

POLITICAL THEOLOGY: SPECIAL ISSUE

SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHIES AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Introduction

1. Event

This themed edition of Political Theology emerges from a unique event held in June 2011 at the University of Chester, which was entitled *Speculative Philosophies and Religious Practices – New Directions in the Philosophy of Religion and Postsecular Practical Theology*. The event was hosted by the Centre for Faiths and Public Policy in association with the Department of Philosophy at the University of Liverpool. The Centre for Faiths and Public Policy is recently established at the University of Chester, and which exists to provide new spaces of engagement, reflection and research on the emerging relationship between religion (as broadly defined) and public space (as equally broadly defined – but referring primarily to public policy, social welfare, civil society, economics and urbanisation). The Centre is a joint initiative between the William Temple Foundation and the University of Chester.

The rationale for the Centre is a response to the way that the 21st century has unfolded in a such a different way to that confidently predicted in the latter half of the 20th century (at least in the West). The 21st century has seen the re-emergence of religion in public life in ways which appear to question the nostrums of classic secularisation thesis. Under the auspices of sociologists as such as Peter Berger, Bryan Wilson and Steve Bruce this thesis suggested that religion would cease to have significant public significance by the time the 21st century arrived. First, government now specialised in the social welfare traditionally associated with the Church (particularly health, education and social welfare – the so-called ‘differentiation’ theory). Second, religion, under the pressures of modern life associated with progressive change (especially technological advance, scientific positivism and urbanisation) appears increasingly out of touch and old-fashioned (the so-called modernisation theory). Berger has now rewritten his thesis (what he calls de-secularisation) to take account of global re-awakenings in religion, even if in his opinion, this religion is characterised as ‘furious, supernaturalist, fundamentalist or

conservative expressions of religion'.¹ Meanwhile Jose Casanova has talked about the 'de-privatisation of religion' in respect of the public sphere.² Nor are our so-called 'secularised Western societies' immune to some of these changes: global immigration to our major urban centres; the continuing search for the 'spiritual', the 'authentic' and the 'enchanted'; and the consistent deployment in the last 10-15 years by successive governments in the UK of the 'faith sector' within public policy initiatives addressing issues of poverty, inequality, social cohesion, political radicalization and local democracy.³ All these shifts have ensured that the UK is undergoing its own version of the religious deprivatisation, and exhibiting symptoms of what is now being called with increasing empirical certainty (but still conceptual unclarity) the postsecular city/public space.⁴

The Department of Philosophy at the University of Liverpool has a long tradition of engagement with (for want of a better phrase) the conceptual effects of spiritual practices. A tradition exemplified in its iconic Philosophy as a Way of Life programmes, as well as the work of Stephen Clark and Michael McGhee. In recent years, members of the department (Clare Carlisle, Daniel Whistler) have looked to continental philosophy of religion as a means of theorising the impact of philosophical concepts on communities. In particular, Daniel Whistler has worked on the significance of the speculative turn for the philosophy and practice of religion. It is in this vein that a collaboration between the Centre for Faith and Public Policy and the University of Liverpool developed.

The deprivatisation of religion has begun to take effect at the more conceptual level in, on the one hand, what has been termed the (speculative) return to the Real by philosophers of religion (as represented among the organisers by Daniel Whistler) and, on the other hand, the reawakening (after recent years of Radical Orthodoxy-inflected ecclesial and eucharistic metaphysics) of the Christian Realism tradition as

¹ Peter Berger et al (eds.) *The Desecularisation of the World: resurgent religion and world politics*, Grand Rapids (Eerdmans Publishing 1999), 6

² Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 20

³ See for example, Adam Dinham, Robert Furbey and Vivien Lowndes (eds.) *Faith in the Public Realm: Controversies, Policies and Practices*, (Bristol, Policy Press, 2009).

