

literature if more attention were paid to the roles that reading and the portrayal of reading play in the cultural transmission of ethical and aesthetic ideas and ideals.

Stock's choice to end with Coleridge and Schopenhauer is curious, particularly because he seems to take their analyses of fancy, imagination, and mind so seriously. These writers do not offer views of the mind that are well supported by contemporary work on the nature of consciousness or perception, such as Marvin Minsky's studies at MIT. Moreover, neither Coleridge's criticism nor Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Idea* are notable for clarity. If Stock means to make a more general point that the English Romantics and the German philosophers after Kant were part of a larger reversal of the respective roles of aesthetic judgment and ethical judgment, then he might have made a more extensive case by citing additional figures or at least by saying more about Kant's notion of the purposiveness without purpose that is art. He touches on Kant's later aesthetic only briefly.

Readers of this journal who take an interest in Augustine, Dante, and their relationship to the views of art expressed by Aristotle, Plato, and others may find interesting analyses in Stock's study. Others may find this book stimulating in exactly the same way that it is stimulating to read an essay by Montaigne or a section or two of Pascal's *Pensees*—to be faced with a challenging viewpoint or to be given a fresh perspective. Stock's Conclusion restates the argument of the book well, though this critic must finish by observing that there are probably many riches in Brian Stock's thinking about his topic that would have been clearer had he written a longer book that presented each of the strands of this study more explicitly. Stock does not present a study that is specifically informed by a Christian viewpoint, though of course he offers many rich observations about the reception and uses of reading in medieval literature as well as in medieval Christian monasteries. Schopenhauer, of course, was deeply influenced by his reading of Buddhist texts and by his fascination with the Buddhist understanding of compassion.

To read Stock is to re-enter the world and the worldview of Ernst Curtius. In Stock's case, the topos is the scene where reading takes place, and the historical task is to see the relationships among scenes of reading in major and minor literary works in the context of classical and Christian views of the value of art. This is a comforting and familiar world, though perhaps not the world we now inhabit.

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On What Cannot Be Said: Apophatic Discourses in Philosophy, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, Volume 1: Classical Formulations. Edited by William Franke. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007. ISBN 0-268-02884-2 (cloth); ISBN 0-268-02882-6 (pbk). Pp. xi +401. \$70.00 (cloth); \$35.00 (pbk).

On What Cannot Be Said: Apophatic Discourses in Philosophy, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, Volume 2: Modern and Contemporary Transformations. Edited by William Franke. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2007. ISBN 0-268002885-0 (cloth); ISBN 0-268-02883-4 (pbk). Pp. viii + 480. \$80.00 (cloth); \$40.00 (pbk).

There is an inevitability to this anthology of apophatic discourses, or so we will have perceived after reading William Franke's enlightening "theoretical and critical essays" introducing each volume of *On What Cannot Be Said: Apophatic Discourses in Philosophy, Religion, Literature, and the Arts*. If Franke is indeed correct, we have never not been immersed in the apophatic, and in this age, "postmodern," "post-secular," or post-whatever depending upon your academic camp, apophasis is a dominant discourse, whether we know it or not. Let me clarify this "we." It certainly includes the academics, those in religion, philosophy, English, literature, and elsewhere, but it also includes the artists of our culture, the poets, the painters, the composers, and maybe we could include the academics in this category as well. Beyond these categories, though, we might suggest that the European and American cultures of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are themselves defined by the resonance of the apophatic, and we could take the wide breadth of texts included in this anthology as an argument for this.

Here is precisely the strength of Franke's anthology, and what makes it so impressive and welcome at this time. Ranging from Plato to Jean-Luc Marion, Franke exhibits texts formed by and forming apophatic discourse in diverse realms from Socratic philosophy to phenomenology tinged with Catholicism, from essays on the silence of music to poetic proclamations of Divine Love. He presents texts from America, France, Ireland, Germany, and elsewhere, covering an admirable geographic area. The result of this wide-ranging presentation is a sense of the pervasiveness of apophatic discourse throughout the history of European and American thought and art.

