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Norman Wirzba and Bruce Ellis Benson, eds., TRANSFORMING PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION: LOVE'S WISDOM

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and Renaissance philosophy. Sadly, this is the only chapter in the book that addresses this aspect of Lewis's thought. Thankfully, Muth does it excellently by examining Lewis's use of ancient and medieval bestiaries and connecting this with the Augustinian sacramental tradition in philosophical theology. A sacramental view, he argues, rescues individual creations from the ontological erasure that follows from so many other versions of metaphysics. Muth is not sanguine about the future of beauty in marketplace-driven academia, but Lewis's writing provides a hopeful—and beautiful—alternative to the current intellectual environment.

In the final chapter, Gregory Bassham, in his typically lucid style, makes a quick case for the importance of fantasy, not only for the imagination, but also for Christian philosophy. In a nutshell, Bassham argues for the important role fantastic literature plays in helping us to see familiar things from a new angle—which is, after all, one of the chief aims of philosophy.

I have two criticisms of this book. First, I found myself correcting the index quite a lot, penciling in important references that were omitted. Second, and more importantly, the book left me wanting more. Lewis devoted a good deal of his writing to arguing with philosophers like Spencer and Nietzsche. Other philosophers like Bergson and Bernardus Silvestris permeate Lewis's writing. Yet none of these figures is mentioned in the book. Even if Lewis wasn't a philosopher in some narrow sense, he constantly engaged figures like these from the history of philosophy, and surely that merits mention in a volume of this sort. Or perhaps it merits mention in a second volume. After all, taken together these essays make a solid case for considering Lewis a philosopher. If that is the case, then there may be a good deal more Lewisian philosophical writing to come.

This book should be on the shelf of every college library, and will make a helpful addition to classes on the philosophy of Lewis.

Transforming Philosophy and Religion: Love's Wisdom, ed. Norman Wirzba and Bruce Ellis Benson. Indiana University Press, 2008. viii + 263 pp.

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The usual practice in philosophical discussions on love has been to begin with certain reflections or theories on love and then to apply these or test them against various domains such as politics and gender relations. This volume reverses this process by looking at how our very theoretical or reflective practices, philosophy and theology included, can be transformed by the discipline of love. The very etymology of 'philosophy,' in fact, presupposes that the attainment of wisdom requires the practice of love in some form. Philosophers, as the editors note in their Introduction, have tended to sever the connection between love and wisdom, seeing the former as an impediment to the attainment of the latter (love as a passion

that distorts reality). But could not love lay open to view vital and valuable aspects of the world that a detached and impersonal stance would (inevitably) overlook? Although this is certainly the case, if modern psychology has anything to teach us, we need to recognize that love distorts just as much as it reveals, for love comes in many forms, from the parental to the romantic, from the narcissistic to the agapaic.

I would have liked to see this issue addressed more thoroughly, a point to which I will return. Nonetheless the essays collected here, which arose from the Wisdom of Love conference organized by the Society for Continental Philosophy and Theology at Wheaton College in March 2005, make a splendid contribution to the philosophy of love. Unable here to deal adequately with the variety and complexity of the collection, I will comment only on those essays which I found most provocative.

Norman Wirzba's essay ("The Primacy of Love") calls upon philosophers to acknowledge the primacy of love, for love "is the indispensable prerequisite for wisdom. If we do not exhibit appropriate forms of love, our access to wisdom will be seriously impaired if not altogether denied" (pp. 15–16). It is, of course, a perennial temptation of the philosopher that he or she can proceed with their craft without attending to the practice of love and the attendant disciplines of self-purification and detachment. Wirzba's emphasis on the dangers of this temptation is welcome, but what would have been welcome also is an examination of *the dangers of love*, beginning with an analysis of the various forms love has taken in the past as well as in today's virtual and market-driven worlds. Wirzba admits that "What love itself is, of course, is not easily or simply determined," and that "love is a varied and complex phenomenon that should not be narrowly or quickly reduced to one thing" (p. 16). But it seems that this is precisely what Wirzba does when, only one paragraph later, he goes on to say that, "Though love flowers into many different forms, at root a loving disposition is one that acknowledges, affirms, and nurtures (human and nonhuman) others in their ability to be" (p. 16). Similarly, a few paragraphs later Wirzba discusses the familiar mystical view that our rational faculties are constrained by the power of sin (sloth, pride, etc.) while loves heals the root of sin and nurtures practical goodness—without, however, noticing that love may also be open to, and constrained by, the same vices. I found this to be a glaring omission in the volume generally, and even when the dangers of love are acknowledged, little is provided by way of detailed analysis. For example, B. Keith Putt's essay, "A Love that B(l)inds," discusses the theme that love is blind, and notes that "such blindness provokes a certain epistemological crisis of love in that the lover may not genuinely know the beloved, or know if the beloved genuinely reciprocates that love, or even know whether he or she genuinely loves the beloved" (p. 122). However, Putt does not delve into the details of such dangers, preferring instead to show how this blindness in love creates the necessity for faith and hope.

