reason to leave his religion at home when he comes to work. I would in fact go so far as ask whether, for Levinas, the movements de Vries describes as minimal theology are not the defining moves of the Jewish tradition. And perhaps a similar argument could be made about Adorno, though I am not yet in a position to make it. I sense that it would have to rest not on the famous messianic moment at the end of *Minima Moralia*, but on the argument de Vries himself makes in chapter 12 that the prohibition of graven images is the root of negative dialectics.

The critique to which the book is most susceptible is not actually a critique of the book at all, but of the ideas expounded. Once the oscillation that defines Levinas's and Adorno's thought—and indeed our current philosophical condition—has been defined so clearly, the reader finds herself asking whether the little bit of promise left in a minimal theology is not like being a little bit pregnant. To be sure, it is. The trick is to keep it this way, rather than letting it grow into theism or resorting to terminal atheism. To keep one's theology at the state of "not yet" requires continual care, and, as the analogy suggests, a certain amount of philosophical violence. Yet, as a student of Levinas's work, I find myself seeking the moments where diachrony seems to take us beyond the oscillation between transcendence and immanence, into an otherwise that being that is not tormented or difficult. The otherwise than being is not the romantic play space of art or text that some have seen in it, nor, I think, is it merely the unreachable purity lying on the other side of the quotidian compromise that repeats and compounds the philosophical problem of dirty hands. For me, this speculation or longing has been sharpened and clarified by de Vries's superb volume.

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Peter Jonkers and Ruud Welten, eds., *God In France: Eight Contemporary French Thinkers on God*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 227 pages.

With the publication of *Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* in 1991, Dominique Janicaud decidedly brought to the forefront of contemporary continental philosophy a debate concerning the relationship between phenomenology and theology. Janicaud's well

known thesis is that phenomenology has been taken hostage by theology and that this "theological turn" is inextricably tied to the history of phenomenology itself. While originating in the ambiguities found in Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's readings of Husserl, and depending upon Heidegger's *Kehre*, Janicaud contends that it is with the publication of Levinas's *Totality and Infinity* in 1961 that the turn becomes explicit. This explicit manifestation is then expanded and deepened in the "new phenomenology" of such thinkers as Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Louis Chrétien, and Michel Henry. Often when we get lost on our way to a particular place, the best way forward is to go back to the last spot that we recognized and proceed on from there. Janicaud urges exactly the same thing for contemporary phenomenology. Namely, he suggests that we *turn back*, as it were, to the original phenomenological impulse and methodology laid out by Husserl. Ultimately, for Janicaud, the new phenomenology is simply not properly phenomenological at all.

It is within this context, and concerning this debate, that the recent collection of essays *God in France: Eight Contemporary French Thinkers on God* offers a profound and persuasive challenge to Janicaud's contention. Although this volume contains essays by eight different authors and deals with eight French thinkers, it presents a unified argument to the effect that Janicaud is wrong to conclude that the theological turn is a *turn-away* from phenomenology *towards* religion. Peter Jonkers nicely summarizes the thesis of the collection as a whole when he comments that the thinkers discussed "use religious ideas in a *heuristic* way: they are convinced that both the content of these ideas and the way in which they are understood in religion can shed new light on important philosophical questions" (2). Rejecting any suspicion of an apologetic enterprise, Jonkers asserts that, with the possible exception of Lacoste, the thinkers discussed "take a rather distanced attitude with regard to religion and theology as such" (7). Thus, he concludes, ". . . it seems to me incorrect to interpret the attention of contemporary (French) philosophy for God and religion as a turn to religion or theology, as some do" (8). Essentially, then, *God in France* is a sustained attempt to demonstrate that *new* phenomenology continues to be properly described and regarded as phenomenological.

Indeed, it may seem to some readers that the book actually protests too much against Janicaud's thesis. It is a recurring refrain throughout the book that the thinkers being discussed are philosophers and should be treated as such. For example, Rudd Welten argues that although Henry's discussion of Life and transcendence might be

drawing on Christianity, "Henry is not a theologian or a mystic" (125). In his essay on Marion, Welten claims that both Henry and Marion "approach theology phenomenologically, not dogmatically" (197). Marion resists simply doing theology because he does not "show us God; he just makes sure there is room for God to show *Himself*" (206) Johan Goud is comfortable contesting the "one-sided moral and non-religious interpretations" of Levinas, and even goes as far as saying that Levinas's "philosophical thought hinges on philosophical theology"(99). Yet, he solidly insists that Levinas does not "discuss God in theological terms" (98). Lest these protestations lose their weight because of frequency, however, every essay is successful in challenging the quick assumption that phenomenology prohibits talk of God. Moreover, all offer substantive rationales for the supposition that Janicaud might have been too hasty in narrowly defining the domain of phenomenological inquiry.