Volume I of the anthology covers the "classical formulations" of apophatic discourse, and stretches from Plato to Angelus Silesius, the seventeenth-century Lutheran-then-Catholic writer. The texts chosen for this volume predominantly fall into the categories of philosophy or theology, though one cannot deny the literary quality of the works of Marguerite Porete, Meister Eckhart, or Angelus Silesius among others. Franke's introductory essay attempts to show the continuity of thought from Plato to Jakob Böhme, and goes a long way in explaining some of the choices of texts in this volume. Franke begins by showing the importance of Plato's *Parmenides* in establishing a discourse that exists in relation to the One and the Good, but which asserts the ineffability of the One and Good. Following quickly is a brief account of the discourse that develops through the commentaries on the *Parmenides* of Plotinus, Proclus, and Porphyry. Thereafter, Franke marks the first major turning point in the history of apophatic discourse. When Christian

theologians incorporated Neoplatonic philosophy and its discourse on the inexpressible, this apophatic discourse had to deal with the Creator God who exists in intimate relation with the world (13). As Franke writes:

The creationist framework of these monotheisms, however, radically transforms the problematic of unsayability, since it concerns no longer an impassively remote One approached intellectually by abstraction (*aphaeresis*) but a living, caring, engaged, personal Creator, who is present everywhere in existence, yet in an ungraspable, unsayable way that infinitely transcends every creature and every creaturely apprehension and expression. (14)

Thus, following Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, that exemplar of apophaticism, innovatively and powerfully interweaves the Neoplatonic stream of apophaticism with Christian, Trinitarian theology. The Areopagitic line of thought then ramifies throughout the great Scholastics, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, and into Meister Eckhart. From Eckhart, we trace the line of apophatic discourse into Jakob Böhme and Angelus Silesius.

As a basic history of apophatic discourse, Franke's account is quite standard, and his treatment of each of the authors on which he focuses in this essay, the Neoplatonists, Pseudo-Dionysius, Thomas, and Eckhart is also standard in relation to the literature on each. It is worth noting that Franke's grasp of secondary literature, German, French, English, and so forth, is excellent. The publication of the volumes would be worthwhile simply to have at hand the web of resources that Franke provides in footnotes to the two long introductory essays and the short introductions to each author. If Franke's account is standard, even if quite informative, we should ask what makes it a "theoretical and critical essay," as Franke names it. Franke draws two interwoven conclusions from his historical analysis of these "classical formulations" of apophatic discourse. We will begin with the second. At the end of the introductory essay, Franke notes that the history of apophatic discourse, especially taking into account Jewish forms (such as that of Maimonides), leads directly into philosophy and theology from German Idealism to contemporary forms of phenomenology which are focused around the question of difference (32-33). It is precisely the idea of absolute difference between God and creation which is incorporated into French and German thought, especially the ethical works of Levinas and Derrida. Yet, following his reading of apophatic discourse, Franke asserts that difference cannot be the end of the story. From the Neoplatonists through the medieval and early modern Christian thinkers, especially the mystics, apophasis has been used to describe the profound unity of the human, and sometimes all of existence, with God. Franke writes:

In Eckhart, particularly, the negation of all language as applied to God led to a conception of God as absolute negation. Yet ultimately this entails that God is also the negation of negation, the non-other (*non aliud*, as Cusanus was to put it), and at this level absolute difference turns out to be indistinguishable from identity or oneness – though it is unity as negated in any of its verbal expressions, such as, *infinite*, *undefined*, and *unsayable*. In the end, identity and difference alike are not definable or sayable. (32)

That the boundary between identity and difference is not firm will be familiar if we have read Hegel; yet, the assertion that both identity and difference, at some level, rest at the edge of language and concept may surprise us. That an even stronger thesis, that “absolute difference cannot be positively distinguished from absolute unity,” (33) holds once we understand apophatic discourse is a strong contribution of Franke, which ought to call into question the focus on difference that preoccupies the twentieth century, especially in the work of Levinas and the late Derrida (see *The Gift of Death*, 1996, for example), works which emphasize the absolute singularity, the radical alterity, of every other (Derrida’s *tout autre est tout autre*). Respect for and grasp of the history of apophasis, especially in the later Neoplatonists and some Christians, might offer a way for critiquing the dominant European forms of philosophy that have become so prominent in literary and cultural studies in the academy in the United States.