Bertha Alvarez Manninen, in her contribution ("Why There Is No Either/Or in *Works of Love*"), notes that Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* is sometimes

interpreted as a rejection of preferential love—which is directed only to those we are close to, and is conditional on our feelings and preferences and so is fleeting and subject to change—in favor of unconditional love or Christian *agape*—which is universal in scope, as it is grounded in the divine commandment to love all humanity and so is not subject to change or termination. But Manninen sees this as a misrepresentation of Kierkegaard, who is best viewed as valuing both forms of love and not requiring us to choose between them. In support of her position, Manninen defers to Kantian moral philosophy. Kant is often criticized for not allowing moral actions to be motivated by any inclinations or feelings, but in response it has been noted that (for Kant) an action has moral worth as long as it is determined by the motive of duty, and any accompanying inclinations or nonmoral motives do not negate the moral worth of the action but simply *overdetermine* the action. Similarly, for Kierkegaard (argues Manninen), preferential feelings do not negate genuine love, as long as the ultimate motivating factor for love is the divine duty to love all humankind, in which case any preferential feelings would only overdetermine the loving relationship. Thus, "what Kierkegaard wants to abolish is not *preference*, but rather *love based on preference*" (p. 97).

The preference for nonpreferential love seems to lie not merely in the capacity of this kind of love to embrace all of humanity, but also in its stability and security: nothing can possibly tear it asunder. This indeed is the kind of love extolled in the apostle Paul's memorable words in Romans 8: 38–39: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (NIV). And so, if inclinations or feelings of preference are taken to be integral elements in a loving relationship, then since such inclinations or feelings can whither away and disappear, so can the loving relationship itself. But to therefore demote the affectual and passional dimensions of love to 'overdetermining factors' seems to me too drastic a measure. A more cautious and nuanced approach would see the emotions and passions as an indispensable element in (genuine) love, but would ask the question: what *kinds* of emotions and passions are thereby demanded? The sort that quickly and easily fade away in difficult circumstances, or the sort that are the product of long and hard ascesis (prayer, commitment, etc.)? This would then overcome the (good) objection the author deals with in her final footnote, that if love is not based on preference all of our loving relationships would be 'equalized,' since I would have no more reason to prefer or value the love of my wife over the love of my female neighbor. Manninen responds by saying that the feelings of preference that overdetermine my love for my wife will serve to make my experience phenomenologically different from the love I feel for any of my neighbors, and this difference would render my relationship with my wife valuable and irreplaceable. But what if these feelings were to wither away? This

Manninen takes to be a live possibility, but if so then my wife is replaceable after all.

John Caputo, in "Living by Love: A Quasi-Apostolic *Carte Postale* on Love in Itself, If There Is Such a Thing," engages in a dialogue with the apostle Paul on love and its relation to the law. He begins with a phenomenological account of love, where love is described as an excess which leaps over and overrides the law, in which case "we need the law in order to have something to exceed" (p. 104). Among a long list of contrasts between love and the law, Caputo writes: "Laws are numerable—ten more or less, in several versions—but love is a single virtue that is everywhere itself yet everywhere diversified" (p. 104). Caputo, like many other contributors to this collection (Gschwandtner and Anderson being the major exceptions), falls into the trap of thinking that love is a unitary phenomenon, albeit one that is manifested in diverse ways. But why must love be one and not many? Why cannot love itself be made up of different kinds and varieties, with some varieties closely related to each other and others only tenuously so? Why, in other words, must we continue to assume that there is an essence or ideal form of love, rather than a plurality of loves, some better and some worse than others? Indeed, this seems to be a more phenomenologically adequate account of love.

In the final section of the paper, Caputo offers a deconstructive reading of love. On this reading, we can never be sure that love in itself, which is not deconstructible, exists or has finally been found; and we must always be wary of any actual manifestation of love posing as (pure) love in itself, for love has its ruses and we can never be sure that it is merely a disguised form of (e.g.) power or pride. This struck me as a significant point but an underdeveloped one, and perhaps greater depth could have been achieved by delving into the wealth of psychological literature on love—something that is only occasionally done by the contributors to this volume.

