

the Kingdom of God, arguing that prayer is always a response rather than a gesture of mastery that we initiate. God is the subject, not the object of prayer, which means that the praying 'I' experiences a movement outside his control – a 'countersubject' – in which the immanence of the subject is ruptured and called into question (pp. 79–81).

The theme of prayer also animates Jean-Yves Lacoste's essay, which takes a phenomenological approach to liturgical experience. Lacoste employs a Heideggerian analysis of *Mitbefindlichkeit* to examine the way in which coaffective experience forms the praying 'we' of the liturgy (p. 93). The phenomenological tradition is well represented in this volume, with the names of Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas, and Marion peppering many of the essays. Michael Purcell's essay on 'the inexperience of God' – i.e. God's hiddenness – draws primarily on Levinas. Michael F. Andrews' illuminating essay on Edith Stein discusses her departure from orthodox Husserlian phenomenology (pp. 137–40, 152), as well as the similarities of her work to Marion's – specifically in its

commitment to the apophatic tradition of Dionysius the Areopagite and John of the Cross (pp. 142–44, 154). Jeffrey Bloechl's essay explores related themes of decentred subjectivity and mystical unknowing, drawing not only on the phenomenological and mystical tradition, but on Nietzsche as well.

Finally, Kim Paffenroth's essay is a pleasant surprise, given her admittedly unlikely pairing of Pascal's *Pensées* and Melville's *Moby-Dick*. Paffenroth develops the similarity in the way that Pascal and Melville treat the human encounter with God, which reveals the interweaving of human greatness and human wretchedness (p. 201). In addition to these fine contributions, the first five essays in the book are enhanced by the inclusion of the original responses from the conference at which this volume originated (at Villanova University in 2001). In sum, this is a rich and enjoyable collection that will interest anyone tracking recent intersections of Continental philosophy, theology, and religious studies.

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The Elusive God. By Paul Moser. Pp. xi, 292, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, £45/\$90.

Sub-titled 'Reorienting Religious Epistemology,' this book develops an unusual, complex and in many ways original line of argument about what is required if we are to access knowledge of God. Moser, Chair of Philosophy at Loyola University Chicago, brings together considerations about why God seems to us to be hidden, eluding all our seeking, with a radical call for a more appropriate way for us to be brought into readiness to receive the kind of knowledge of God makes available to everyone. In the process (it might seem to some readers) philosophy is recast as ancillary to (Christian) theology and brought into play in service of the church. This is a controversial move, one likely to be strongly resisted in many quarters. However, seen from a view of discipleship that aims to integrate the intellectual with the spiritual, by means of divine grace rather than by human effort, it offers a powerful and challenging vision.

Moser points out that we cannot expect to find God on our terms, using man-made criteria to test for God's existence. 'God's ways of self-manifestation and of imparting vital knowledge of divine reality wouldn't necessarily meet our natural expectations. . . . How we may know God's reality would depend on what God lovingly wants for us and from us' (p. 94). If God is worthy of admiration, love and trust, Moser argues, then this would entail epistemological conditions for knowledge of divine reality that differ importantly from our usual mode of reasoning, conditions that entail surrender rather than mastery and which include acceptance of the offer of a non-coerced (and salvific) transformation of our whole self into volitional fellowship with God. This transformation depends on will, not just reason, and requires

acceptance of God's authority and attunement to God's will, a (probably lengthy) process of dying to self and of letting go of idols such as 'success, happiness, comfort, health, wealth, honor, and self-approval' (p. 104). Within us are barriers that prevent us doing God's will and thus from perceiving God in any way that is upbuilding. We need to be stripped of the power of these barriers if we are to plumb the depths of the divine will and love. 'God would lead us to such depth by convicting us of our causal ingratitude, moral dullness, selfish indifference, unwarranted pride, and self-indulgent fear, among other moral deficiencies' (p. 99).

It is not that evidence for God is unavailable, according to Moser; rather we are looking for it in the wrong way and in the wrong places, testing for signs but using the wrong criteria; we are unready (and unwilling) to receive it. He presses readers to reflect more carefully about the kind of knowledge the God believed in by Christians might be expected to want us to come to, its nature, features and purposes. 'A perfectly loving God would communicate on a frequency available to all people who are open to divine rescue on God's terms. God's frequency wouldn't be the exclusive possession of the educated, the 'morally good,' the physically strong, the wealthy, the 'religious,' or any other group that excludes other people' (p.116). Moser links attunement of our wills to God's will, acceptance of God's authority, love for and fellowship with all people (as equally the object of God's love), letting go of our customary idols and a complete re-ordering of our normal criteria for evaluating evidence for God. This linkage moves us from spectator, propositional knowledge and discussion mode to participant, filial knowledge and obedience mode, from a concern for the quality of our thinking, taken in

