

BOOK REVIEWS

Hans Waldenfels, *In-Between: Essays in Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue*. Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2011, pages xii + 156, ISBN: 978-81-89958-47-3.

In-Between, consisting of six chapters, is originally the annual Dharma Endowment Lectures of 2011, conducted by the Faculty of Philosophy, Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore. The book has the interesting title *In-Between*. The first chapter explains human being as a being in-between. From womb to tomb he is in-between. The whole drama of his life is played out in-between. In the family, in the school, in the place of work, in the place of recreation, everywhere he is in-between. He is in-between fellow human beings, animals, and other creatures. This in-between can have several dimensions. Sometimes he is united with his fellow human beings in love and friendship; sometimes he depends on others for his wellbeing and even for his survival; there are also instances, when he uses and exploits them for his selfish interests (5-6).

The second chapter reminds us of the fact that religion plays a crucial role in man's being in-between. In today's world of extra-fast mobility, intercommunication, and globalisation, the in-between of persons has very evident social dimensions. We may say that any part of the world has become multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi-religious. Today there is a general tendency to understand religion as the 'way.' The many 'ways' connected with Zen Buddhism are known even in the western world. They are 'concrete ways,' which influence the daily life of ordinary people. When we turn our attention to Christianity, 'religion' is not a biblical concept. However, 'way' is a central concept in the teachings of Jesus (42-43).

The third chapter deals with the theme "Secular Age." The author reminds us of the fact that a human person's being in-between has not only a horizontal but also a vertical aspect. We could say that man's immanence is crossed by transcendence (49-50). In other words, man lives between heaven and earth. However, in modern times this type of deliberation is confronted with a sudden rupture. Many do not believe any more in a heaven. Earth alone remains the beginning and end of their existence. In May 2011, the worldwide known German playboy Gunter Sachs committed suicide. Then, a German newspaper wrote: "Gunter Sachs created his orders himself. He did not want to be in the hands of a blindly working fate." Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) is perhaps one of the

pioneers of this line of thinking with his ‘death of God philosophy’. This new situation is called today ‘secular society’, ‘secular world’, or ‘secular city’ (50-51). Charles Taylor, a Canadian philosopher of Catholic origin, affirms that modern man is confronted with the possibility to choose between belief and unbelief. Today it is possible to live in the society without believing in God’s existence (62).

In the fourth chapter, the author reminds us of the fact that in the intercultural and interreligious encounter language has a crucial role to play. In the general process of communication language is the most important factor. My partner in dialogue should first understand what I am talking about. This is all the more true in the context of India, where numerous languages and dialects are spoken (72).

The fifth chapter emphasises the point that the terms ‘intercultural’ and ‘interreligious’ remind us of the fact that the encounter between cultures and religions is a multidimensional undertaking in which all have to be sincere and open to learn from the other (109). Dialogue should not be used as a tactical means to impose one’s own view on the other. ‘*Inter*’ means that we start from different angles of the world and meet somewhere *in-between* (117).

The sixth chapter discusses the Divine in the form of Buddha and Christ. Their vision, words, and actions still influence the world history. They originated from ethnically limited historical contexts: Buddhism was born from Hindu background; Christianity has Jewish roots. However, both movements till today attract people from all races and nations; they are world religions (120). In Buddhism, the term expressing the liberating experience is negative ‘*nirvāṇa*’, extinguishing, blowing away, so that ‘nothing’ is left and yet ‘nothingness’ is not the appropriate translation, if it means the nihilistic nothing; *śūnyatā* = emptiness. It needs an ascetic, spiritual, and meditative approach to realize the true meaning of ‘emptiness’ (128).

For a long time the smilingly squatting enlightened Buddha and the painfully hanging and dying Christ on the cross seemed to be unable to meet. The famous Japanese philosopher Keiji Nishitani commented on the Christian confession to the kenotic Christ in the *Letter to the Philippians* 2:5-8. For Christ taking the form of man and becoming a servant is “making himself empty.” According to Nishitani, the central Buddhist notion of *śūnyatā*, emptiness, finds a beautiful parallel in the notion of *kenosis*, self-emptying of Christ as explained by St. Paul (129-131).

Prof. Waldenfels' profound expertise and vast experience in the field of intercultural and interreligious dialogue are clearly evident in this book. He does not hesitate to proclaim his firm conviction that finally humanity shall not survive without belief and a religious option (4). He brings to our attention also another very important and interesting point. The term inculturation was coined by theologians and missiologists after the Vatican Council II to describe the process of introducing the Gospel to new social and cultural environments. This term was considered characterising a positive attitude of the Church towards other religions and cultures. According to Prof. Waldenfels, however, inculturation is in fact a one-way action focusing on the transfer of western civilizing and cultural values in the name of Christianity. Therefore, supported by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, Prof. Waldenfels pleads for a change in the terminology from inculturation to "interculturalisation" (96). This term clearly implies mutuality and not one-sidedness. The term interculturalisation invites all to a readiness to learn from one another.

Of course, intercultural and interreligious dialogue is not an entirely new theme, because especially after the Vatican Council II, there were a lot of academic and practical activities in this field. However, the present work has a comprehensiveness and originality of its own. Therefore, *In-Between* could be a very useful guide for all those who are engaged in any sort of interreligious and intercultural endeavours.

Alex Thannippara

Peter Tyler, *The Return to the Mystical: Ludwig Wittgenstein, Teresa of Avila and the Christian Mystical Tradition*, London and New York, Continuum International Publishing House, 2011, pages: xix+275; ISBN: 978-1-4411-0444-1.