The book consists of an extended introductory essay by Jonkers that details the way in which Heidegger's legacy has contributed to the emergence of (French) phenomenological discussions of God. Following Jonker's introduction are eight essays that each focus on a particular French thinker (Ricoeur, Girard, Levinas, Henry, Derrida, Lyotard, Marion, and Lacoste). The remarkable aspect of this volume is that each essay is simultaneously introductory while being a significant contribution to the existing literature. The accessibility of the essays does vary greatly, however. Although familiarity with the major trajectories of contemporary continental philosophy would be decidedly beneficial, the essays on Ricoeur, Levinas, Henry, Marion, and Lacoste are all accessible for the novice in phenomenological literature. Each provides synopses of the major aspects and important concepts in the thought of the particular thinker; and while stressing the theological strains, all situate these concerns in the larger context of the thinker's overall authorship. In contrast, the chapters on Girard, Derrida, and Lyotard make for significantly more difficult reading, but also offer more developed original theses. Because I am unable to give adequate consideration to each essay, let me simply offer synopses of two chapters in an attempt to demonstrate the overall structure and themes of the volume as a whole.

Johhan Goud's essay, "This Extraordinary Word: Emmanuel Levinas on God," begins with a brief biographical sketch that leads into a discussion of the way in which Levinas "relativizes method" (100) along three lines: 1) the incorporation of pre-philosophical

experiences (viz., Talmudic Jewry), 2) the commitment that philosophy is a discipline of questioning (i.e., not a process of systemic totalization), and 3) concern for the enigma as evidenced in Plato's notion of the good beyond being, Plotinus's discussions of the one, and Descartes' conception of the infinite (100-101). Goud then moves on to outline the major philosophical influences on Levinas's thought: Husserl's phenomenology, Buber's notion of relationality, and Heidegger's hermeneutics (102-103). In an attempt to illuminate the way in which Levinasian subjectivity ruptures the bounds of typical philosophical categories, Goud explains how Levinas makes use of both prophecy (e.g., the Bible) and poetry (e.g., the work of Paul Celan). Importantly, and in keeping with the challenge to Janicaud's interpretation, Goud is quick to note that Levinas never engages in the problematic practice of using religious texts as proof for philosophical claims. The Bible quotations that Levinas offers "represent the pre-philosophical inspiration that led him to philosophize. They also serve to relativize the difference – sometimes presented as absolute – between religious and philosophical literature" (107).

After this more general introduction to Levinas's work, Goud turns his attention to the question of God in Levinas's thought. "The fact that Levinas sets himself a theological task does not mean he wants to be viewed as a theologian" (111). Goud offers two reasons for why it is inappropriate to consider Levinas a theologian. First, "In his view, the language of religion adequately describes a dimension of the human world of experience which eludes and transcends our understanding – a dimension that, at the same time, confronts us with fundamental *choices*" (111). And second, "Levians offers no statements about the theme 'God'. . . . In his view, making God a theme is characteristic of the practice of theology" (111). Such thematic discussions are what tend to make western theology a mere example of "theo-ontology" (112). Hence, Goud concludes, "Levinas' thought must be read, valued and perhaps criticized as a philosophy" (112).

In conclusion, Goud offers a persuasive case that, for Levinas, if theology or philosophy is to escape the totalization of ontological categories then there must be the requirement, and actuality, of constant criticism. Hence, "[t]heology – including philosophical theology – is only acceptable if it can maintain a discourse that constantly criticizes, corrects, or even cancels itself" (115). This "challenge of constant self-criticism" (117) is what should continue to animate all philosophical and theological inquiry. Finding Levinas to be, for the most part,

successful at such a task, Goud admits that "Levinas' philosophical theology contains no system that answers all questions and speaks final words. On the contrary, it presents us with questions: Prophetic, intense, disturbing questions" (118). In doing so, Levinas might not be overturning the philosophical tradition, but tapping into its Socratic fount.

Rico Sneller's "God as War: Derrida on Divine Violence" opens in a playfully serious tone reminiscent of Nietzsche's question at the beginning of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Sneller asks concerning Derrida: "Has he ever been otherwise engaged than with the question of *God*? And what would it mean were this true?" (143) Sneller then lays out the ways in which Derrida's discussion of God is rooted in his conception of both the limits and open-endness of language in the Western logocentric tradition. In so doing, Derrida demonstrates that, classically, God has been understood as a guarantor of meaning and a stable foundation for our words and their significations. Counter to this tradition, Derrida claims that difference always serves to infinitely challenge such stability. Thus, he opens the space for thinking God otherwise than as a mere sign of some original signified object. For Derrida, God is best thought of as a "trace." This resituating of language and, thereby, of God, Sneller contends, marks a shift away from pure critique "towards a heterologous, more affirmative use of the name of 'God'" (149). It is to the move towards affirmative statements – "God is X" – that Sneller now directs his attention.

