

theology and international law and shown how complex this interaction has been through the ages and is still today.

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**DYNAMICS OF DIFFERENCE: CHRISTIANITY AND ALTERITY. A FESTSCHRIFT FOR WERNER G. JEANROND** edited by Ulrich Schmiedel and James M. Matarazzo Jr., *Bloomsbury T&T Clark*, London, 2015, pp. xv + 310, £80.00, hbk

Students of modern continental philosophy might wonder whether anything new can be said about alterity. This collection of engaging and lively essays, edited and collected by Schmiedel and Matarazzo as a *festschrift* for their *Doktorvater* Professor Werner Jeanrond, however, inverts the question: how can theologians *not* say something new about alterity? For, as the essays collectively and individually manifest, to say anything theological at all is, implicitly or explicitly, to invoke otherness. In a world seemingly marked by increasing sociocultural fragmentation, theological and philosophical reflection on alterity is demanded both morally and pragmatically. It is not, however, an opportunistic embrace of the *Zeitgeist* that leads this volume's contributors to embrace these *dynamics of difference*, but a recognition that a theological embrace of alterity governs and vitally animates the theological dynamic itself: locating alterity within theology *per se* reflects the radical alterity of theology's object (*kataphysic* theology, as Torrance would have it), simultaneously preventing both a lapse into pagan monism and the splitting of moral injunction from a theological ontology of the person.

Reflecting Jeanrond's preference for 'short and succinct studies' (p. x), the volume comprises an unusually large number of contributions: thirty-two essays, including Schmiedel's own incisive '(Instead of the) Introduction' (pp. 1–14), which offers a lucid and penetrating account of the development of Jeanrond's hermeneutical theology. Schmiedel's essay will be of particular value to those hitherto unfamiliar with Jeanrond's thought and primary writings, but also provides a context for the broader *festschrift*, drawing attention to themes that are developed in the subsequent essays. The contributions are notably interdisciplinary—philosopher Brian Klug's account of Moses as the 'significant other' makes a contribution to biblical studies, for example—and are marked by a strongly international flavour, reflecting Jeanrond's influence in Britain, Scandinavia and amongst German-speaking theologians, as well as his institutional affiliations at Dublin, Lund, Glasgow and Oxford.

The first five essays are clustered around the theme of 'biblical others'. Reflection on the three characters of Moses, Joseph in Egypt and the

Johannine Nicodemus flows into two essays concerning the scripture's own status *qua* other: the first negotiating its constitution as the 'other' in both intra- and inter-religious discourse; the second exploring the alterity inherent to the category of revelation itself, in its 'letter' which 'announces but cannot contain' the 'arrival of the Word in the flesh', which is accomplished in an 'alterity of the flesh, an alterity still clearer than that of the letter' (p. 58–59).

Scriptural themes are not abandoned by the second cluster of essays, which explore philosophical accounts of alterity: Jeffrey Bloechl, for example, analyses the necessity of personal alterity in a Pauline agapeic morality (read through the lens of Alain Badiou). Indeed, this second section is marked by a pervasive concern to connect theological and philosophical accounts of alterity with concrete moral philosophy, frequently drawing—unsurprisingly—on Jeanrond's proposed 'hermeneutic of love'. This concern flows organically into the third cluster of essays, which trace characteristically theological accounts of alterity. For many readers, Knut Wenzel's account of religion as an other to secularity (and vice-versa) will lie at the centre of this *festschrift* both sequentially and conceptually. Although Wenzel's suggestion of an analogy with poetry that becomes 'more than it is' through an isolation of 'itself from the nexus of *Lebenswelt*' (p. 137) is highly suggestive (although perhaps problematised by the sacramental), here—as elsewhere—constraints of space appear to foreshorten the necessary account of the source of the distinctive alterity of religion (and, moreover, of Christianity in particular).

The already pervasive personalism is explicitly connected with Jeanrond's 'hermeneutics of love' in the fourth cluster of essays, which explore issues of religious otherness and the philosophical and hermeneutical presuppositions of inter-religious dialogue. Again, the concern is to address 'a fundamental experience of pluralism in contemporary societies' (p. 231), connecting a sometimes abstruse theological discourse to the raw phenomenology of human experience—touching on such fundamental experiences as ageing, empathy, personal growth, and community solidarity. The inclusion of Karl-Josef Kuschel's courageous and scholarly autobiographical sketches (pp. 231–238), which resemble theo-spiritual exercises, solidifies the personalist hue of the *festschrift*, further highlighting the pedagogical dimension of Jeanrond's personal embrace of the *dynamics of difference*: the question of alterity is fundamentally a question of negotiating human existence in the light of God's self-revelation within a plural world, and of responding with fidelity and love to both.