⁴ For more detailed descriptions see Justin Beaumont and Christopher Baker (eds), *Postsecular Cities – space, theory and practice* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), Jurgen Habermas, (2005), 'Equal treatment of cultures and the limits of postmodern liberalism', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 13(1), 1–28, and (2006), 'Religion in the public sphere', *European Journal of Philosophy* 14 (1), 1–25.

undertaken by this journal and the William Temple Foundation (represented among the organisers by Chris Baker and John Reader).⁵

Beginning to observe the nature and implication of this new and productive confluence (and its implications for the public sphere), a natural step in taking forward these agendas was therefore to create a space whereby, for the first time, practical and public theologians and philosophers of religion could meet together to discuss what we might mean by the Real and how this renewed ontological and political enquiry might begin to shape the new postsecular public space now opening up before us. The articles in this volume are based on the presentations given at the Chester conference, and we hope that is the first of many such events that will focus on shared conceptual and strategic agendas.

2. The Speculative Turn

At stake in this issue therefore is the utilisation of recent trends in philosophy for the sake of renewing the interrelation of theory and practice in religion. To begin, therefore, it is necessary to describe precisely what these recent trends are.⁶

Philosophical fashions come and go – and this was no less true of deconstruction and postmodernism. Just as Derrida’s work had burst into Anglo-American thought in the 80s and permeated every aspect of critical theory, so too after his death in 2004 the constellation of postmodern and poststructuralist concerns slowly ebbed. Indeed, there has emerged within continental philosophy an increasing frustration with, what are seen as, limitations to the linguistic turn, the turn to the Other and the turn to apophatic modes of discourse. To note merely two of these limitations. First, it is claimed that concentration on language (instead of actual objects in the world) leads to solipsistic idealism: Alain Badiou, for example, laments “the sophisticated tyranny of language” in contemporary Western philosophy.⁷ Second, appeals to alterity rather than focus on the here-and-now have resulted in political

⁵ See for example, John Atherton, Christopher Baker and John Reader, *Christianity and the New Social Order – a manifesto for a fairer society* (London: SPCK, 2011)

⁶ For more detailed descriptions, see Levi Bryant, Graham Harman and Nick Srnicek, “Towards a Speculative Philosophy” in Bryant, Harman and Srnicek eds, *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: re:press, 2011), 1-18; and Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler, “What is Continental Philosophy of Religion Now?” in Smith and Whistler eds, *After the Postsecular and the Postmodern: New Essays in Continental Philosophy of Religion* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010), 1-24.

⁷ Alain Badiou, *Theoretical Writings*, ed. and trans. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, 2004), 38. See also Lee Braver, *A Thing of this World: A History of Continental Anti-Realism* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2007).

apathy, not activism. To take Badiou as our example once more, he advocates an ethics that would be “indifferent to differences”⁸ – that is, an ethics that does away with the Other.⁹ Moreover, there has been a growing recognition of materialist and constructive philosophers omitted from the postmodern genealogy: Democritus, Spinoza, Bergson.¹⁰ In general, as Bryant, Srnicek and Harman put it, “The risk is that the dominant anti-realist strains of continental philosophy have not only reached a point of decreasing returns, but are now actively limiting the possibilities of philosophy.”¹¹

It is in this climate that the works of Gilles Deleuze, Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou began to receive more widespread attention. Three consequences ensued. First, the rise of realism – a shift in attention away from language and other phenomena which mediate between subject and object (and therefore concern the philosopher’s very ability to describe the world) to the object (and the world) itself. Second, renewed interest in philosophies of immanence – that is, theories which eschew all forms of transcendence in favour of non-hierarchical accounts of being. Third, and following on from this, communism has come to be taken seriously again, generating political as well as philosophical radicalism.¹² These are the three foundations of *speculative* philosophy.¹³

Many of these new directions were resumed in Quentin Meillassoux’s *After Finitude* and its reception in the English-speaking world. Meillassoux’s short book is intent on returning philosophy to “the *great outdoors*, the *absolute* outside of pre-critical thinkers”¹⁴, after its unproductive detour through Kant, Heidegger, Wittgenstein and Derrida. As Badiou puts it in his preface to the volume, *After Finitude* “allows thought to be destined towards the absolute once more, rather than towards those partial fragments and relations in which we complacently luxuriate

⁸ Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London: Verso, 2001), 27.

⁹ See further Daniel Whistler, “Introduction” to *Attending to Others*, Special Issue of *Literature and Theology* 25.4 (December 2011).