Investigating such strange claims as 'God is death,' 'God is violence,' and 'God is war' allows Sneller to articulate Derrida's "re-adoption" (150) of 'God.' 'God' becomes the name for the rupture at the heart of the world, the contestation at the heart of subjectivity, and the resistance and invitation at the heart of language. Sneller offers the provocative thesis that, for Derrida, philosophy is crucially framed in the "perspective of a theodicy" (156). The idea here is that 'God' is the name for the constant demand for a justification that is continually yet to come. Yet, "Derrida's speaking about God-as-violence evokes the question of theodicy without really answering it: the question can only be illuminated, but definitely cannot be answered conclusively" (162). Sneller concludes by claiming that what all of the foregoing suggests is that 'God' no longer refers to a being, a location, a guarantee, or a certainty, but instead to "an original dynamism" (163). According to Sneller, then, "Derrida aims at *renewing* traditional God talk . . . and

not, as for example Sartre did, at abandoning it as if it were something obsolete" (163).

Having outlined two of the essays included in this remarkable collection, let me quickly raise a few questions concerning the structure and substance of the volume itself. First, while the text challenges Janicaud on the reality of a "theological turn," there remains a problematic ease in the way that the authors grant Janicaud the notion that "phenomenology and theology make two." As I mentioned above, they all seem ready to grant a *heuristic* role to theological discourse, but stop short of allowing room for anything like an *apologetic* enterprise to occur. Surely phenomenology and theology need to be differentiated, but it seems likely that the line between phenomenology and theology is more blurry that either Janicaud or the authors of *God in France* are willing to admit. It is possible that phenomenology may do more than simply use religion for its own purposes and, instead, actually provide good *philosophical* reasons for crossing into more theological terrain. Secondly, despite the fact that the essay on Lyotard provides valuable insight into his "indirect philosophy of religion" (184), that Lyotard is included while Chrétien is not seems a bit odd. Indeed, van Troostwijk readily admits that Lyotard might seem like an unlikely thinker to mention when discussing the theological turn and, hence, even titles his paper "Lyotard's *Hidden* Philosophy of Religion" (my emphasis). I am not suggesting that the chapter on Lyotard should not be included, but simply that an additional chapter on Chrétien, who has written explicitly phenomenological analyses of such theologically invested concerns as the call, response, hope, and memory should also be included in order to give a fuller picture of the contemporary phenomenological landscape. In other words, Chrétien's philosophy of religion is not so "hidden" and, as such, would be a nice supplement to the current essays. Finally, there is not sufficient attention paid to the question that Jonkers himself raises in the introduction: "Is it possible to detach 'religion' from its connection with a specific religious tradition and community, from its being embedded in a ritual praxis, from its concrete moral do's and don'ts?" (12) That is, phenomenological discussions of God may indeed remain phenomenological, but have they evacuated the theological import and existential value in the process? Joeri Schrijvers's question in regard to Lacoste is, thus, appropriate for all of the thinkers in the volume and warrants substantive consideration: "the question is not whether God feels at

home in France, but whether men and women are at ease with this 'French' God" (225).

Such criticisms notwithstanding, *God in France* is as rewarding to read as it is important for the furtherance of the contemporary debate. It is the perfect collection to include in a graduate seminar on phenomenology or continental philosophy of religion and should be carefully read by anyone working in continental philosophy who is not readily familiar with "new" phenomenology. Additionally, because it pairs thinkers who reside at the center of American continental interest (e.g., Derrida, Levinas, and Marion) with thinkers who have not yet received as much attention (e.g., Henry, Lacoste, and Girard), the book invites us to rethink our own preferences, practices, and possibly even prejudices. In short, by serving to invite further conversation and challenge current perspectives, the book is exemplary.

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Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), xvii+642 pages.

Paul Ricoeur's *Memory, History, Forgetting* (*La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* [Seuil: Paris, 2000]), dedicated to the memory of Simone Ricoeur, addresses the fundamental question of the representation of the past by examining the reciprocal relationship between remembering and forgetting. The prevailing issue of the treatise is the possibility of the past's being made present again. Following Vladimir Jankélévitch, Ricoeur presents the "mysterious and profoundly obscure fact of having been" as the human being's "viaticum for all eternity." As is befitting for a treatise on the philosophy of history, the content of the book is preceded by a black-and-white photograph of a baroque sculpture from the Wiblingen Monastery in Ulm representing the dual figure of history. (In the French edition this full-color photograph is on the front cover). Kronos (Chronos), an old man, represents a past that cannot be recuperated. History, a young man, possesses the instruments for mastering time: a notebook, ink, and a feather; the trappings of a