



but I see now that he didn't. Even so, I am right." For that reason, it would have been better, in my opinion, to frame the critical chapters in light of the conclusion. In that way, the reader could consider DeHart's view of the importance of retrieving metaphysics as he goes through the ways the real Aquinas can do what Milbank cannot. Of course, he could always write a sequel.

JAMES F. KEATING

Providence College
Providence, Rhode Island

The Intimate Strangeness of Being: Metaphysics after Dialectics. By WILLIAM DESMOND. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012. Pp. 352. \$55.00 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-8132-1960-8.

This latest book from one of the most creative philosophers of our time explores the prospect of constructing a metaphysics in the wake of the modern erosion of confidence in such an enterprise (4) and in the face of a number of powerful explicit critiques of it from Kant to Heidegger. In line with his numerous previous productions, and especially his trilogy on a metaxological metaphysics, Desmond argues for the return of metaphysics by recurrence to its ground in the dense milieu of phenomena that give themselves to embodied and responsive selves in communion with each other. As he does so, Desmond assesses Kant's and Heidegger's critiques of metaphysics and their postmodern developments (chaps. 4, 5). Yet ultimately this assessment is a sideshow to the critique of the speculative dialectic of Hegel, who offers a reconstruction of metaphysics this side of Kant's destruction (chaps. 1, 3, 5, 9).

Throughout his distinguished philosophical career, Desmond has shown the ability to ramify and refresh the major features of his analysis of the everyday as well as his critique of the modern philosophical tradition. This book is no exception. Desmond's fidelity to the matrix of our acting and thinking which enfolds us is again explored, and his powers of description and discrimination—what he would call finesse—rarely fail him. Crucial for Desmond is our experience of excess in our encounter with a reality, at once plural and imbricated, and irreducible to percept and concept. In addition, reality gives itself to us neither as purely multiple nor unitary but rather as a complex unity of both. To be faithful to reality, we have to acknowledge the 'more' in every phenomenon and at a limit acknowledge the 'more' that sustains the matrix. Analysis of the latter was the defining characteristic of the third and final book in Desmond's hugely important metaxological trilogy, *God and the Between*. In the milieu, in the between, the proper response to reality is wonder. Desmond worries, however, that wonder can too quickly

give way to perplexity, which represents a cognitive narrowing, and wonder gets further reduced when it gives way to curiosity which flattens phenomena into objects to be known, thereby flattening calculative rationality (chap. 9). Desmond's reflections on curiosity in chapter 9 are marvelously redolent of Augustine and open up further avenues of investigation into the relation between Desmond's work as a whole and an equally ramified Augustine who also sees the neighborliness of philosophy and religion. If profiling curiosity as an alienation from the milieu represents a good example of development in Desmond's thought, an example of refreshment provided by this text is Desmond's locution of "intimate strangeness," which poetically captures our participation both in and with givens that forever remain other.

As already indicated, the central opponent in this book is Hegel the reconstructor of metaphysics rather than Kant, Heidegger, Nietzsche, or Derrida, who are destroyers or deconstructors. The reason is obvious. Hegel represents a solution to the overcoming of metaphysics, by the presentation of a nonclassical metaphysics in the new grammar of self-determining Spirit. From Desmond's perspective there is something truly promising for metaphysics in Hegel's dialectical thought, since it avoids both the Eleatic reduction to one and the Ionian reduction to the unsynthesizable many. But Hegel is a promise denied rather than fulfilled: speculative dialectic rests on a systemic truncation. It culls the given by reducing the dense overdetermination of reality into a manageable indeterminacy; it masters every step of the dialectical development of reality, including knowledge's overcoming of mystery, by pretending to show how knowledge—which admittedly is more than instrumental reason—is conceptually adequate to the whole of which it is a part; it acknowledges the insights of art and religion, but is invested in translating these insights into a conceptual medium; and finally its friendliness to Christianity becomes questionable when the God who is 'beyond' (*Jenseits*) is overcome as an idol and is replaced by the complex whole to which is ascribed self-transcending momentum and in which worship is not the creature's acknowledgement of the utter gratuity of her existence, but essentially the acceptance of the whole and one's place in it.

This basic outline of this critique of speculative dialectic is familiar from Desmond's trilogy and his *Hegel's God: A Counterfeit Double?* What is new about this text is his view that the analogy of being is understood to be a 'companion' of his own metaxological metaphysics rather than the problem to which postmetaphysical thought and Hegel's speculative dialectic are regarded as answers, however adequate these answers may be. It is worth noting that early in his career Desmond had a somewhat negative assessment of analogy. This book offers his deepest and most positive analysis of the analogy of being to date and draws attention to the way in which his metaphysical project and that of Aquinas and his followers overlap and can be regarded as critiques of the Hegelian speculative option. Of course, the Thomistic critique of Hegel is not dealt with here thematically after the manner of a Cornelio Fabro, but it

rather appears as a function of its proximity to Desmond's own articulation of a metaxological metaphysics which is truer to Hegel's basic intuition of a complex plural unity than Hegel's own articulation of the monistic-tending self-determination of Spirit.

