The question remains whether the "psychotheology of every day life" is not atheistic in the end, a view that Freud at least would not mind.

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