

Chris Doude van Troostwijk and Matthew Clemente (eds.), *Richard Kearney's Anatheistic Wager: Philosophy, Theology, Poetics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018). 312 pp. \$65.00 hardback.

In their famous essay, "What Is Philosophy," Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argued that the chief activity of philosophers is to generate and circulate concepts. Other thinkers can embrace and transform these ideas or they can cast them into the dustbin of history. If the current literature is any indication, Richard Kearney's concept of anatheism has caught traction in this cultural moment and will continue to be in high circulation for the foreseeable future. This is not surprising given its focus on the struggles inherent to losing and gaining anew one's native religious beliefs in a climate that is so often full of disenchantment. Yet, the numerous conferences, journal articles, and no less than four edited volumes engaging his account of a post-secular faith indicate that Kearney is contributing something unique to this current cultural faith crisis. While previous volumes have addressed the praxis and art of anatheism, in Chris Doude van Troostwijk and Matthew Clemente's new edited volume *Richard Kearney's Anatheistic Wager: Philosophy, Theology, Poetics*, a number of qualified thinkers interrogate and apply the *theoria* and *poesis* of Kearney's project. The central aim of the book is to explore the moment of existential wager inherent to engaging one's faith after having it called into question.

The volume is divided into three sections that each correspond to one of the domains mentioned in the book's subtitle. The first section ("Conversations After God") is comprised of four interviews that discuss Kearney's work from a literary, theological, psychoanalytic, and phenomenological standpoint. This is followed by a section ("At the Limits of Theology") of theological analysis and application of Kearney's work in dialogue with various denominational and interreligious settings. The concluding portion ("Poetics of the Sacred") utilizes Kearney's anatheism as a hermeneutical tool to analyze a variety of religious and secular literary works and explore the wager of hospitality and hostility in their chosen texts.

In the opening interview with author, literary critic, and atheist James Wood, Kearney explores his own religious biography. It quickly becomes clear that the hospitality, humor, and humility of the anatheistic project emerge out of Kearney's own Irish-Catholic context. The next interview pivots from the atheistic and biographical to the theistic and theological. If James Wood wanted to explore anatheism's relationship to atheism, Chris Doude van Troostwijk desires to understand anatheism's compatibility with protestant theism. Between these two initial interviews there is much overlap in content, but the juxtaposed theological positions of the interviewees provides an opportunity to

see anatheism's response to those who return to and stay away from religious adherence.

The next two conversations place Kearney in the seat of the questioner as well as the respondent. With Julia Kristeva, Kearney discusses the connections between religious experience, gender, doctrine, dark nights, and *This Incredible Need to Believe* exemplified in the life and writing of Teresa of Avila. While much of this conversation does not directly pertain to Kearney's project, it does help illuminate his relationship to psychoanalysis and the phenomenology of desire alongside a preeminent thinker working on these topics. The final and in my mind most interesting dialogue occurs with Emmanuel Falque. This conversation illuminates the fact that religious conviction (or lack thereof) is less a matter of cognitive transformation, or moments of crisis, and more about the narratives and embodied practices that shape one's identity. This conversation also affords a view into two contemporary Catholic philosophers wrestling with the legacy of the Christian metaphysical tradition while attempting to remain faithful to the phenomenological experience of persons living in a secular age.

The next section of the volume explores the conceptual framework of the atheistic wager and probes its possibility for ecumenical, interreligious, and cross-philosophical dialogue. The various contributors to this section rehash many of Kearney's arguments from anatheism, and apply them to Roman Catholic, Reformed, and Buddhist contexts. While it would be impossible to explore each of these contributions, two in particular illuminate the hermeneutical flexibility of Kearney's project.

The juxtaposition of Marianne Moyaert's essay on interreligious hospitality and Joseph O'Leary's chapter on Buddhist anatheism throw this interpretive fluidity into sharp relief. Moyaert recounts the Roman Catholic doctrine that God is fully revealed in Jesus, but other religions also bear truths that are compatible with Christian theology. Moyaert worries that this claim, more modest than those of fundamentalists and more confident than those of total pluralists, may not be possible in Kearney's project where all dogmatic claims seem to be given the same epistemological and ethical dismissal as part of a first naïveté spirituality. O'Leary on the other hand finds that Kearney's metaphysical scruples prime anatheism to stage a wonderful dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity. By skipping over dogmatic claims, straight into the life world of existential wagers, one is able to see that Buddhists and Christians have much that mutually informs their practice in relation to the absolute.

Like Moyaert, I wonder whether all exclusive truth claims regarding God must be equally exclusionary or violent? Kearney makes much of moving past notions of divine omnipotence, yet it is not clear to me that God's active (as opposed to kenotic) power or Christian particularity leads to evil-justifying

theodicy or other-excluding eschatology. *Pneuma* readers could identify Azusa Street as a site where divine empowerment fought against hegemony and racism. While one must wager with humility, perhaps divine power and not merely weakness could figure in a post-secular faith.

In the final section of the volume various biblical, ancient Greek, and contemporary stories are explored with an eye toward the wager between hostility and hospitality. Whether it is Odysseus in Ithaca, Abraham on Mount Moriah, or in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, one finds characters confronted by a stranger that invites them to either become a host or a hostile respondent. While Kearney will want to argue that ethical discernment is crucial in these encounters, the authors in this section press Kearney to embrace a more radical (read Derridean) vision of hospitality for a stranger that one cannot discern ahead of time. Abraham's story of obedience prior to calculating costs and benefits is a prime example of this radical hospitality. Nevertheless these authors will agree with Kearney that everyone, whether secular or religious will find themselves in moments of existential wager where prudential judgment is needed. Whether this wager is for God or neighbor, hospitality or hostility, one will find the insights in this edited volume valuable. Anyone interested in Kearney's project specifically or post-secular faith more broadly will benefit from reading this collection of essays.

*Austin M. Williams*

Boston College, Boston, Massachusetts

*williblc@bc.edu*