place within this space opened by Merleau-Ponty. Here, Flynn's argument is most convincing.

He argues that a definitive moment of modernity is the separation of the religious and political spheres. While in pre-modernity the king embodied the coincidence of divine and human, taking on a Christ-like duality, in modernity the symbolic and divine orders are separated. The divine is no longer embodied by a king, and the symbolic order becomes dispersed into an uncertain and incoherent "the people." With this dissolution of the markers of certainty, the possibility for a discourse on the political as such becomes, for the first time, symbolically enabled. If this political science takes as its object "the real," we then need only to decide which account most effectively gets behind appearance: the ideology of technological progress, Marx's forces of production, reason, Foucault's power grid, *etc*. Lefort, however, sees the emergence of political science to be just as historically contingent as the previous lack of such discourse; it is a natural outgrowth of the disincarnation of society and no more "real" than the coincidence of divine and symbolic order in the body of the king.

If there is no discourse of the real, what remains for Lefort's political imagination? In the end, Flynn only hints at a meaning of political action by saying "it is an action hermeneutically inscribed within the flesh of the political field in which it unfolds," a sentence only marginally more comprehensible once one is familiar with his vocabulary. He offers a number of solid critiques of current political philosophy, but hesitates to set forth in clear and distinct language what a post-metaphysical political philosophy would do (apart from critique others).

The book requires a substantial familiarity with the history of modern philosophy before its most basic points can be grasped. Ultimately, however, the book moves boldly among different critiques of modernity. Flynn successfully treads the thin line between breadth and depth, between giving each of his subjects the attention they deserve and painting a broad picture of political philosophy at the closure of metaphysics.

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In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology. By Gordon Kaufman. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993. ISBN 0–674–44575–9. Pp. xv+461.

In this substantial new work, Gordon Kaufman synthesizes and develops many of the themes which have appeared in his earlier work (although with some changes in emphasis: 478). For Kaufman, the old orthodoxies of Christianity are anachronous and unhelpful in an age of nuclear powers, ecological destruction, and advanced scientific knowledge of the universe. The theologian must abandon notions of "God" as other and as personal/relational, shifting the theological task to analysis of "God" as a socially-constructed symbol of "that ultimate point of reference in terms of which all else is to be understood and relativized" (8). Indeed, of all religious symbols, it is "God" which provides the most "powerful

focus for human consciousness and devotion, helping orient human life toward realizing the potentialities latent in our historicity" (309).

Structurally, the book is divided into five parts: "Introducing Theology as Construction;" "Constructing a Concept of the Human;" "Constructing a Concept of the World" (i.e., as the context of human existence); "and Constructing a Concept of an Ultimate Point of Reference" (i.e., God); and "Faith and life in Today's World." The progression from humanity to world to God is important, for it reverses the traditional progression of the theological task, which according to Kaufman prioritizes God and works down to humanity. By prioritizing the human, Kaufman reflects his conviction that "theological reflection and construction...is practical, not speculative" (430). In consequence, it is matters of personal orientation, ethics, and the proper role of the church (as a community of reconciliation and humanization) which provide the themes toward which Kaufman builds in the final part of the book.

The "Mystery" in Kaufman's title refers to "life's ultimate mysteriousness" (29), or "the ultimate limits of our understanding" (47). The epistemic import here is that mystery "must properly qualify and relativize all our theological claims." The question then arises as to how theology is to be done in the face of such Mystery. Kaufman's answer is that it must be done as a thoroughly human task, taking as its point of departure contemporary understandings of humanity and the world/universe in which humanity exists. According to Kaufman's analysis, people are socio-cultural and bio-historical animals who gain orientation in life through imaginatively creating worldviews and categorial patterns of symbols by which to understand themselves and the overall context in which they live. Furthermore, scientific study leads Kaufman to conceive of this world/universe principally as an evolutionary-historical process permeated by serendipitous and directional creativity. Such an analysis of humanity and the world, when including recognition of the Mystery of existence, provides the basis for imaginative constructive theology.

Were John Dewey alive today, *In Face of Mystery* might very well be the way he would want theology done. The book, however, is not only a presentation of Kaufman's theological method, but also of his own "doctrinal" content. This "positive" content is his own reconstruction of traditional Christian symbols according to their ability to orient human meaning today in the context of our extensive yet-limited-by-Mystery knowledge of humanity and the world. On this basis Kaufman reconstructs a wide range of Christian symbols, including "God," "Christ," "Trinity," "incarnation," "faith," "sin and evil," and "forgiveness." Thus, for instance, "Christ" refers to the paradigmatic example of what it means to be truly human and truly humane (456), and "Trinity" refers to three tightly-related intentions or motifs: the ultimate and true reality, the concepts by which this reality is understood, and the rest of experience and life within the whole (421).

Kaufman stands in a long line of thinkers wanting to "reconstruct" traditional Christian categories according to a preferred intellectual schema or ethos: for example, Kant, Hegel, and Schleiermacher in the past, and Tom Driver and Carter Hayward in the present. This is not to say that Kaufman shares the explicit theological objectives or methods of these others, but it is to say that what at first

appears to be a rather radical method on further inspection looks familiarly conservative. The reason for this is quickly apparent: Kaufman still wants to describe his theology as "Christian." Nonetheless, it would appear that a number of the reasons Kaufman cites for abandoning Christian orthodoxy (principally a range of modern sensibilities) should be equally applicable to his own desire to retain Christianity, no matter how greatly modified. Many readers will be unpersuaded by Kaufman's reasons for retaining "Christianity" as a key organizing concept. Others will find dubious at best his argument that "God" is *the* most powerful of all religious symbols for orienting human life.

On the other side, others will not be persuaded that Kaufman has made his case that "God" as personal being should be abandoned. On a number of occasions Kaufman charges that many "traditional" theistic beliefs are "cognitively unintelligible" (e.g., 332); however, such a charge is blatantly false. He may not find such beliefs cognitively persuasive himself, but this is hardly grounds for claiming unintelligibility. Indeed, the sheer productivity of members of the Society of Christian Philosophers in recent years attests that a good many competent thinkers find that such beliefs are cognitively intelligible today (see journals such as *Faith and Philosophy*, or the numerous recent monographs and anthologies published by the presses of Notre Dame, Cornell, and Oxford universities). It is indeed surprising that Kaufman makes his arguments against traditional Christian concepts without referring to any of their current major philosophical proponents (e.g., Adams, Alston, Craig, Morris, Plantinga, Rowe, Swinburne, van Inwagen, Vitz, Wolterstorff, van Leeuwen). Such thinkers have addressed the full range of Kaufman's arguments against the current viability of traditional Christian concepts, but Kaufman shows no familiarity with them. Kaufman's sweeping statements concerning that which "moderns" consider intellectually credible and personally orienting is incautious; they imply that the current intellectual and social climate is more homogenous than is the case. Moreover, it would have been much more helpful dialogically—for both the religious and academic communities he addresses—if he had interacted with, or at least shown some awareness of, these significant locations of current Christian thought.

This is not to say that neither the more traditionally-inclined theistic thinker nor the more radically anti-theistic thinker will find this book useless. For instance, Kaufman's discussion of how religious language becomes reified provides a helpful warning to all religionists (although what counts as reification may be disputed), his discussion of a "normative concept of the human" is stimulating on a number of fronts, and his discussion of how all religious thinking must have practical and not merely speculative import is worthwhile whatever one's intellectual orientation. Regardless of the direction of one's critique of Kaufman (as too conservative or as too revisionist), this is a significant and lucid work, and will confirm Kaufman as a powerful and creative thinker.

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