Here is the link to other conclusions, critical and theoretical, that Franke draws in this first introduction. His treatment of the Neoplatonists and the works of the Areopagite, Thomas, and Eckhart is predominantly focused on the question of Being and its relation to the One or to God. Franke is particularly adept in showing the difference that arises starting with Porphyry, who asserts that it is the pure act of being which transcends concept and language (23). Here is the difference between the Platonic and Neoplatonic One who “is” beyond Being and the One who *is* Being, the pure act of Being. From at least Pseudo-Dionysius on, Christian thinkers often incorporated and wove together both views, insisting that God is beyond Being while also asserting that God is indeterminate Being (*Deus est esse*) (20). The point of Franke’s reading of apophatic discourse from the Greeks onward is to show the powerful role which apophatic discourse has taken in the development of the metaphysics of Being, which reigns from Plato through the 20th Century. Franke draws an interesting conclusion from this. He writes:

The contemporary philosophical polemic that targets metaphysics, as if getting rid of this type of thinking would cure Western culture of its pluri-millenary sickness, is itself another symptom of the tendency to reify and isolate elements by their objective manifestations and to abstract from and forget their deeper roots that reach into the unsayable and unknowable. (26)

According to Franke, this reading of apophasis gives us the resources for critiquing the critique of metaphysics so prominent from Heidegger, through Derrida, to any number of contemporary philosophers and theologians. These authors have dealt with only a single side of the development of metaphysics and have critiqued that single side without adequately handling the apophatic discourse that has always accompanied the developments of metaphysics. Thus, we can draw on the resources of tradition in order to more accurately examine and critique, should we choose to, the Western metaphysical tradition and the contemporary critique of metaphysics.

Franke continues to follow this line of thought in the introduction to the second volume, which is concerned primarily with nineteenth- and twentieth-century works in philosophy, theology, and the arts. He affirms his assertion that the “historical interdependence of apophatic and metaphysical approaches to the question of the unsayable and especially of the Names of God suggests a vital connection that deserves to be reactivated” (34). The prime example of this critique of metaphysics which fails to acknowledge this link is, according to Franke, Heidegger, who neglects the Neoplatonic authors who maintain the ontological difference between Being and beings. The implication is that Heidegger fails to plumb the depths of the apophatic tradition which allows for a re-interpretation of the metaphysical tradition. Yet, we should not simply accept Franke’s word here, no matter how astute he is throughout his excellent introductory essays. Even if Heidegger neglected the Neoplatonic Greeks, he learned quite well from Meister Eckhart, who powerfully incorporated Neoplatonic thought. We have only to examine Heidegger’s lectures on Eckhart, or read John Caputo’s excellent work on the two, to understand this. Whether Heidegger *sufficiently* incorporated apophatic thought, whatever that might mean, in his reading of metaphysics may still be in question, but we should keep it in question precisely because of the way in which Heidegger explicitly is influenced by the apophatic tradition. Likewise, reading Derrida’s critique of metaphysics, a post-Heideggerian critique if there is one, we should keep in mind, as Franke himself notes, that Derrida was aware of negative theology as early as 1968, when he denied that *différance* is the God of negative theology (443; see “La différence” in *Margins of Philosophy*, 1985). Further, again as Franke knows, Derrida wrote rather frequently of apophasis in the last two decades of his life, explicitly treating Pseudo-Dionysius, Eckhart, and Angelus Silesius. So, again, if we are to think that Derrida comes under Franke’s critique of reifying one side of metaphysics, and not sufficiently incorporating apophasis from the tradition, we should pause. If we are to write only of Derrida’s explicit work in those early years, we may concede the point; yet, we cannot deny Derrida’s knowledge of the tradition, Neoplatonic, Jewish, and Christian, and we are not yet done considering the way in which this tradition impacted the earlier or the later Derrida. We should deeply appreciate, though, Franke’s recognition of the way in which Jean-Luc Marion already carries out this very project that Franke suggests, using the resources of Christian tradition, especially the Church Fathers,

their apophatic discourse, to construct a theology which exceeds metaphysics, and, eventually, to construct a phenomenology, saturated phenomenology, which also exceeds metaphysics. We could wish, however, that Franke had more significantly addressed this saturated phenomenology, which is powerfully apophatic, and how Marion has shown its promise in addressing issues from aesthetics to religious experience.