The mere fact that love can so easily—and unfortunately often does—turn to hate, leading people to do the unthinkable (viz., killing their loved ones in 'crimes of passion'), should at least lead one to be wary of any psychologically naïve conception of love. A charge of this sort has indeed been leveled at Caputo in the past. Gregg Lambert, for example, has argued that the concept of love Caputo has inherited from Christianity is deeply problematic, both morally and psychologically. Borrowing from psychoanalytic theory, Lambert argued that the intensity and excessive demands (for reciprocation) that characterize love are the very conditions that make possible the excessive cruelty that characterizes hatred.[1] Caputo in turn replied that any inventory of love's stratagems and ruses, such as that provided by Lambert's 'cold hermeneutics' of love, need not undo love altogether. The challenge, Caputo emphasizes both in his reply to Lambert and in his contribution to the book under review, is to know that

[1]See Gregg Lambert, "Against Religion (Without Religion): A New Rationalist Reply to John D. Caputo's *On Religion*," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 5.2 (April 2004): 20–36.

love in itself is impossible, to be fully aware of the ruses and risks of love, and then still to make the leap of love. The challenge is to move within this aporia, to negotiate this double bind of love, and not simply to denounce all ecomonies or attempt to dissolve them.[2]

But it seems that Caputo is faced with the following dilemma: *Either* love does occasionally escape the economy of exchange, *or* love never escapes the economy. If the former is the case, then Caputo has in effect abandoned the Derridean deconstructive project, where 'the unconditional' (whether in the guise of love or something else, such as justice or hospitality) is always *to come* (*à venir*), forever lying beyond our reach. And if the latter is the case, then we may wonder: Why bother? Why bother striving for something that can never be actualized? Caputo's call to 'love without demand (for anything in return)' becomes an impossible and hence futile task, for no matter how hard we may try we are inevitably led back to the circle of exchange. Our predicament is therefore no better than that of Sisyphus. Caputo may, of course, reply that we should bother because we can try to approximate this ideal as far as we can, even if we can never fully attain it. But I wonder, like Lambert, what sense can be made of the idealized notion of 'love in itself,' a notion that is so detached from history and its complications and multiple meanings that it seems to spiral away into nothingness, if not nonsense.

Brian Treanor, in "Absence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder," is also critical of postmodern, and in particular deconstructive, accounts of love, viewing them as deriving from faulty assumptions about otherness. If deconstruction is love for the other, it is not love construed in terms of intimacy and union (as it is in the Christian and Neoplatonic traditions), but love figured as difference and distance, as respect for the otherness of the other, an otherness construed in terms of *absolute* alterity. Against such notions of love and otherness, Treanor makes some telling points. Treanor quotes Dostoevsky to the effect that, "the more I love mankind in general, the less I love people in particular" (p. 147). Deconstruction, similarly, enjoins a love for otherness, but fails to love any actual or particular others, for as Treanor explains, "as soon as the other is present, she is no longer *tout autre* and thus, strictly speaking, no longer the object of my love" (p. 147). This reminded me of a Russian Orthodox priest in Moscow who, in response to the flippant (but attributed) comment of astronaut Yury Gagarin that he traveled to the heavens but never saw God, remarked: "If you have not seen Him on earth, you will never see Him in Heaven."[3] The singular and the concrete is where love (and love of God) is found.

Treanor's solution to the problems with deconstructive love is to rehabilitate the notion of otherness by, firstly, affirming the irreducible alterity of every other (so that otherness is not merely relative), and secondly,

[2]See John D. Caputo, "Love Among the Deconstructibles: A Response to Gregg Lambert," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 5.2 (April 2004): 37–57.

[3]Quoted in Anthony Bloom, *Beginning to Pray* (New York: Paulist Press, 1970), 45.

rejecting the hyperbole of absolute otherness, for there can be no relationship or communication with an other that is wholly other. Treanor thus offers a 'hermeneutic-chiastic' understanding of otherness: "while there may be some aspects of the other that are foreign and even absolutely obscure to the self, these aspects exist alongside others that are in some measure familiar" (p. 150)—a far more reasonable view in comparison with the excesses of deconstruction.

