

environmental degradation” (62). In direct contradiction to what he had said earlier, W. asserts that, in line with Aquinas, Eckhart “does not lose sight of the inherent sanctity of creation, its *sacramental* [emphasis original] character as a revelation of God as creator,” and he quotes Eckhart verbatim: “Someone who knew nothing but creatures would never need to attend to any sermons, for every creature is full of God and is a book” (54–55).

W. attempts to resolve this apparent dilemma by pointing out that Eckhart often paradoxically reverses himself. “It is perhaps too easy to quote Eckhart against Eckhart. He was, after all, a dialectical thinker” (57). Rather than exploring the implications of Eckhart’s rhetorical complexity—which is one of the few weaknesses of W.’s treatment of Eckhart in this collection—he instead turns to Eckhart’s doctrine of detachment as another avenue for ecological counsel, and concludes that with “detachment as selfless commitment to contemplative action flowing from unity with God,” we may fulfill “our destiny as the Stewards of Creation” (62–63).

Despite the lack of discussion on Eckhart’s complex and dynamic rhetorical methodology, and the fact that it is a collection of diverse essays, this study maintains a surprising and engaging coherence throughout, especially with regard to Eckhart’s enduring relevance. I highly recommend the book for those seeking a novel and integrated introduction to Eckhart.

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ANASTASIA WENDLINDER

THE VOCATION OF THE CATHOLIC PHILOSOPHER: FROM MARITAIN TO JOHN PAUL II. Edited by John P. Hittinger. Washington: American Maritain Association, 2011. Pp. xxxvi + 263. \$24.95.

This fine collection of essays discusses and analyzes what the vocation of the Catholic philosopher should be in the postconciliar era (xi). Vatican II called for the renewal of the church. Both Jacques Maritain and Pope John Paul II are exemplary models for showing how to reinvigorate Christian philosophical reflection through reuniting faith and reason or spirituality and philosophy. Maritain especially wanted to avoid the extremes of the preconciliar Manicheism and the postconciliar Pelagianism (20). Both thinkers wanted to steer between the extremes of rationalism and fideism. This collection of 14 papers from diverse perspectives, which were presented at the 2005 Maritain Association conference, is a clarion call for philosophers of all stripes to return to their original vocation: the metaphysical quest for truth and the divine ground of being (xviii).

Catholic philosophers must embrace revelation and the response of faith so as to answer the call to the absolute, transcendent dimension of reality that opens up in truth, beauty, moral values, other people, and

being itself/God. This renewal of Catholic philosophy needs to take place in a deep unity of faith and life in the subjectivity of the philosopher. Maritain and John Paul II held fast to a Christocentric faith and the metaphysical realism of Thomistic philosophy, even while maintaining that philosophies other than Thomism are legitimate, and that the church does not have its own official philosophy. Additionally, Aquinas well represents the paradox of Catholic philosophy by his reconciling the secularity of the world with the radicality of the gospel through the theory of the ultimate unity of truth.

This collection addresses several contemporary issues facing philosophy in Aquinas's spirit of critical openness to the world and John Paul II's encouraging words for philosophers to stop being so "modest" in what they think they can know about the world and its first principles (152). The philosopher should have "more faith" in reason. In short, Maritain is presented in these papers as showing what the intellectual and spiritual conditions are for the renewal of the vocation of the Catholic philosopher by exploring the merits and deficiencies of modernity (94). Moreover, Maritain wanted to ground philosophical rigor in contemplation and prayer, for these grace-filled activities help purify and strengthen the mind and guide it to follow the "natural inclination" to pursue the source/goal of all things. Catholic theology has always seen philosophy as essential to the interpretation and understanding of the word of God. Therefore, Catholic philosophy is a high calling, since it contributes to the church's saving mission (200). All the papers collected here were written in the magisterial shadow of *Dei filius* (Vatican I), *Dei verbum* and *Gaudium et spes* (Vatican II), and the encyclical *Fides et ratio* (1998), and show the need for the "return of metaphysics."

I recommend the book to scholars and graduate students in philosophy and theology who have an interest in the perennial question of the relationship between faith and reason. It is also quite good on the recent history of Catholic philosophical theology. The papers are clearly written and inspiring regarding the permanent need to acknowledge the "universal and absolute truth" of a transcendent God. The serious thinking-through of many of the themes of *Fides et ratio* is a valuable contribution as well.

The advocacy of an undifferentiated philosophical realism, however, will be a point of contention for many readers today. How can one really speak in a philosophically legitimate way about Truth in an age marked by the "end of metaphysics?" The collection makes only passing references to the postmodern challenges of plurality, ambiguity, and relativism that the linguistic turn has highlighted about the process of reasoning. This weakens the intellectual relevancy of the conversation.

The collection would have been richer had it tried seriously to engage Catholic postmodern philosophy. The works of John Caputo, Adriaan

Peperzak, and Jean-Luc Marion, for example, would have made for exciting dialogues with Jacques Maritain, John Paul II, and Vatican I's tradition. While each postmodern Catholic philosopher speaks about the end of the metanarrative and the missteps of ontotheology, each thinker also struggles to maintain the theological voice within the postmodern Continental perspective. By extension, this would have brought in the postmodern giants of Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, and Emmanuel Levinas.

Overall, one is left with the feeling after reading this collection that a "faith-commitment" is not deleterious to sound thinking; on the contrary, it is necessary for any philosophy or theology worthy of the name Catholic.

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CRAIG A. BARON

THE BANQUET: A READING OF THE FIFTH SURA OF THE QUR'AN. By Michael Cuypers. Preface by Huhammad Ali Amir-Moezzi. Translated from the French by Patricia Kelly. Miami, FL: Convivium, 2009. Pp. 565. \$54.95.

How often have Western readers registered consternation in attempting to read the Qur'an? We are usually told that its style is more paraneitic than narrative, or offered ways to negotiate the canonical order of suras (chapters) so that purportedly earlier and shorter ones might be read first, to lead us more gently into the longer, later ones. (That is the way I initially helped students find their way, using German scholars for dating when the different suras were reckoned to have "come down.") One was also reminded that the holy book was meant to be recited—heard rather than read, like good poetry—and offered ways of calibrating specific revelations with events in the life of the Prophet and the community ("occasions of revelation") so as to reconstruct some kind of narrative to offer a context for the subjects mentioned. Yet something essential always seemed to be missing to guide our reading and comprehension of this baffling book, which Muslims take to be the very word of God.

Cuypers has supplied that missing element by finding a way to display "Semitic rhetoric," to unlock the inner structure of the verses (*ayât*) in relation to one another and encapsulated in an illuminating order. He accomplishes this for a long Medinan sura, Al-Ma'ida (The Banquet), in a dense exercise designed to lay bare the structures endemic to "semitic rhetoric," so that the meaning of verses will emerge from the ordering they actually display in relation to one another. If this sounds complex, it is even more so as C. patiently works out Chinese-box-like inclusions, yet in the exercise, such sophisticated structuring apparatus yields the fruit promised. The effort, it seems, is ours, for the "semitic rhetorical" structures laid bare prove quite natural to persons familiar with Arabic and the multiple "sandwich constructions" endemic to that language. C. explicitly