Indeed, the theme of the pedagogical function of God's self-revelation is developed in the fifth cluster of essays, particularly in Lieven Boeve's suggestion that the event of revelation involves the 'interruption of our theologies of love by love' (p. 282). These concluding essays are concerned to ground the theological dynamic of difference in the radical

alterity of God, as reflected in Christian tradition and in literature. This is achieved most notably in Fergusson's (re-)reading of the traditional doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* not in terms of a monarchical sovereignty on the part of the creator, but in terms of the safeguarding of an alterity necessary for the creator-creature relationship to be one of loving self-donation.

The collection provokes numerous questions, mostly cohering around matters of fundamental ontology: how to assert a source and consummation of alterity without sublating the diversity of the many into the one? How to engage our own alterity *vis-a-vis* the other, without positing a cleavage between the meta-noetic and meta-ontic? How to prevent alterity collapsing into a placeholder for infinite dialectic? A Christian theology has a unique ontological resource for handling these sorts of questions: the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. Interestingly, however, despite the appeals to both *creatio ex nihilo* and the eschatological hope of 'perfection [as the] integration of 'the same' into 'the other'' (p. 140), thereby implicitly invoking the Trinity, no single essay isolates the doctrine of the Trinity as a locus for reflection. Indeed, a reading of the ontology of the one tri-personal God in terms of the fulfilment of alterity—the infinite realisation of difference as diversity and not as *diastasis*, by a relationship of personalising and particularising love—could provide the *festschrift* with the ontological anchor it sometimes seems to be seeking, by situating the otherness of authentic relationality within the divine simplicity, as source and *telos* of all that is.

Nonetheless, the theme of the inherent relationality of the one God of love is a recurring *leitmotif* of the essays, and explicitly handled at certain points (e.g., pp. 211–215), but the absence of an entry for the Trinity in the book's index is nonetheless suggestive of a lacuna. There are, to paraphrase T.S. Eliot, 'guesses and hints, hints and guesses' towards Trinitarian consummation, but the moment of incarnation, when 'the impossible union/of spheres of existence is actual', where 'the past and future/are conquered, and reconciled', is never quite reached. Hafstad's re-visiting of *Gegenüber* (in which, across just eight-and-a-half pages, the notion of 'thirthing-as-othering'—invoking Soja, Foucault, Assman, Luther, *inter alios*—is connected with Barth's theology of spatiality and the spatial turn of contemporary theology) is one of the essays most suggestive of un-developed Trinitarian themes.

Likewise, more could be made of the incarnation's implications for a thoroughly Christian account of alterity, including the significance of the specific ontological claims of Chalcedonian Christology: the hypostatic union, with its rejection of Nestorian reductively contrastive otherness, indicates a nexus between theology proper and the personalism manifest in Part IV *et passim*. There is, indeed, a tension between Ola Sigurdson's provocative (but sadly brief) treatment of the 'comedy of the incarnation' (p. 152) and Anne-Louise Eriksson's meditative theology of the 'other on the cross', marked as it is by an awareness of

the profound tragedy of the crucifixion and its ontological shockwave, which prevents human over-familiarity with the divine (p. 178).

Gladly, these and other antinomies are embedded within an ongoing conversation with Jeanron and those engaged with his work. As an opportunity to ‘eavesdrop’ into that conversation, and an invitation to become ‘other’ participants in our own right, these essays are a worthy testament to the theological creativity and hospitality (p. 247!) of Werner Jeanron; they are equally indicative of future lines of research and reflection as Jeanron continues to teach and publish. No reader, however, could fail to be struck by the genuine and apparent warmth of the contributions, which is a profound testimony to the esteem in which Jeanron is held by his colleagues, and his capacity to engage and nourish theological creativity in those around him. *Ad multos annos!*

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**WITTGENSTEIN AND NATURAL RELIGION** by Gordon Graham, *Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014, pp. xiii + 219, £35.00, hbk*

Although relatively little of Wittgenstein’s voluminous writings directly concerns religion, his impact on the field of philosophy of religion has been significant. The lack of explicit discussion of a topic is not in itself an indication of the importance it plays in the work of a philosopher. At the same time there is a danger that in the absence of a developed discussion scattered remarks and conversations later recalled can encourage an overconfidence in ascribing particular ideas to Wittgenstein for which the textual evidence is thin or non-existent. It is one of the many merits of *Wittgenstein and Natural Religion* that Gordon Graham sets himself the task of offering a modest interpretation of Wittgenstein’s understanding of religion, and to state clearly where his own use of ideas derived from Wittgenstein takes over.

At the centre of Graham’s interpretation of Wittgenstein is his contention that whereas most previous attempts to understand Wittgenstein’s views on religious belief have focused on questions of belief and justification, Wittgenstein’s primary concern was with religion as a natural human practice. In this respect Graham argues that Wittgenstein has a great deal in common with various modern philosophers such as Hume, Reid, Scougal and Schleiermacher, who in their different ways sought to show how religion is part of the natural history of human beings. Chapter 1 thus provides an overview of the topic of natural religion in the modern period, in which it is distinguished from natural theology and later sociology of religion. Graham argues that unlike natural theology accounts of natural religion did not aim to provide a rational justification for religion, but to show how it is part of the natural development of human