

tradition of the Catholic Church to occur when that tradition is no longer taught? Thus an appraisal of this universal curriculum is warranted and necessary.

Moreover, although I praise H. for his pragmatism—which I believe will benefit his audience, namely, Catholic educators and parents—some of his advice is abstract and fails to take into account the facts on the ground. For instance, while H. correctly stresses the importance for Catholic educators to continually seek professional development and opportunities for education, he does not take into account the realities that most Catholic school teachers face such as having five or six class preparations each day in addition to being expected to serve the school community. These issues make substantial professional formation impossible or cumbersome.

Despite these shortcomings, H.'s book is a welcome addition to the study of Catholic education in the United States. It is well written, up to date, and informative. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in the history and future of Catholic education at the primary and secondary levels in the United States. The book is both accessible to a nonspecialist audience and well suited as a supplemental text for a course on religious education or the history of Catholicism in America.

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Theology and the Arts: Engaging Faith. By Ruth Illman and W. Alan Smith. New York: Routledge, 2013. Pp. xiv + 215. \$125.

Coauthorship is not an easy task, particularly when one author lives in Finland and the other in the United States. But a chance meeting at the Oxford Round Table in 2008 along with the love of both theology and the arts provided a powerful attraction to draw two scholars together for a joint project with all the attendant challenges of working at a distance.

The book brings the emerging fields of practical theology and theology of the arts into a dialogue while avoiding the methodology of systematic and constructive proposals. Smith and Illman draw upon dialogical/dialectical, postmodern, postsecular, feminist, liberation philosophy and theology, including an epistemological critique of reason and the scientific method as the model for all knowledge. The method of practical theology of the arts focuses the work of theology on the actual practices of art-making that engage the arts in their various forms. Art becomes the means of interpreting and understanding the nature of the communities and their members, as well as the mechanisms through which these communities engage in transformative work. The authors outline some of the central theoretical reevaluations that have altered the way religion in general and theology in particular have been envisioned and carried out over the decades.

Four such approaches are worthy of note. The first is how postmodernism challenges the idea of a singular grand narrative as the basis for understanding religion and the self. A second approach is that of postsecularism, highlighting the changing role of religion in contemporary societies and rejecting the tradition of seeing the religious

and the secular as mutually exclusive categories. In a third approach, feminist theology is examined as it produces questions of gendered power, marginality, and embodiment in theological research. The fourth approach argues that liberation theology draws attention to the importance of context and ethical dimensions of conscientization. The authors, however, are not content in making lofty claims from a speculative theological perspective. Rather they are interested in letting the arts speak for themselves. Thus, their book presents its theological claims through the careful analysis of several stories of communities around the world that have engaged in transformational practices through a specific art form.

The case studies explored include Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Druze, indigenous, and sometimes agnostic subjects, the last of which are involved in visual art, music, dance, theater, documentary filmmaking, and literature. The authors set out to answer the question, How has this particular form of the arts helped give voice to practices that lead to personal and community transformation?

The volume demonstrates that the challenges of a postmodern and postsecular context require a fundamental rethinking of theology that focuses on discrete practices of faithful communities, rather than on one-dimensional theories about religion. The interest in the arts as a *locus theologicus* is not new. Just before the turn of the new millennium, we witnessed a growing interest in theological aesthetics. Richard Viladesau authored his *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty, and Art* (1999) in the same year that the work of the late Alejandro García-Rivera, *The Community of the Beautiful*, appeared. The following year, Frank Burch Brown published his *Good Taste, Bad Taste, Christian Taste: Aesthetics in Religious Life* (2000); and four years later appeared a wonderful collection of essays edited by Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen entitled *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader* (2004). Interestingly, sometimes the titles are almost exactly the same, such as Viladesau's *Theology of the Arts: Encountering God through Music, Art, and Rhetoric* (2000).

But the great interest of the book under review is its inclusion of the seven case studies in part II that work across differences of international location and religious tradition. From a citywide mural program in Philadelphia to Peruvian women creating *arpilleras* and *cuadros*, from the literary output of French author Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt in his *Le Cycle de l'invisible* to the "Playback Theatre" emerging around the globe, from documentary filmmaking to music and dance, all the artists producing these works are responding to the need to express the divine within the created order. So the question arises whether the world needs another book on this topic. Absolutely! This book along with the others mentioned above provides a kaleidoscope through which the question of theology and the arts can be engaged from many horizons. What makes this book truly unique is the methodology that bridges disciplines as diverse as art history, ethnography, and justice and peace studies.

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