

B. REFERATE ÜBER FREMDSPRACHIGE NEUERSCHEINUNGEN

Richard Kearney, Jens Zimmermann (Eds.): *Reimagining the Sacred. Richard Kearney debates God.* 211 S., Columbia University Press, New York 2015; ISBN 978-0-231-16103-9, US \$ 30,-

In the wake of publishing *Anatheism. Returning to God after God* (Columbia University Press) in 2010, Richard Kearney was invited to dialogue and debate with numerous, well-established philosophers and theologians with an interest in religion and theology. A good number of these conversations were gathered in the current volume. Assumingly, a number of discussions – such as with William Desmond in Amsterdam (2015) – came too late to be included in this volume. Nevertheless, the choice of interlocutors is impressive and very well chosen given the vibrant interest (academic and otherwise) in postsecular philosophy of religion.

One could obviously always quibble about the choice of discussion partners. Why not include Slavoj Žižek? Why not be even more audacious and engage a scientific atheist such as Richard Dawkins or Daniel Dennett? Or why not engage philosophers of religion in the analytic tradition like Alvin Plantinga? Or seek a dialogue with prominent religious authorities with a strong philosophical background, like Rowan Williams? The choice of interlocutors, while some atheist, theist or agnostic, was carefully made to include those thinkers that share some of the basic, mostly continental and hermeneutic, preconditions of Kearney's philosophical project. But this does not have to be a demerit of this edited volume! In fact, just because of this shared presentiment, Kearney is able to engage all of his interlocutors in compelling and passionate dialogue. Additionally, because of Kearney's attentive nature, he is able to carefully detect the worries and subtle objections made to his views in a manner that goes to the heart of the philosophical debate. Too often does it happen that philosophical debate amounts to nothing more than a number of combative participants fiercely defending their own view with no intent of honestly engaging the opposing side. In fact,

Kearney's anatheism can be read as a means to honestly engage thinkers of profoundly different positions, insofar as these are willing to recognize the excessive epiphany of a call of transcendence in immanence.

Anatheism is neither theism nor atheism; instead, it is the enabling condition of theism or atheism as respective responses of hospitality or hostility towards the anatheist wager of the epiphany of the Stranger. Kearney's most overt philosophical inspirations are Paul Ricoeur and Emmanuel Levinas. From Levinas, he takes that the encounter with the Other can be an epiphany of an occasion of transcendence; from Ricoeur, he takes that this encounter has to be interpreted and re-interpreted by means of historical and dialectical hermeneutics. Two very salient and indeed compelling ideas arise in Kearney's defense of anatheism against his contemporaries. First, the encounter with the Stranger is not just a call for hospitality towards the other, but likewise a moment of discernment that honestly wavers prudentially whether to be so accepting. In other words, there has to be an honest solicitation of atheism – the hostility towards the Stranger – that confronts, but also deepens, the religious moment of theistic acceptance. A line Kearney often quotes from Dostoevsky: "The hosanna must be tried in the crucible of doubt."¹ Second, Kearney believes that the encounter with the Stranger has to be informed by certain historical narratives. Postsecular philosophy of religion eschews talk of traditional religion, because this always alludes to the troublesome preposition of God as a supremely powerful being. Kearney is more hospitable to the tradition – and not just the Christian one! He detects a number of 'anatheist moments' in various religions, and even in secular narratives. As such, he eagerly quotes not only from the Bible, but also from writers such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. This emphasis on narrative philosophy is a welcome counter to the hegemony of postsecular mysticism.