Tyler Roberts, in "Militant Love: Zizek and the Christian Legacy," explores Zizek's 'turn to *agape*,' his idea that Christian love is the key to radical politics. This turn, explains Roberts, is theorized in terms of a radical change, a revolutionary break inaugurating a new symbolic order, first conceptualized by the apostle Paul, where excessive *agape* releases us from the repressive economy of desire and law. Although Zizek thus defers to the Christian legacy, his underlying concern is political: his goal is to provide a model of political commitment to a 'cause,' and he thinks that Christian love (which he describes as intolerant and violent) helps provide such a model. But here Roberts detects a problematic valorization of violence, and I share Roberts's concerns. Consider the following quote from *The Puppet and the Dwarf* (reproduced on p. 178):

> Who is really alive today? What if we are "really alive" only if and when we engage ourselves with an excessive intensity which puts us beyond "mere life"? What if, when we focus on mere survival, even if it is qualified as "having a good time", what we ultimately lose is life itself? . . . What makes life "worth living" is the very excess of life: the awareness that there is something for which we are ready to risk our life (we may call this excess "freedom", "honor", "dignity", "autonomy", etc.).

Even more revealing is the following rhetorical question which occurs where I have placed the ellipses in the above quotation: "What if the Palestinian suicide bomber on the point of blowing himself (and others) up is, in an emphatic sense, 'more alive' than the American soldier engaged in a war in front of a computer screen hundreds of miles away from the enemy?" I find this a disturbing question. As I write, Palestinians and Israelis are once again slaughtering each other in the Gaza Strip, and I wonder whether these soldiers, freedom fighters, terrorists (call them what you will) are "really alive," or whether life has become for both sides of this conflict (as in all wars) cheap and expendable, in the name of a 'higher cause.' In other words, Zizek's simple conflation of "life worth living" with "the very excess of life" is just that: simple to the point of being simplistic. If excess can render life worthwhile, it can just as easily reduce it to meaninglessness (consider drug addiction). While Zizek may be right in decrying the lack of firm belief or commitment in the postmodern world, a more balanced approach would be to develop, as Roberts puts it, "a politics *between* resistance and order" (p. 182).

Christina Gschwandtner, in "Love as a Declaration of War?," continues with the theme of militant love, but this time as it occurs in the work of Jean-Luc Marion. Marion frequently compares love to war, and this

raises for Gschwandtner several suspicions about Marion's phenomenology of love. Marion writes, for example, that a declaration of love is like a declaration of war in being beyond reason and calculation, and in being performative and not descriptive, initiating a total commitment and abandonment of any hope of returning to the equilibrium of exchange. Marion adds that the language of love also parallels—and indeed can only be expressed by means of—the language of mystical theology, and that love is univocal insofar as all types of love (including divine and human love) function in the same way. Gschwandtner highlights the problematic, if not extreme, character of these aspects of Marion's recent work, concluding that Marion's love "just seems a bit too overwhelming" (p. 195).

I was reminded of a play I recently saw, called *Grace* and co-written by the philosopher and critic of religion A. C. Grayling. In this play, a young man has a religious awakening and decides to become a priest, to the bewilderment of his skeptical parents and girlfriend. He nevertheless persists in his decision to follow his calling and shortly after asking his girlfriend to marry him he is killed by religious fundamentalists. His girlfriend, who is as unsure about the marriage proposal as she is about God, is devastated by the death of her partner, whom she clearly loved greatly. In anger she protests that love, the love (of God) that killed her partner and the love (of her partner) that is killing her, is just too much to bear, too overwhelming, too blind and too violent. Her solution: kindness. Kindness is measured, thoughtful, not spiteful and not liable to abuse. I left the play wondering whether kindness, and not the violent torrents of love depicted by Zizek and Marion, is what religiously inclined philosophers should be advocating today.

Alone in the World?: Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology, by J. Wentzel van Huyssteen. University of Edinburgh, 2004. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006. 347 pp. $40.00

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For this book, van Huyssteen won in 2007 the first Andrew Murray-Desmond Tutu Prize for the Best Christian and Theological book by a South African. Van Huyssteen has held the James I. McCord Chair of Theology and Science at Princeton Theological Seminary since 1992, and deserves congratulations on his interdisciplinary scholarship; it is important to contribute to the interaction between theology (however conceived) and science (whatever branch).

> The book discusses human uniqueness from both theological and scientific points of view. "We are indeed alone [van Huyssteen concludes], formed by biological processes such as natural selection yet, unlike all other species . . . we alone appear to have attained the capacity for self-consciousness and