Let us turn to the other major thesis of the introductory essay to the second volume. The texts collected in this volume, and the introductory essay, deal significantly with the Jewish tradition of apophasis, and Franke makes a compelling argument for the importance of this tradition for thinking through contemporary philosophy, especially that of Levinas, Derrida, and others. The strong point that he makes, what those of us in philosophy and theology should pay most attention to, is that a great deal of twentieth-century philosophy and theology has its foundation in the thought of Franz Rosenzweig. Franke's explication of Rosenzweig is remarkably clear and succinct, and he convincingly shows in Part III of the introduction that, at the least, Levinas's work proceeds directly out of that of Rosenzweig, incorporating an understanding of language and difference, of alterity, directly drawing on the apophatic tradition. While we could follow Franke's brief excursions on Wittgenstein and Heidegger (24-25) to further understand this influence, we can most easily remember the influence of Levinas on so much of contemporary philosophy, theology, and criticism to see how far Rosenzweig's influence runs. While others have examined the profound influence of Jewish thinkers upon the twentieth century, few have so clearly set forth Rosenzweig as a crucial link, and we should, hereafter, take Franke's idea and run with it. If we do, we shall see, like Franke, the profoundly positive side of apophasis in the religious traditions and philosophy influenced by those traditions, which engenders an innovative idea of experience in excess of reason and concept, which incorporates but pushes beyond identity and difference. Whether we look to Marion's Catholicism-tinged phenomenology or elsewhere, we will not go wrong if we pursue this notion of experience.

If the introductory essay to Volume I and much of the introductory essay to Volume II lay out a history of apophatic discourse running from Plato to Marion, with compelling accents, the final section of this second introduction focuses on the fine arts, which had otherwise been neglected. While it is easy to see the coherence of Franke's historical account, it is less easy to see the links between the two-plus millennia of philosophy and theology and the works in contemporary art, especially poetry, music, and architecture, which he addresses toward the end of this introduction. While Franke valiantly shows the way in which the fine arts have powerfully incorporated and advanced apophatic discourse, it is less easy to see how these twentieth-century arts relate to the development of apophatic discourse as Franke follows it through Rosenzweig. Though we might comment on the influence of deconstruction on architecture, it seems that much of the apophatic discourse in fine arts either occurs as an original reaction to an event or returns

to earlier moments in the tradition rather than any recent developments. Paul Celan's poetry is powerfully apophatic, and while Celan almost certainly was influenced by the discourses surrounding him, much of his poetry seems a profound and original response to the trauma of the Holocaust. The work of Vladimir Jankélévitch on apophasis and sound draws heavily on the Neoplatonists and the Christian mystics (45). While we can recognize the truth of Franke's assertion that many of the poets and other artists of the twentieth century vibrantly utilize apophasis, it is unclear, and Franke does not make clear, how these authors might fit into the very coherent account of apophasis that Franke develops. He leaves them as divergences of the discourse, but we might want to investigate further, think further, how these authors have or could profoundly influence philosophy, theology, and literature.

Franke has limited space, though, and if he chooses to draw our attention to American poets such as W. S. Merwin or the architecture of Le Corbusier rather than forge some further unity out of the disparate discourse of apophasis we should only be thankful. Many of us who pretend to the titles of philosopher or theologian know unfortunately little outside of our own disciplines or specialties. We should respect the clear implication of Franke's breadth of selection and focus balanced with what is possibly an unwillingness to paint a completely clear picture of apophasis as a whole. It is precisely the indeterminacy inherent in all apophatic discourse which will always prevent the success, if closure is success, of such a project. With this in mind, we should turn then to Franke's stated project, which, possibly, I have thus far failed to address. At the end of the "Preface" to Volume I, Franke writes:

This modified form of anthology interprets classic and contemporary texts in order to construct apophasis as a quasi-genre (or genre of genres) and theorize its modes. It is an anthology-cum-history-and-theory that proposes an original outlook on what cannot be said through reflecting on a selection of ground-breaking texts in the apophatic vein. (6)

By the time we have finished reading both introductory essays, whether we have perused the actual selections in the anthology or not, we will have been convinced of Franke's argument that apophasis is a genre of genres. Focusing on works in philosophy, in theology, in poetry, criticism, architecture, prose, and so forth, and showing how these works address and instantiate the apophatic, Franke makes clear that apophasis serves as a genre which can pull together works of numerous other genres. This work of drawing connections allows us, Franke's dutiful readers, to pursue, enrich, and deepen the avenues which he begins to open.

It is only in light of these introductory essays that we can understand Franke's choice of texts for each volume. The selections mirror the historical and theoretical account of each essay, providing selections from the primary texts which Franke references and, if we read with Franke in mind, giving evidence for Franke's conclusions. Whether we would draw the same conclusions without having read

Franke is a question we might wish to keep alive. Whatever the case may be, there are some small comments or questions we might raise about textual selection and ordering. The selections and ordering of Volume I are quite coherent and helpful. I can only admire Franke for sorting through the numerous works of Eckhart to choose several powerful representatives, both German and Latin. Likewise, we can only respect the helpful inclusion of Jewish and Islamic authors, such as Maimonides, Ibn al-'Arabi, and Rumi in a collection whose introduction might have inclined us to think that apophysis is dominantly the concern of Greeks and Christians. Before every textual selection, Franke provides useful introductions, ranging from a single page to six or seven, which give historical, textual, and critical information on each author and selection. In this first volume, the introductions to Damascius, Aquinas, and Eckhart are notable for their interest and provision of secondary resources. While the selections in this volume are generally shorter than those in the second, there is a good balance between introductions and text selections, and the length of selections reflect the foci of the introductory essay, with the Neoplatonists as a whole, Pseudo-Dionysius, Aquinas and Eckhart given the longest consideration.