¹⁰ All figures crucial to the work of Deleuze.

¹¹ Bryant, Harman and Srnicek, “Towards a Speculative Philosophy”, 3.

¹² For an overview of the politics of recent continental philosophy, see Costas Douzinas and Slavoj Žižek eds, *The Idea of Communism* (London: Verso, 2010).

¹³ As Smith and Whistler argue (“What is Continental Philosophy of Religion Now?”, 18-9), ‘speculation’ has a threefold reference: first, it refers to the pre-Kantian tradition of rationalism practiced by Spinoza and Descartes among others; second, it refers to those contemporary philosophers who have laid claim to be heir to this tradition (Badiou, Meillassoux etc) and third it refers to a way in which philosophy hopes to free itself from the limitations of reflective correlationism (see below).

¹⁴ Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008), 7.

while the ‘return of the religious’ provides us with a fictitious supplement of spirituality.”¹⁵ At the heart of Meillassoux’s argument is a critique of correlationism, the philosophical claim that “we never grasp an object ‘in itself’ in isolation from its relation to the subject” and so the rejection of the idea that “it is possible to consider the realms of subjectivity and objectivity independently of one another.”¹⁶. Meillassoux undoes correlationism (which, he claims, is affirmed by every philosopher since Kant) by pointing both to the ability of contemporary science to speak about that which existed before consciousness and also to mathematics’ capacity to articulate an object without reference to a subject. Meillassoux therefore explicitly aligns himself with pre-Kantian rationalists, like Descartes, who conceive mathematics and the physical sciences as paradigms for philosophical enquiry.

Between 2007 and 2009, Meillassoux formed part of the ‘speculative realist’ project along with Graham Harman, Ray Brassier and Iain Hamilton Grant. The three other members are equally intent on rediscovering the “great outdoors” by breaking the hegemony of the linguistic turn, or, in Harman’s words, shifting philosophical endeavour away from subject-object relations (“this ghetto of human discourse and language and power”) to object-object relations.¹⁷ While this common project was short-lived, it was still a catalyst for many further adventures in constructive, realist and politically radical philosophy. What we have seen over the past few years, in short, is a new orientation towards the speculative.

3. Realism in Public Theology

It would be tempting to try to argue that recent movements within public theology parallel those within philosophy, but it has to be said that nothing quite so clear cut emerges. The mainstream in current UK public theology is dominated by writers heavily influenced by what is known as Radical Orthodoxy, but with an alternative coming from the Christian Realist sources represented by some of the contributors to this edition. A summary of the Radical Orthodox approach would point out such features as its tendency towards a communitarian response to political issues through a search for a distinctive and, at times, imperialistic, understanding of the relationship

¹⁵ Alain Badiou, “Preface” to Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, viii.

¹⁶ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 5.

¹⁷ Graham Harman in Brassier *et al*, “Speculative Realism,” *Collapse III* (2007), 381. See further Graham Harman, “On Vicarious Causation,” *Collapse II* (2007), 172-3.

between the Christian tradition and the surrounding culture. It would also highlight a non-realist strand of thought that depends upon arguing that the Christian tradition so defined, offers a better and more convincing narrative that “out narrates” all possible alternatives, including those Christian approaches that foster a connection with any form of political liberalism. The latter deemed to be too individualistic and based upon the language of human rights in a way that marginalizes any faith contribution. There is an interesting debate and set of publications representing an engagement between key Radical Orthodox writers such as John Milbank and Creston Davis, and the philosopher Zizek, but it is not easy to see any real agreement emerging from these over possible ethical and political implications¹⁸

From within theology itself, the appeal of the Radical Orthodox approach is its claim to represent what is distinctive and original from within a faith base, over and against a more open and possibly compromised stance adopted by those who have taken seriously ideas and contributions from other disciplines. At a time when evangelical forces are in the ascendancy within church circles it is to be expected that such an appeal will attract approval. One of the hidden assumptions behind this though, and one rarely acknowledged by those who adopt the Radical Orthodox approach, is that of a form of non-realism that eschews any appeal to empirical data and does not allow for a base which would enable open debate with other perspectives. In other words, any appeal to human reason is ruled out in advance, or at best, made subservient to an axiomatic theological position. One of the possible counters to this from the alternative of a Christian Realism may yet emerge from an encounter with the Speculative Realism addressed by some of the papers in this edition.