isolation, to a concern for our whole way of life in which right thinking is a fruit (rather than the root) of the overall quality of our life. Perhaps Moser underestimates the potential of discussion. It can open up a space where we can develop sufficient sense of who we are and what we truly want so that we become willing to accept grace in donating ourselves freely to God (the only kind of self-donation we can offer with integrity). Moser is stronger in his arguments about the need to let God be God and the epistemological implications of this than he is on the need for humans, as the sought-after (junior) partners God seeks, to develop appropriate forms of (derived) autonomy as a sufficient basis for self-donation to God via the attuning paths of faithful obedience.

Towards the end of the book, Moser shows how a philosopher driven by Christian faith should do

philosophy in harmony with God's call and commands. The interweaving of philosophical rigour and the language of obedient discipleship will be as disorienting for non-philosophical Christians as it is for academic philosophers used to distancing themselves from such language (at least while doing philosophy). The integral nature of what (and who) we love, what (and who) we concede authority to and what (and who) we thereby open ourselves up to know, emerge powerfully from this book. It is for advanced readers, being demanding not only in its intellectual demands, but also in its call for repentance, relinquishing of idols and conversion of will as preconditions for true knowledge of God.

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Between System and Poetics: William Desmond and Philosophy after Dialectic. Edited by Thomas A. F. Kelly. Pp. xi, 307, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007, \$100.00.

It is fitting that the first book-length treatment of William Desmond's work, *Between System and Poetics*, would arrive on book shelves in 2007 only a short time before Desmond completed his third and final explicit reflection on what he calls the 'between' in early 2008. Desmond's approach to philosophy and his conception of the 'between' (or the *metaxu*) is provocative and insightful, but also challenging to the uninitiated. For this reason, *Between System and Poetics* is a welcome companion volume. Those unfamiliar with Desmond's corpus might find it fruitful to spend some time with this volume before turning to *God and the Between*, where Desmond relies on much of the work he has already done to begin a 'metaxological' attempt at a philosophy of God.

The book is comprised of eighteen essays covering a broad range of topics that nevertheless continue to revolve around the central core of Desmond's work over the course of his productive career. Contributions have been made from thinkers as distinguished as Cyril O'Regan, Richard Kearney, and John Milbank, and they are a testament to Desmond's influence in his field. But the volume also includes a number of essays by emerging scholars, who have bring new problems to the table and add to the breadth of inquiry that this volume covers.

Of considerable importance to the volume is Desmond's own contribution. In this essay, the uninitiated will immediately get a sense of Desmond's idiosyncratic style: the poetic resonance, the rhetorical questioning, and the exploratory manner in which he proceeds. They will also get a sense of what he is all about: his frustration with certain modern and contemporary developments in philosophy, as well as his awareness of his own debt to such thinkers as Kant, Hegel, Pascal, and even Nietzsche. But whether veteran or novice, this essay will impress upon the reader Desmond's overall approach to philosophy: at once critical of the modern totalizing will to system,

yet at the same time haunted by the belief that philosophy must still be able to say something. Much of his philosophy and his own articulation of the 'between' seems to aim at making the latter possible, while avoiding the former.

The ensuing essays in this volume serve to supplement this aim. Garret Barden's essay on 'Transcendence and Intelligibility' is a superb example. In a simple and straightforward way, he defines and clarifies the 'plurivocal' senses of transcendence that Desmond often makes use of in his work. Barden at once exemplifies what is best about this volume; he isolates significant moments of Desmond's thought and clarifies what at times can become lost or muddled in Desmond poetic and exploratory style.

Richard Kearney's essay is an important contribution to an on-going conversation with Desmond. Through his charitable reading of Desmond's 2003 critique of his own work, Kearney nicely articulates the central tenets that are decisive for Desmond's own thinking about God. The essay usefully points out the common ground shared by the two philosophers of religion and at the same time does not shy away from demarcating the line of difference between them. In light of the fact that Desmond's newest book *God and the Between* is explicitly concerned with the question of God, this is a highly relevant and timely essay.

Finally, there are several contributions that pay tribute to Desmond's work by using his notion of the 'between' and taking it in their own direction. Thus this volume includes interpretative readings of the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, a 'metaxological' critique of modern architecture, and a meditation on a contemporary film. John Milbank's essay falls into this category. With his characteristic density and difficulty, he meditates on the nature of life post Newton and Darwin, and indicates his sympathy with Desmond that the metaphysics of the 'between' is also a metaphysics of a 'gift.'