

vector of correspondence in the reverse direction, of immanent being conforming itself to external act. Wittman therefore asserts (controversially for Barthians if not for Thomists) the antecedence of the Godhead over divine action *pro nobis*, but only glances the surface of the dispute concerning whether the Christocentric account of election developed in and after *CD II/2* is constitutive or expressive of triunity. Does Wittman admit a *logos asarkos*? Whilst this is a notable lacuna, it must be admitted that many Barth scholars will appreciate not hearing more.

Insufficient engagement with Bruce McCormack is also notable when it comes to the historical evolution of Barth's thought. Wittman attributes great significance to Barth's book on Anselm (133-141), where he locates 'key convictions [that Barth] employs throughout his doctrine of God' and, in particular, the category of necessity. Whilst this does justice to Barth's own reflections on the evolution of his thought, it has been challenged by McCormack, Beintker, and others. Indeed, Wittman seems to have more sympathy with Balthasar's periodisation of Barth's thought than many contemporary Barthians would, but this recourse to *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* worthily draws attention to a text that has sometimes been neglected. Overall, Wittman seems more at home in the English-language tradition of reading Barth, represented by Torrance, Webster and Hunsinger, than he does in the more Hegelian household of the German tradition of Jüngel, mediated to Anglophone theology by Robert Jenson *inter alios*.

The Karl Barth-Archiv in Basel is unmentioned in the acknowledgments, and it is unclear what the treasures of Bruderholzallee 26 might contribute. What significance are we to attribute to the excisions that Barth made from *CD III*, now available in volume fifty of the *Gesamtausgabe*? In some of these texts Barth ruminates on the connection between the threat of 'nothingness' and the spectre of idolatry in ways that intersect with Wittman's thesis. Indeed, Wittman does not really engage with *CD III* §50 (Barth's somewhat notorious account of the always already defeated threat of nothingness): squaring this with the moderated form of actualism that Wittman proposes would not be entirely unproblematic. And the transcripts of Przywara's visits to Barth's seminar would surely shed more light on a metaphysics of creatureliness (and, perhaps, the precise nature of the curious category of 'correspondence').

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**WILLIAM DESMOND'S PHILOSOPHY BETWEEN METAPHYSICS, RELIGION, ETHICS, AND AESTHETICS** edited by Dennis Vanden Auweele, *Palgrave Macmillan*, Cham, pp. xix+343, £89.99, hbk

William Desmond agrees with the ancients that philosophy begins in wonder. His own 'metaxological' philosophy, which he has elaborated

in fifteen books over four decades, begins in astonishment at how being is ‘over-determined’ or ‘hyperbolic’. There is always more to experience, more to describe. In his introduction to this collection, Dennis Vanden Auweele writes: ‘It is abundance that propels thought, not emptiness. The mere appearance of good, beauty and communal being makes one stagger’ (p. 6). Often, of course, we do not experience the world in this way. Since we are intimately a part of being, we become inured to its abundance and mystery. We can become absorbed in our own desires. We can reduce being to ‘serviceable disposability’, to an exploitable resource. For Desmond, a central task of philosophy—but also of art and religion—is to reawaken our wonder at the richness of being.

Vanden Auweele collects seventeen wide-ranging and consistently insightful essays on Desmond’s work as well as Desmond’s response to them. Many of them grew out of presentations at a 2017 conference honouring Desmond’s retirement from KU Leuven. This volume appears a year after another collection, *William Desmond and Contemporary Theology* (2017), edited by Christopher Ben Simpson and Brendan Thomas Sammon. Together they testify to growing interest in Desmond’s thought.

Richard Kearney writes as a ‘friend, colleague, and fellow Irish philosopher’ (p. 271). His essay offers keen insights into Desmond’s account of interiority. For Desmond, when artists speak of inspiration or of the muse, they refer to the release of ‘inner otherness’ that gives rise to art. Desmond ‘describes art as the receipt of a gift before it becomes a construction of the will’ (p. 280). Inner otherness is also essential to Desmond’s account of religion and ethics. In prayer, we attend to ‘the openness to the sacred in the gap or cleft of ‘nothing’ at the very heart of the human self’ (p. 277). This is no simple retreat from the community of being, though. By opening ourselves to otherness within, we can also open ourselves to the other without. Indeed, there is no sharp opposition of within and without since humans are porous, open wholes. Prayer can unclog this porosity. As Kearney puts it: ‘In authentic religion the most intimate interiority reconnects with the most far-reaching exteriority of the ‘whole’; not to exert some kind of totalitarian hegemony over our lives, but to foster a disposition of openness to all, in a spirit of ‘agapeic service’ to the community’ (p. 278). Kearney (like Patrick Ryan Cooper elsewhere in the collection) is well attuned to how the Christian mystics ‘ghost’ Desmond’s steps (p. 279). Kearney’s suggestive essay made me think of how Schopenhauer is not simply a metaphysical foe for Desmond. He is also interested in Schopenhauer’s recognition of religious asceticism’s philosophical importance. It is also worth noting in this regard Takeshi Morisato’s forthcoming study *Faith and Reason in Continental and Japanese Philosophy: Reading Tanabe Hajime and William Desmond* (2019), which brings Desmond’s metaxology into conversation with Kyoto School Buddhism.