A current example of the difference between the two approaches would be the response to the Global Financial crisis and its aftermath in terms of spending cuts and possible increases in social inequality. One of the advocates of Radical Orthodoxy, close at the time to the incoming Conservative administration (although not with the Liberal Democrats), Phillip Blond, produced a text¹⁹ which argues for a return to the guild model of social organisation characteristic of the Christendom approach of former years, and highly dismissive of any engagement with the political liberalism of

¹⁸ See Slavoj Zizek and John Milbank (edited by Creston Davis), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic* (Boston: MIT Press, 2009).

¹⁹ Phillip Blond, *Red Tory*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2010).

Rawls and Habermas. An easy criticism of this is that it bears little relationship to political realities and refuses to countenance anything other than an effectively imperialistic theological stance. Contrast this with the approach adopted by the William Temple Foundation and their establishment of the Religious Futures Network, making public a series of papers covering a range of views and attempting to deepen the debate by engaging with ideas and contributions from other disciplines. This was followed in 2011 by the publication of *Christianity and the New Social Order*²⁰, a text which initiates discussion across disciplinary boundaries, presents empirical evidence, and does not try to impose an external theological position. It is the latter which assumes a realist approach and is better placed to offer a critical perspective which can shape public life and policy decisions.

Some brief pointers now to areas where the Speculative Realists might contribute to a Christian Realist critique of Radical Orthodoxy, drawing out possible ethical implications of the approaches advocated. Ray Brassier²¹ proposes an understanding of the extinction of life that throws all projects suggesting some final version of human community into sharp relief, arguing that it is the extinction of meaning that clears the way for the intelligibility of extinction and that senselessness and purposelessness represent a gain in intelligibility. Contrast this with the Radical Orthodox approach which posits a church-shaped salvation and some form of ultimate Christian community as the goal of existence. A Christian realist view would be that any final form of Christian community must be one in which it is those who have nothing in common who find a place rather than those who share Christian values alone, and even that such a community must be prepared to envisage its own destruction and non-existence to fulfil its purpose, just as Christ embraced his own non-existence.

Then we read Meillassoux on the role of reason²² and his concern that theology has attempted to inoculate itself against this by forbidding reason any claim to the absolute, thus allowing a religion that claims immunity from human reasoning in through the back door. This is an argument that has yet to receive proper attention and would again contribute insights to a Christian Realism that does envisage a role

²⁰ John Atherton, Christopher R Baker and John Reader, *Christianity and the New Social Order*, (London: SPCK, 2011).

²¹ Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 238.

²² Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 45ff

for reason and is willing to engage with other disciplines and to tackle head on the critiques they launch rather than claiming some sort of immunity. It might be consistent with the approach advocated by John Reader²³ in which an encounter between Habermas and Derrida is proposed as a means of negotiating this relationship and providing a realist basis for a Christian engagement with practical social and political issues.

Perhaps the most promising line of inquiry though is the work of Graham Harman and his interpretations of Bruno Latour²⁴ which will be examined in greater detail in one of the papers. A renewed emphasis on the study of objects as objects existing in their own right and not simply as adjuncts to human consciousness; a willingness to reconfigure our understanding of the relationships between the human and the non-human; a concentration upon matters of concern rather than matters of fact and to research in appropriate detail the gatherings and assemblages of different components that go to make up any specific matter of concern, all offer fruitful lines of investigation for Christian Realism. Above all, this would encourage theology to recognize the autonomy of other disciplines rather than trying to subsume them under a theological metanarrative in the way of Radical Orthodoxy, and also support an emphasis upon empirical research as a prerequisite for an ethical approach to practical issues. In combination with other Speculative Realists this could yield a public theology which is realist rather than non-realist, eschews any claim to establish a final and definitive Christian community as the goal of human existence, and offers proper respect and autonomy to non-theological disciplines and what is to be learnt by a respectful engagement with them.