After providing a brief introduction to anatheism (chapter one), Kearney engages into dialogue with the English essayist James Wood (chapter two). While Wood overtly identifies himself as an atheist – he is the author of, among others, *The Book against God* (2003) – the dialogue is remarkably charitable. Kearney praises Wood as the "most ar-

1 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, transl. Constance Garnett (New York: Signet Classics, 2007), p. 743.

articulate, challenging, and intelligent atheist writing in the contemporary God debate” (20). Indeed, Wood’s atheism and Kearney’s anatheism turn out to be remarkably consonant. The second discussion partner is the feminist theologian Catherine Keller (chapter three). Oddly, this chapter engages more thoroughly Keller’s work *Cloud of the Impossible*, with Kearney mostly asking questions of clarification. Again, it seems that there is quite a bit of proximity between Keller and Kearney. The next dialogue is with the Canadian well-known philosopher Charles Taylor (chapter four). In his *A Secular Age*, Taylor attempts to open up a sense of Humanism beyond the immanent frame. In this dialogue, there is a very interesting split between the two authors on the subject of the role of carnality in religion. In dialogue with Julia Kristeva (chapter five), Kearney engages Kristeva’s work on a post-Christian humanism, particularly her interesting notion of the ‘need to believe’. In chapter six, Kearney engages the Italian philosopher/politician Gianni Vattimo, who would initially seem rather inhospitable to anatheism for his advocacy of ‘weak thought’. Vattimo chooses particularly to engage Kearney on the subjects of kenosis and incarnation. In one of the strongest dialogues, Kearney engages philosopher Simon Critchley (chapter seven). In particular, Kearney defends all-out his notion that religious commitment must include a sense of discernment, and cannot solely depend on a postmodern, mystical openness to the other (any other). In dialogue with Jean-Luc Marion, Kearney discusses the likeness between anatheism and the ‘saturated phenomenon’ (chapter eight). Their attention is drawn particularly to invalidating certain idolatrous conceptions of God. Here, Kearney turns out to be particularly oecumenical and opens up anatheism beyond Christianity, an avenue that Marion will only reluctantly follow. Engaging his long-time sparring partner Jack Caputo, Kearney defends anatheism from certain objections by Caputo: (1) a sense of left-over Hegelianism, (2) the critique of the God of omnipotence and (3) Kearney’s take on truth. In this dialogue, the distance between Kearney and deconstructive philosophy of religion becomes apparent. The final discussion features a panel discussion with David Tracy, Merold Westphal and Jens Zimmermann (chapter ten).

This book of conversations provides an interesting window into the panoply of postmodern philosophy of religion. While some of the dis-

cussions tend to be a bit repetitive – especially when it comes to the central terms and narratives of anatheism – this can be excused considering the circumstances under which this book came to be. Anyone interested in postsecular philosophy of religion will find this a welcome addition to his bookshelf. Also, for anyone unfamiliar with the work of Richard Kearney, this could be an excellent first introduction to anatheism and the God-who-may-be.

Dennis Vanden Auweele, Leuven

Jason M. Wirth: *Schelling's Practice of the Wild. Time, Art, Imagination*. 280 S., State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, 2015; ISBN 978-1-4384-5679-9, US \$ 85,-

Jason Wirth's most recent *Schelling's Practice of the Wild* continues a unique engagement and conversation with Schelling that he began in his earlier *The Conspiracy of Life: Meditations on Schelling and his Time* (SUNY Press, 2003). In his own, exhilaratingly engaging fashion, Wirth manages not only to paint a clear and compelling picture of Schelling's philosophy, but also displays how Schelling's philosophy clearly has prepared and even inspired numerous topics in 20th and 21st century philosophy. Despite a number of minor infelicities, this monograph is a welcome addition to the burgeoning field of Schelling-studies and more general discussions on art, stupidity, religion and imagination.

Wirth conceives of this volume in terms of six relatively self-standing essays which engage Schelling with regard to a myriad of themes. The obvious and regrettable drawback of this strategy involves that the essays have to start from the ground up, by which I mean that they necessarily develop each a number of the same basic intuitions of Schelling. For instance, the famous quote from the *Freedom Essay* that modern philosophy has a common defect – “the whole of modern European philosophy since its beginning (with Descartes) has the common defect that nature is not present for it and that it lacks a living ground” (I/7, 356) – recurs in most of the chapters. As such, these different chapters are more ap-