Human porosity also makes us vulnerable. Philosophy is animated not only by astonishment at the goodness of being but also perplexity at evil.

Cyril O'Regan, another of Desmond's longtime interlocutors, surveys the place of evil in his thought. Since philosophical or religious theodicy tends to flatten evil into an abstract 'problem', Desmond instead attends to the varied phenomena of evil and to how they are recalcitrant to determinate analysis. Desmond writes about vices like envy and ambition, historical evils like the Holocaust, and natural evils like disease. He often approaches such evils 'sideways' through figurations in religion, myth, art, and literature: 'not only Adam, Eve, the serpent, and Job but also Iago, Lady Macbeth, Othello, and the correlative demonic figures in Dostoyevsky's hall of mirrors' (p. 166). O'Regan claims that Desmond draws on these 'because relative to [philosophical] concepts, symbols and narratives under-interpret rather than over-interpret the phenomena of evil, thereby being more faithful to the originating experiences and more responsive to the irreducible density, complexity, and ambiguity of the phenomena...' (p. 163). Still, Desmond is also aware of the dangers in approaching figurations of evil (as well as the dangers in the equivocal impulse to make such figurations). These dangers include lurid curiosity, desensitization, and despair.

O'Regan warns of how figurations of evil can act like diabolical icons, kakophonies rather than theophanies, petrifying us with a Medusa stare. Renée Köhler-Ryan, a former student of Desmond's, explores how our porosity can also harden in monstrous ways. Her essay thus bridges Kearney's and O'Regan's concerns, and it does so with Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, a play that appears throughout Desmond's writings. Köhler-Ryan reads Macbeth's soliloquy after he has murdered the king as the 'reverse' of Augustinian soliloquy or Desmondian porosity: 'Macbeth questions himself, and reveals how closed off he is to his moral community, how impermeable to divine communication. He cannot even pray, having found that when he tried, 'Amen' stuck in his throat' (p. 285). She concludes that Augustine, Shakespeare, and Desmond all teach that 'self-reflection porous to transcendence and ethical knowledge is important for each and every human person' (pp. 299-300).

The other essays in the collection cannot be summed up in a sentence, but I can at least give a sense of their major concerns. Some of them take up important themes in Desmond's work. Vanden Auweele writes about silence, Daniel Minch about transcendence. Others bring Desmond into conversation with contemporary thinkers. D.C. Schindler uses Desmond's thought to critique Gianni Vattimo, while Philip John Paul Gonzales pits Desmond against Giorgio Agamben. Philip Gottschalk takes up the debate between Desmond and Peter Hodgson on Hegel's God. Sandra Lehmann compares Desmond's metaphysics to emerging trends in 'new realist philosophy'. Mark Novak discusses the convergences and differences between Desmond and Kearney. Other essays bring Desmond into conversation with earlier thinkers. Sander Griffioen surveys and responds to Desmond's critique of Hegel. Patrick Ryan Cooper compares Desmond to two Leuven philosophers from the first

half of the twentieth century: Pierre Scheuer and Joseph Maréchal. Josephien van Kessel (and Gottschalk, too, in the second half of his essay) stages a conversation between Desmond's metaxology and Sergei Bulgakov's Sophiology. Brendan Thomas Sammon offers a metaxological reading of Dionysius the Areopagite's *On the Divine Names*. Still other essays take Desmond's thought into new fields. John Milbank offers a sweeping survey of and intervention into philosophical debates about mathematics. Roberto Dell'Oro uses Desmond's philosophy to intervene in bioethics. Alexandra Romanyshyn finds affordances in Desmond's writing for environmental ethics. This is a particularly fitting concluding essay, for Desmond's philosophy both begins and ends in wonder at the richness of being, a wonder that gives rise to gratitude and care.

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