4. The Impact of Philosophy of Religion

While, as the previous section outlined, the interplay between philosophy and religious practice will be beneficial for public theology, the same, we wager, will be true for philosophy of religion. Philosophy of religion is, in name at least, a field of applied philosophy, operating philosophically on concrete religious phenomena. It should thus serve as a means of mediating between pure theory and practice. However, 'should' is here the appropriate term, for it is too often the case that

²³ John Reader, *Blurred Encounters: A Reasoned Practice of Faith*, (Glamorgan: Aureus, 2005).

²⁴ Graham Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism: Essays and Lectures* (Ropley: Zero, 2010).

philosophy of religion has been alienated from its mediating role to become lost in the ether of rarefied abstraction. In analytic philosophy, the recent shift to ‘analytic theology’ (and so, for example, to speculation on what the afterlife is like) is one example of this distortion.²⁵ And it is precisely a comparable distortion that threatens continental philosophy of religion in the wake of the speculative turn. From the side of philosophy of religion, therefore, an emphasis on praxis is a crucial medicine, ensuring it maintains a foothold in reality; it is a means of piercing philosophy of religion’s false consciousness.

In other words, the papers which follow flag up the correlation or binding that must always already exist between the empirical and the ideational in philosophical discourse about religion. Rocco Gangle, in elucidating the work of Laruelle, draws attention to the importance of ‘the example’ in illustrating this binding of the empirical to the universal:

In each case, the empirical, worldly and familiar example is used to indicate a general or universal (precisely philosophical) structure that is itself understood to govern *any and all such* examples. In philosophy, the universal is understood in this way always to stand *in relation to* the particular or singular... What philosophy in general takes to be real is the very form of this relationship, what Laruelle calls the ‘empirico-transcendental parallelism’. What distinguishes one philosophy from another is merely how this form happens to be filled in for any particular case, how the empirico-transcendental parallelism comes to be specified in one way or another for *a* given philosophy.²⁶

Every articulation of the philosophy of religion exemplifies this structure: it too establishes a correlation between theory and empirical religious phenomena – and the manner in which it is established generates the peculiar character of that philosophy of religion.

What is required therefore is to model the ways in which philosophy of religion binds theory to practice – in other words, the means by which philosophy of

²⁵ See T.J. Mawson’s *Belief in God* (Oxford: OUP, 2005) for an obvious example this kind of speculation – and Brian C. Clack’s “Religious Belief and the Disregard of Reality” (in Joseph Carlisle, James Carter and Daniel Whistler eds, *Moral Powers, Fragile Beliefs: Essays in Moral and Religious Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2011), 261-87) for a much needed antidote. For a critique of analytic theology in general, see W. Wood, “On the New Analytic Theology, or: the Road Less Traveled”, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77.4: 941-60.

²⁶ Rocco Gangle, “Translator’s Introduction” to François Laruelle, *Philosophies of Difference: A Critical Introduction to Non-Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2010), x.

religion impacts upon concrete religious phenomena. The aim of such modelling is not merely descriptive (i.e. outlining the variety of ways in which philosophical theory appropriates, reinterprets and sometimes misrepresents religion in all its forms), but also ameliorative – that is, the pertinent question is what are the most productive bindings, the most effective ways in which philosophy relates itself to religion.

One possible answer (but not an answer by any means shared by all the contributors) is that philosophy of religion relates most immediately and productively to concrete religious phenomena only when it manages to liberate itself from its dependence on *theological* operations. That is, philosophy of religion has in recent years become increasingly ‘theologised’ (hence, movements like analytic *theology* and the *theological* turn in phenomenology). It has increasingly mimicked theological ways of articulating religion (or, in terms of this introduction, theological configurations of the empirico-transcendental correlation). Such is of course one reason for philosophy of religion’s reluctance to acknowledge any direct relation to religious phenomena whatsoever. Hence, a philosophy of religion free of theology would be one inventing its own ways of relating to religious phenomena and so self-consciously inaugurating new, productive ways of impacting upon the concrete.²⁷

More generally, what is at stake in this special issue is the proliferation of new models for conceiving the theory/practice correlation for philosophy of religion – proposing new ways of understanding it and better ways of overcoming philosophy’s false consciousness. That is, the time is ripe to experiment with philosophy of religion and its possible impact.

