

Reframing Continental Philosophy of Religion

Series Editors

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Reframing Continental Philosophy of Religion aims to revitalize continental philosophy of religion. It challenges the standard Western Christian framework which has dominated philosophy of religion in the academy. It provides a platform for voices, theories, and traditions which have been suppressed or marginalized by that framework, and offers genuinely new and constructive openings in the field. It is motivated by an imperative to liberate original thinking about religion from the legacy of Empire.

The series is experimental, creative, subversive, and risky. It promotes work which brings continental philosophy of religion into fruitful dialogue with postcolonial theory; Islamic studies; heretical, esoteric, or mystical, or otherwise marginalized Western traditions; non-Western philosophical traditions; and critical studies of power, race, gender, and sexuality. Taking seriously the fertility of European philosophy, it does not, however, merely subject "other" discourses to a European gaze, but allows different discourses to interact and mutate one another on a mutual basis.

Reframing Continental Philosophy of Religion will not leave continental philosophy of religion as it finds it.

The series is published in partnership with the Association for Continental Philosophy of Religion at Liverpool Hope University.

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Phenomenology with Emmanuel Falque

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Foreword

Richard Kearney

Emmanuel Falque crossed the Rubicon and came back to tell the tale. James Joyce once wrote that Dublin was a city where Caesar and Christ walked hand in glove. I would not align Falque with either Caesar or Christ but describe him rather as a philosopher who thinks *between*, riding mid-river, one foot in the stirrup of classic metaphysics, the other in the stirrup of Christian tradition. Falque does not hesitate to straddle the divide, to cross Latin horses with Hebrew donkeys. His *esprit* is mulish at best, and while happy to render to Caesar what is Caesar's, he never forgets the hosannas of Palm Sunday. In other words, Falque does not fear to trespass where his phenomenological mentors—Husserl and Heidegger—dared not tread. He defies the Freiburg embargo on the God question, a prohibition based on the requirement that all religious beliefs be bracketed when engaging in genuine philosophical questioning, that faith and phenomenology never meet. By contrast, in his scouting out the frontiers between the *Seinsfrage* and *Gottesfrage*, Falque throws down the gauntlet to Heidegger's claim in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* that "Christian philosophy is a round square and a misunderstanding." For Falque nothing is *verboten*. Giving his hermeneutic mule his head, he rides the waves of the Rubicon to the other side.

Falque's work displays the audacity of a thinker who carves his own path rather than ape his Masters. He reads Husserl without becoming Husserlian, Aquinas without becoming Thomist, Scotus without becoming Scotist, and more recently Freud and Marx without becoming Freudian or Marxist. His thinking is constantly morphing and metamorphosing from one disciplinary discourse to the next—from ontology to eschatology, from epistemology to ethics, from psychoanalysis to palliative care. Thinking, for Falque, is a process of creation rather than repetition, invitation rather than imitation, while never ceasing to dialogue with numerous interlocutors. There is always

Richard Kearney

give and take in what Falque likes to call, after Jaspers, *un combat amoureux*. Each successive book offers new recipes for cross-fertilization, resulting in a rare intellectual crossbreed: a brilliant metaphysical mutt.

One might also see the crossing of the Rubicon as a summons to a new way of being. A passage from text to action. But in waving us back to the life-world, Falque always remains "reflective." He never lets his metaphysics—his "army of mobile metaphors" (Nietzsche)—be swept away in the cross-currents of topicality. While his philosophy is deeply *engagé*, his commitments are less short term than long, preferring the *longue durée* to *des faits divers*. Falque engages with his contemporaries (Ricœur, Breton, Chrétien, Marion) as vigorously as with the ancients and medievals he loves to revisit and rethink. And with each *Auseindersetzung* he gives as much as he receives. His exchanges are two-way journeys: between past and present philosophies as much as between his own philosophical perspective and that of his conversation partners, ever ready to be transformed in a process of mutual enhancement. So when Falque, the self-avowed philosopher, takes on theology, psychoanalysis, or medicine, he is prepared to have his mind altered and amplified by each hermeneutic detour. Thus for Falque, as for Ricœur before him, the hermeneutic circle becomes a hermeneutic spiral. After the odyssey one returns to oneself "othered," transfigured by each successive turn of the of the gyre. Oneself as another, again and again.

What we have in Falque's work is a call to a new rapport between philosophy and theology—*une invitation au voyage* (Baudelaire)—where one is ready to lose oneself in order to find oneself anew. Borderlands are there to be traversed without denying that borders exist or that different countries have a right to co-exist in fruitful commerce rather than be invaded or annexed. As with EU passports, Falque's intellectual landscapes share the same color cover with distinct images for each member. Or to pursue the analogy, Falque's interdisciplinary thinking calls for a pooling of multiple sovereignties rather than their dissolution into one. He displays an *esprit frontalière* from first to last. Hovering over thresholds, invigilating crossings, keeping philosophical doors open without ever ignoring the different spaces they delimit, Falque offers conceptual hospitality to many different guests. He knows what dialogue means—*dia-legein*: welcoming a plurality of voices. Not reducing them to one.

As the chapters in this volume attest, Falque is a philosopher of continuity rather than of rupture. A practitioner of open conversation rather than an apologist of sectarian separation or conversion. His writings returns to the "things themselves," as they are found in the great texts of classical, medieval, and modern thought, but also in the existential phenomena of everyday life: eros, death, finitude, anxiety, flesh, birth, malady, animality, chaos. Nothing human is alien to Falque's phenomenology, and nothing animal or divine either. And it is this radical hospitality to all comers that makes Em-

manuel Falque a thinker in perpetual (at times exhausting) motion. In sum, he might be described as a Parisian Hermes, mercurial and mobile, guardian of thresholds and promoter of migrant thoughts that never come to rest.

What is true of Falque is also true of his commentators in this volume. The editors have enlisted here an impressive array of young scholars eager to think "with Falque" rather than "according to Falque." Creatively rather than mimetically. Sometimes agreeing, other times disagreeing, the contributors do not subscribe to some Falquesque mission or doctrine. As if there was one. While his interpreters know that Falque's first name is Emmanuel, they confuse him neither with Christ nor Caesar. They respond in their different ways to his invitation to think for themselves—in critical dialogue. Always celebrating the metaphysical mongrel he is.

Dog bless Emmanuel!

—Richard Kearney