This is an extraordinary book, blending mysticism with philosophy, creative synthesis with critical analysis and Teresa of Avila with Ludwig Wittgenstein. Though began with a fascination and enthusiasm for two giants in the field, the book is the result of persistent and meticulous research for ten years, exploring the interaction between these two great authors in depth both in style and content. Both the authors are exciting and exasperating; exciting because they seem to be saying something original and deep, exasperating because they seem to use certain style and

method to confuse the reader rather than to make things clear. Peter Tyler is successful in showing that style is as important as content in understanding these great figures and that changing the style of thinking and living is at the heart of these writers.

As a Carmelite and as a student of Wittgensteinian thoughts, I think, Dr. Peter Tyler is successful in following the methodology of Wittgenstein, that of assembling reminders, criss-crossing the terrain, than of constructing sustained deductive arguments on what he calls *theologia mystica*, to refer to the ‘language game’ that was developed in the mystical schools of the High Middle Ages, after Dionysius the Areopagite. By bringing out how Teresa and Wittgenstein enlightened him in providing a *Blick of theologia mystica*, he shows how they might intelligibly illumine all who attend to their writings carefully. What the book, thus, provides is a threefold insight, moving from Saying to Showing to Acting, illuminated by Wittgenstein’s philosophical investigations and Teresa’s mystical explorations.

The detailed bibliography of primary texts and secondary works as well as the index are very useful for scholars and students of Teresa and Wittgenstein. The author’s mastery of the original languages, Spanish and German, brings out nuances in his own translations.

The book begins by the question ‘What is Mystical Anyway?’ Applying Wittgensteinian methodology that navigates between the boundaries of quasi-ontological, cross-credal category of modern mysticism and the constructivist approaches, Dr. Tyler presents a ‘mystical speech’ which is neither de-psychologized nor overly ontological. Mysticism is not a ‘something’ that we can identify in a person like colour of the eye or DNA, but it is not a ‘nothing’ either. Wittgenstein observed ‘Not empiricism and yet realism in philosophy, that is the hardest thing’ (*Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* 325). This is true about our discourse on mystics, mystical experience and the mystical. The experience, language and truth are related not just empirically but logically. We experience more than what we speak about, we speak about more than what we systematise. This is true about the language on mystical, even by Teresa or Wittgenstein. In his explorations on *The Return to the Mystical*, Tyler could have hit the nail more on the head, increasing the value of the book, if he had paid greater attention to the complex net work of realism, empiricism and logic. Wittgensteinian strategies of language game, family resemblance and form of life have metaphysical import, not just epistemological value. Without this

ontological dimension *theologia mystica* would also slip into (empty chatter) rather than ‘life question.’

After briefly exploring the problem of understanding Wittgenstein, in the labyrinth of interpretations of earlier, later, new and third Wittgenstein, neither committing himself fully to the theoretical or therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein, the author proposes a way of seeing, after Wittgenstein, a *Weltblick* rather than *Weltanschauung*, in the second chapter. The author isolates the move from thinking to seeing to acting, and offers to showing the character of performative discourses and linguistic strategies of elucidating both Wittgenstein and Teresa of Avila.

The part two of the book deals with investigating the evolution of the *theologia mystica*, by criss-crossing the terrain of twelfth/thirteenth-century Latin revival of the works of Dionysius in the Parisian and German schools, journeying to its culmination in the convents and friaries of Renaissance Spain. The aim of the section is not to cover every aspect of the medieval mystical tradition, but to trace one strand of its influence. The sections on the mystical strategies of Dionysius and the *theologia mystica* and the chapters on the medieval flowering of this tradition and the emergence of the Spanish School are particularly useful for any serious student of Christian mysticism.

Tyler concludes his work in part three, by returning to the life and works of Wittgenstein and Teresa, showing their family resemblance, similarities and differences of their strategies of unknowing – the direction of locution, contradiction, avoiding conclusions, disorientation, humour, ordinary speech, and strategies of affectivity. The work is successful in showing that these are brilliant strategies and not drawbacks of the writings of these authors. This is a work of mutual fecundation: how Wittgenstein could throw light on the mystical strategies employed by Teresa and how Teresa could enlighten careful readers on Wittgenstein’s baffling ‘religious point view.’ What is surprising is the fact that ‘Their strategies interrupt the spontaneous, unselfconscious flow of our ongoing ‘mental’ activity forcing us to re-evaluate our place in the world and our attitude to it’ (Introduction, xiv). This is very rewarding philosophically and religiously.

The concluding postscript shows that *theologia mystica* is a life question and not a scientific question. One is reminded of Wittgenstein’s statement in the *Tractatus*, “We feel that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched” (6.52) and his remark, “One of the things Christianity says

amongst others, I believe, is that all sound doctrines are useless. You have to change your *life*. (Or the *direction* of your life)” (*Culture and Value*, 61; MS 132 167:11.10.1946). Life of the mystic would decide whether something is ‘empty chatter’ or a ‘life question.’ Dr. Tyler has brilliantly shown that in the case of Teresa and Wittgenstein, the *theologia mystica* is a life question. Indeed this is also an invitation to the reader to make the chatter a life question. Tyler’s threefold insight, moving from Saying to Showing to Acting will find fruits in mystical forms life; only in the stream of life do words and deeds have meaning!

Jose Nandhikkara