5. The Papers

The turn to practice is represented by two of the articles, in different ways redressing the balance between an emphasis upon language, doctrine and ecclesiastical structure and the growing interest in religion as embodied, performative and taking place often outside institutional boundaries. A similar movement is to be encountered from within religious studies and the work of Manuel A. Vasquez²⁸ where he says:

²⁷ See further Smith and Whistler, “What is Continental Philosophy of Religion Now?”, especially the critique of theologisation therein.

²⁸ Manuel A. Vasquez, *A Materialist Theory of Religion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 321.

I have sought to overcome disabling dichotomies in religious studies that have privileged beliefs over rituals, the private over the public, text and symbol over practice and mind and soul over the body....It is not that doctrine and personal beliefs, texts, and symbols do not matter or carry their own material density. Rather I have argued that we can only appreciate their full materiality if we contextualize and historicize them, if we approach them as phenomena produced, performed, circulated, contested, sacralized, and consumed by embodied and emplaced individuals.

Katharine Moody opens up a parallel trajectory by studying the work of Žižek and his atheistic speculative philosophy as it might relate to emerging religious practice as represented in the practice of Peter Rollins in particular.. Žižek talks about a “God who dies” and the surviving Christian community of believers driven by the Holy Spirit as what remains following Christ’s death. He does however tend to suggest that it is only outside the boundaries of institutional religion and churches that this residual revolutionary praxis is to be encountered.. Moody questions this and suggests that Rollins’ emerging transformative and creative movements as found in Ikon, offer an example of an heretical and apocalyptic practice which exists, albeit uncomfortably, both within and beyond institutional boundaries. This is a religious collective, but one that exhibits a “faith beyond religion” and is close to Caputo’s deconstructive theology. Perhaps the crucial characteristic of this movement is that beliefs are held lightly, whilst it is the embodied practices of emerging and often doubt-driven collective worship and activity that are the central aspects of what are now developing. Whether or not this bears much relationship to Žižek’s new communist collective is a question that Moody suggests requires further research.

In her article, Anna Strhan focuses on the increased interest in lived and everyday religion, thus also turning attention away from a theologically determined emphasis upon language and Christian doctrinal formulations. It is the messiness of actual practice that needs research, and Strhan proposes that utilising the work of Latour in relation to that of Webb Keane, is likely to be fruitful in identifying the complex material dynamics that can then be brought to the surface. Thus the purification between humans and non-humans, between words and actions, which so often shapes contemporary study of religion, invariably cannot hold, just as Latour questions the same distinctions within science studies. Using Latour’s version of realism, one can argue that facts are both real and constructed, both objective and

situated, and that this understanding can help in revealing the different modes of existence that are to be found in religious practice. A practical example of this would be the way in which the actual saying of the creed shapes religious subjectivities, just as Strhan's own study of conservative evangelicals and their varied responses to secularism shows that there is more at stake than simply beliefs and doctrines. It is the actual relations between words, things and subjectivities that can be identified by utilizing a realist Latourian approach to the study of religious practice and reinforce the turn to the material encouraged by the philosophers of speculative realism.

Graeme Smith and Elaine Graham's papers add critical voices to the proceedings. They both in different ways question current trends and provide useful criteria for evaluating both the turn to speculation in philosophy of religion and also the turn to the real in public theology. Smith argues that in order for contemporary philosophies and theologies to be genuinely *practical* and thus to insert themselves impactfully into contemporary practice, they need to provide a theory of democracy. Zizek and Badiou's interest in communism can be read, he implies, as a failure to engage in Western liberal society as it is actually lived. It is potentially a flight from reality, rather than an intervention in it. He points to Rorty's pragmatic defence of democracy as an exemplar against which current trends must be judged. Graham, on the other hand, considers the fate of women in recent philosophies and theologies: there is, she argues, a strong risk that the postsecular is in danger of repeating the very mistakes of modernity in refusing to acknowledge the gendered nature of the concepts on which it is constructed. Only through a thorough examination of the role of gender in the erection of contemporary theory can one truly ensure that gender discrimination is not smuggled into Western theoretical discourse once again.