

In Response to the Religious Other: Ricoeur and the Fragility of Interreligious Encounters.
By Marianne Moyaert. *Studies in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur*. Lanham,
MD: Lexington, 2014. Pp. v + 215. \$90.

Moyaert provides a compelling exploration of what Paul Ricoeur has to offer theologies of religious difference, applying her deep knowledge of Ricoeur as an antidote to the impasse these theologies find themselves in. For those interested in theology in a multireligious world, this study offers surprisingly new resources, especially on the issues of “translatability” and the point of interfaith dialogue and comparative work. I would put this volume high on the reading list of anyone interested in the emerging field of interfaith studies, comparative theology, theology of religions, or theology in a multireligious world more generally.

Pursuing the long historical view for understanding our current theological dilemmas, M. sees Ricoeur as a premodern humanist laboring hard to undo modern rationalist reductions of religion (chap. 1). Instead of Cartesian certainty, Ricoeur’s “hermeneutical anthropology” reintroduces “mystery” into two areas of interreligious concern. First, in the project of religious identity formation where our authoritative texts (religious and cultural) give us categories for understanding self and world, Ricoeur insists that this formation is always done under the horizon of mystery (the Ultimate, Otherness, Excess, God, the Infinite, etc.). Ricoeur posits that religious violence is the result of an attempt to capture this Excess/Infinity within the limits of any given text or community. Through her study of Ricoeur’s theory of religious violence in chapter 2, M. rightly proposes that his move might be of use in our contemporary interreligious world.

In addition to our world being mystery to us, Ricoeur’s project for constructing religious identity insists we remain mystery to ourselves. Thus, in chapter 4, M. includes the involuntary aspects of religious belonging for Ricoeur’s conception of identity construction. “Interpretive practices” and “mystery” intersect religious identities rooted in undisclosed yet “deeply embodied convictions.” In so recognizing these dimensions of ourselves and our religious commitments, M., following Ricoeur, names our religious convictions as “fragile certainties” and suggests such an insight engenders genuine humility toward others.

The thread of mystery has its complement in Ricoeur’s insistence on the complexity of religions and religious identities. While Ricoeur’s posture is toward humanism and the reduction of violence, he is critical of those efforts at interfaith work that ignore the particularity of texts and erase the specific roads that communities take toward their distinctive understanding of the “good life.” It makes sense, then, that the focus of chapter 3 is Ricoeur’s critique of Hans Küng’s *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics* (1997). In contrasting Ricoeur’s project with the thin projects of religious cooperation and predetermined universals that erase particularity, M. searches after the possibilities of potential universals that might emerge out of dialogue rather than precede it.

But if our religiosity is irreducibly complex, then concerns regarding the possibilities for *any* meeting across religious difference are legitimate. Again placing Ricoeur

at the center of contemporary debates between liberal pluralists and postliberal particularist thinkers (and M. beautifully captures the state of the field in chapter 5), M. shows how Ricoeur navigates a midpoint between the collapse of difference and untranslatability. We offer not perfect communication, but an imperfect “linguistic hospitality,” as we try to translate across texts and traditions. And in chapter 6, M. examines the contemporary project of comparative theology as a liminal space that enacts such hospitality.

In addition to surveying the field and working toward the reduction of religious violence, M. also uses Ricoeur’s theories to proffer new purpose to interreligious dialogue and the various practices of theology in a multireligious world. On the one hand, through comparative theology and interreligious dialogue we come to an awareness that our interpretive humanity is one among many ways of being in the world. But, through Ricoeur, M. is able to present an even more novel purpose for interreligious dialogue. In pursuing a stance for the reduction of religious violence, she suggests that the point of dialogue is to become aware of those places where *our* narrative inflicts wounds on *others*.

Much has been written on interfaith learning and theologies of religious difference, but few have considered Ricoeur as an ally in this field. Simultaneously introducing readers to theologies of religious pluralism, comparative theology, interreligious dialogue, and the theological methods of liberal, postliberal, and comparative theologies, as well as examining Ricoeur through a new lens, this volume offers truly new strategies for our interreligious world and our interfaith theology.

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Mystery of the Church, People of God: Yves Congar’s Total Ecclesiology as a Path to Vatican II. By Rose M. Beal. Washington: Catholic University of America, 2014. Pp. xii + 281. \$65.

Congar is a multifaceted thinker whose many focal points can serve as the linchpin that holds together the elements of his ecclesiological vision. Beal brings unpublished archival materials into dialogue with Congar’s early published works to make a credible case that his studies on diverse topics were united in representing various components of what he intended to add up to a “total ecclesiology.” Such an ecclesiology, unlike the apologetic approaches of the time, would address the mystery of the church in all its dimensions, including its mission, full range of members, various traditions, need for reform, and eschatological nature. B. demonstrates that this organizing vision, detectable in Congar’s published works, emerges much more clearly both in extensive lecture notes and in draft materials for an unfinished treatise on ecclesiology.

B. focuses this useful study on Congar’s works from the early 1930s up to 1954. Throughout, she emphasizes how archival materials help clarify points in Congar’s published works that might otherwise be confusing. For example, his critiques of