The balance of Volume I is less evident in Volume II, though, again, my concerns are really rather small. Still, we might wonder why Kasimir Malevich receives the largest number of pages of any author in either volume, thirty-four pages, while he is only mentioned once or twice in the introductory essay, and seems rather less important on the whole than Levinas (twenty-one pages), Derrida (sixteen pages), or Marion (sixteen pages). We could also wonder why Franke's introduction to Kafka lasts six pages while the primary text selections cover only two pages. According to Franke, Kafka did, along with Beckett, orient much of contemporary poetry (44). This is one of the few occasions in which Franke's short introduction is rather longer than the actual textual selection. We might also question the organization of texts. While the introductory essay is occupied with showing the link between Rosenzweig, Levinas, and other philosophers and theologians, the texts of Rosenzweig, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger are separated from those of Levinas, Derrida, Marion, and others by the division of texts on the visual arts, music, and poetry. After having made clear the direct and immediate connection between Levinas and Rosenzweig in the essay, it seems strange for Franke to then separate the two with a number of texts (more than 150 pages) which distract from or mediate that immediate connection, if we consider important the ordering of texts. This is one of the few places where the progression of selections does not seem to match the ordering of the introductory essays. Finally, we might wonder about Franke's selections when it comes to Derrida and Marion. Franke addresses Derrida's direct work on negative theology in "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," (See *Derrida and Negative Theology*, 1992) in which Derrida directly deals with Pseudo-Dionysius, Eckhart, Heidegger, and Marion's *God without Being* (1995), from which Franke draws a selection. Yet, Franke includes instead a portion of *Sauf le nom* (1995) for Derrida, which, while interesting and provocative in reading

Angelus Silesius, is maybe less beneficial for the newcomer to Derrida and apophasis than “How to Avoid Speaking: Denials.” The performative character of *Sauf le nom* complicates what is already a challenging issue. As well, while the choice of *God without Being* for Marion fits with Franke’s introductory essay, consideration of more recent works on saturated phenomenology, whether *Being Given* (2002) or the studies in *In Excess* (2004), could have been tremendously interesting, especially in showing a contemporary philosophical discourse in which apophasis plays a powerful if understated role. Such work seems rather like the metaphysical discourse through Western history as Franke reads it. Even if we were to disregard this more recent work of Marion, we could still consider the rich debate between Marion and Derrida directly on apophasis carried out in a number of essays that are not significantly dealt with here. These two authors seem important enough to take the final two spots in the anthology, and Marion, on Franke’s account, is carrying out the very rethinking of the history of metaphysics through the apophatic tradition which Franke calls for; yet, we find rather less than we could with both authors in relation to the apophatic tradition and their recent works.

These small considerations aside, we should take Franke’s anthology as what it is—one of the most important and original contributions to the discussion of apophasis in recent years. While others have focused on negativity in literature (Budick and Iser, *Languages of the Unsayable*, 1987), Derrida and apophasis (Derrida, Coward, and Foshay, *Derrida and Negative Theology*, 1992), or the history of apophatic thought (Raoul Mortley, *From Word to Silence*, 1986), none have compiled an anthology such as this. Franke’s historical and disciplinary range, in light of his well-written and compelling essays, provides an illuminating insight into the pervasiveness of apophatic discourse. For those of us who might know philosophy and theology best, it exposes us to instantiations of the apophatic in other disciplines, such as architecture and opera, which we might not approach otherwise. For those adept with poetry, this anthology provides resources for understanding correlative and influential philosophical trends. For any who know best one single temporal period, or who only significantly know works from the period of German Idealism onward, this anthology gives us valuable insight into the profound historical roots of contemporary thought and art. Regardless of one’s discipline, Franke’s anthology is a resource which should not be ignored. Few others, maybe no others, provide the same clarity, coherence, and scope; few, maybe none, provide the same provocation to think further and more deeply, to think otherwise the tradition from which we come.

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