While in previous works Desmond had left open the scope of the rapprochement between his metaxological metaphysics and the analogy of being, in chapter 9 of this book, he provides a broad outline as to what this rapprochement would look like and sets conditions as to how the analogy of being might be interpreted as retrieving authentic metaphysical resources in addition to being enlistable in a critique of reconstructors and deconstructors of metaphysics. In his reflections Desmond shows himself to be aware of both the Aristotelian warrant for Aquinas's view that "being is spoken in many ways," as well as Aquinas's decision to go beyond an ousiology by invoking a prime instance. Neither is Desmond a stranger to distinctions between the analogy of attribution and the analogy of proportionality. Yet he does not discuss the elaboration of these different forms of analogy over the centuries, or address which should be preminent. The lack of discussion might indicate that Desmond is not deeply familiar with the historical trajectory of analogy through Cajetan and Suarez or with the voluminous modern commentary tradition—not that he claims any such expertise.

In any event, Desmond also sets some conditions—albeit relatively soft ones—that must be met if the rapprochement between metaxology and analogy is to be more than verbal. First, in noting the paucity of Aquinas's explicit discussion of analogy in the *Summa theologiae*, Desmond seems to imply that a Thomistic doctrine of analogy works best if seen in the light of Aquinas's entire metaphysical elaboration. The failure to provide the larger framework will narrow and thin a view that is in principle both broad and rich.

Second, Desmond shows himself to be aware that there are two broad lines of interpretation of analogy—the linguistic, on the one hand, and the ontological, on the other (234-37)—without rehearsing a who's who of this debate. For example, there is no mention of McNerny, McCabe, or Burrell who support the linguistic view, or of Gilson, Owens, Przywara, or Fabro, who support the ontological view. Desmond does not offer a judgment as to which line of interpretation more adequately captures Aquinas's intent. On grounds of metaphysical fruitfulness, however, Desmond is decidedly in the ontological corner.

Third, Desmond sanctions the theological dimension of analogy and does not object to referring to God as the transcendental signified (*pros hen*) (339-40), no matter how much this is forbidden by Heidegger and his postmodern epigones. And fourth, whereas once Desmond was inclined to think that analogy could or should be understood as enabling conceptual control of phenomena and even the divine, this text very much says otherwise. With regard to the analogy between God and all else that is, Desmond underscores apophysis and seems at times to recall the formula of the Fourth Lateran

Council to the effect that the similarity (*similitudo*) between God and creature is superseded by the ever-greater dissimilarity (*dissimilitudo*) (241-47). Simply concerning the matter of interpreting Aquinas's view of God, he joins a number of other scholars who in recent years have underscored the Dionysian dimensions of Aquinas's reflections. With the conditions of rapprochement met, Desmond is convinced that Thomism and metaxological metaphysics have the capability of being more than companions; maybe they are best understood as partners in reinvigorating metaphysics after its collapse due to exhaustion and explicit critique. Together they can combat postmodern sophistications and also join forces against Hegel's speculative dialectic which, in the final analysis, completes the death of metaphysics by putting an end to wonder, mystery, and transcendence, as well as eliminating God as the referent of our signs and the addressee of our prayers.

Desmond understands himself to be a metaphysician and not as one engaged in the construction of a Christian or Catholic philosophy. Still, in and through his trilogy it has become increasingly evident that a metaxological metaphysics is hospitable to religion in general and Christianity in particular. It is not only, however, that 'God' is allowed into metaphysical discourse, but that this God who is totally other can be further specified. This God is equally immanent and transcendent and is thus the God who is the condition of sacramentality as well as its object. This God admits multiple names and yet is finally unnamable. The Christian Neoplatonic figuration of Desmond's metaphysics is as obvious here as it was in his trilogy, and this is, of course, the deep grammar of thought he shares with Aquinas, which makes 'porous' the boundary between philosophy and religion, and between philosophy and theology. If one were to attempt to find a modern version of Thomism, or even of analogy, which Desmond's metaxology most nearly resembles, it would be hard to do better than Erich Przywara's articulation of the analogy of being. Desmond's metaxological metaphysics seems to recall Przywara's *Analogy Entis* (1932) in its fidelity to the given, in its underwriting of wonder, in its holistic understanding of a nonreductive relation that repeats itself throughout our investigation of the universal and regional domains of the phenomena that give themselves for our wonder and admiration, in its dual commitment to transcendence and immanence or a transcendence in immanence, in its elaboration of the imbrications of the philosophical and the theological, in its chastening our speech about God by apophasis, in its openness to the mystical as well as the sacramental, in its authorization of prayer and worship as different than thought and perhaps both its condition and its fruit.

CYRIL O'REGAN

*University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana*