'the question of the meaning of Being.' And that is why William Desmond is an original thinker, and an original thinker of and in 'metaxological metaphysics,' and why his particular style (practice) of philosophy cannot be imitated or appropriated, as O'Neil Surber argues, but, at best, admired or, at worse, ignored. It seems to me, however, that if the content of Desmond's metaxological philosophy is understood to lie between admiration and ignorance, then it is not admired and misunderstood. It is Desmond's intention that the content of his philosophy is communicable, however difficult such communication is for both reader and author (see O'Regan, p. 75). Thus Desmond's work is not a defiance of logic/dialectic but a defiance of any univocal understanding of the logical (in the dialectical) as the sole and primary criterion of what is thinkable. Hence O'Neill-Surber's attempt to think Desmond's 'idiotic' with the 'idiodic' (see parenthetical remarks, p. 61) of the 'conceptual persona' of a Deleuze and Guattari *against* Desmond may not do what it might claim it does (precisely because the concept of similarity implies difference, as well as 'commonalities,' see p. 62), in producing a better understanding of Desmond's metaxological philosophy through 'cinematics' more broadly conceived as 'dramaturgics' (p. 63), rather than through 'poetics' and 'singing thought' as Desmond *himself* argues.

Differences in identical terms (if they are not contingent identities) used by philosophers must be respected. And this is why in his contribution 'Maybe Not, Maybe: William Desmond on God,' Kearney can agree with Desmond's acute observation that 'A God that needs us to be God would be pitiable,' (p. 196), that is to say, pitiable as a God from our perspective, but maybe not from God's perspective—God weeps when we do terrible things to each other, hence the Good that is brought about by humans and that we await, when absent (such as the experiences of the extermination camps) is a pointer to a God that desires us to be better and in this regard the God that is maybe not. Though God did not need to create us, God does, as Augustine remarks, need us, nevertheless, to fulfil creation. With that in mind, the way in which the relation of the human to the infinite, and that we call God, is, without doubt, that which calls both Corkonians to think, though that relation is, as Kearney acknowledges, thought differently by both (p. 200, n. 11).

And this is why Chapter 1, the editor's 'Introduction,' is so important to this work, for, herein the editor encapsulates beautifully and most elegantly Desmond's path of thought and in thought as a 'polyphony between many really differing, but somehow related voices' (p. 2). The editor thanked graciously all those who helped him produce this book, and noted 'I couldn't have done it without you' (p. 9). The book could not have been done without Tom either because it was his orchestral heart and voice that systematically arranged the singing thoughts of all the contributors into this meticulously edited and tightly arranged polyphony. And Tom left us with just one more added thought, being the generous philosopher that he was. The jacket cover of the collection is a photograph of an oil painting entitled 'As By the Sea Begun' which is one of Tom's own works of *poiesis*. Between image and text, therefore, Tom leaves his trace and his memory for which we are truly grateful. *Grásta Ó Dhía ar a anam*.

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The Texture of Being: Essays in First Philosophy. By Kenneth L. Schmitz, edited by Paul O'Herron. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007. Pp. 327. Price $59.95. ISBN 978-0-8132-1468-9.

This is rich fare, a book which will provide satisfying reading for philosophers and theologians alike. The very title of Kenneth L. Schmitz's *The Texture of Being: Essays in First Philosophy* suggests an author with an uncommon ability to turn a phrase. Curious readers will find themselves enticed by chapters with titles such as 'Enriching the Copula,' 'The Geography of the Human Person' and 'The Witness of Beauty.' Schmitz's work, as presented here, is the fruit of many years' thinking. At times individual articles may show their age, written as they were in response to the pressing philosophical issues of their day, but they never lose their remarkable freshness and their ability to invite the reader to think deeply.

Kenneth L. Schmitz is professor of philosophy at the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family. He is also a fellow of Trinity College and professor emeritus of philosophy at the University of Toronto. To date, Schmitz is best known for his important work *At the Center of the Human Drama: The Philosophy of Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II* (Washington, DC, 1993), a theme touched upon a number of times in this latest volume.

The Texture of Being has been edited with an introduction by Paul O'Herron of Mount St Mary's College and is the 46th volume in the prestigious *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* series. There are in total 17 chapters (or 'essays') which have been arranged thematically under three headings: 'Being,' 'Man' and 'God.' Most have been published before and are here reprinted. The final two chapters are new. The essays span a period of some 30 years (1974–2003) and are marked by remarkable clarity of expression, an engaging style and by the author's obvious sensitivity to the playful potential of language, all of which carries the reader along. The volume is enhanced by the provision of an extensive bibliography and an index of names.

Moving on to highlight just some of the content of *The Texture of Being*, we are everywhere reminded of Schmitz's characteristic concern to unite what Hegel termed 'the being of the ancients'—their dedication to metaphysics—and the 'subjectivity of the moderns.' This, it would seem, is and ought to be the aim of any philosopher today. Schmitz's work is a constant reminder of the need for contemporary metaphysics (or 'first philosophy') to keep being and subjectivity together on the philosophical agenda. Schmitz's vision is firmly rooted in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition but seeks conversation with 'moderns' such as Kant and Hegel and with 'postmoderns' such as Derrida and Foucault. Ultimately Schmitz's discourse finds its home in the personalist phenomenology of Scheler, Von Hildebrand and Wojtyla.

The first chapter of the book 'Metaphysics: Radical, Comprehensive, Determinate Discourse' is a robust and confident defence of first philosophy as precisely involving 'firstness' or principle (*principium/archē*). First philosophy forever launches itself with an *in principio*. In metaphysical discourse things follow on from principles. Consequences have their sources in principles and follow in an order dependent on those principles. Against the 'chaos theory' approach to metaphysics evident in our own time, Schmitz pleads for order and principle. Being able to begin, to continue and to come to a conclusion must surely characterize meaningful and responsible philosophical discourse. In chapter three, 'From Anarchy to Principles: Deconstruction and the Resources of Christian Philosophy,' Schmitz appeals to examples from Christian theology to suggest that principles themselves are neither tyrannical nor intolerant of variety. In the beginning, God the creator gives life. In the Incarnation God gives and shares his own life. Beginnings are inherently social just as the Trinity is social. God pitches his tent among us.

In Chapter four, 'Neither with nor without Foundations,' Schmitz develops his notion of the 'contextualised singular.' Singulars, entities are both individual and also open to and constituted by community.

Chapter six of *The Texture of Being*, 'Enriching the Copula,' develops the rich senses of key notions such as being, presence, unity and thought. Chapter seven echoes insights from a previous work by Schmitz, *The Gift: Creation* (Milwaukee, MI: 1982), and prepares the ground for his vision of being as gift. In creation, the created being is given both existence (*esse*) and the capacity to receive existence (essence). The receptivity to the act of being in the creature is akin to a host who welcomes a guest to his or her home. These insights will be further developed in the context of Schmitz's discussion of beauty in his final chapter.

Chapter nine, 'The Geography of the Human Person,' is a masterly account of what it means to be a 'human person.' Schmitz considers the term 'person' in ancient, medieval and modern contexts and relates 'personhood' and 'subjectivity' most insightfully. The originality of Schmitz's presentation is most evident in his consideration of privacy, familiarity and intimacy. Protecting privacy is important in society but is ultimately too fragmented, too isolated and lonely, too much the opposite of intimacy. Schmitz pleads for the concept of person as the basis for mutual association in society, mutual association which nourishes uniqueness.

Chapter 10, 'Immateriality Past and Present,' considers medieval and modern understanding of materiality and immateriality. Schmitz sees affinities between the two. This is further developed in the following chapter, 'The First Principle of Personal Becoming.' Being and becoming are frequently put together in metaphysical discussion. Here Schmitz insists on bringing being and subjectivity together in emphasizing personal becoming as the coming-to-be of spirit in the flesh. Again there has been a shift from medieval to modern, from spirit as *forma* to spirit as *Geist*. Religious interiority and modern subjectivity may seem opposed. The former looks to reach God. For its part, modern subjectivity feels alienated in the face of a field of objects that it cannot identify unless by techno-mastery. But both are united in recognizing a certain insufficiency in the world. Immateriality or spirituality *matters* in a material world.

Thomas Aquinas is the focus of Chapter 12, 'Purity of Soul and Immortality.' Schmitz dwells on Aquinas's insistence on the incorporeal nature of the intellectual operations of the soul. This is to continue Schmitz's earlier discussion of immateriality. Here he develops Aquinas's position, concentrating on the transcendent character of our knowledge of corporeal things.

In Chapter 13, 'Is Liberalism Good Enough?' Schmitz tackles classical liberalism head on. Drawing upon and developing the Aristotelian *tode ti/hoc aliquid* view of the individual, he insists that the individual is neither the 'atomic subject' nor an 'elector-self' who chooses how and when to relate to others. Schmitz speaks of the 'complex, constitutive individual,' one who receives his or her constitution from and through causes and relatedness to others; in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition causality is enabling rather than deterministic. Equality is not an exterior matter but something deeply rooted. There is an ontological equality within that serves as the equality among individuals and between each person and state.

Chapter 14, 'Theological Clearances: Foreground to a Rational Recovery of God,' takes a fresh look at the issue of rational proof for the existence of God. *Fides et ratio*, the encyclical letter of John Paul II, is the subject of Chapters 15 and 17. Here Schmitz expresses his admiration for

the Pontiff's understanding of the newness or 'freshness' of being, an awareness of which comes from combining phenomenology with the metaphysics of being. Such a combination enables us to reach down deeply to a radical appreciation of being 'from the inside.'

In Chapter 16, 'The Death of God and the Rebirth of Man,' Schmitz identifies at least three 'deaths' of God. His lively presentation is worth sampling here: '[The three deaths] are familiar to students of modern thought: first, the death of a *superfluous* God: this is the charge of Enlightenment atheism; second, the death of a *dangerous* God who threatens human freedom and dignity: this is the accusation of and ideology widespread in the nineteenth century; and third, in the past century, the death of a *negligible* God, that is, one who can be ignored in the determination of fundamental issues of human life and destiny: this is the speculative rethinking of some postmodernist intellectuals and increasingly the disregard that presides over the practical ideology of much contemporary culture' (pp. 283–284).

This book is a fitting tribute to a long and illustrious career of one who opens our eyes to the textured nature of being in all its fullness. Perhaps in a work of considerable length, breadth and depth, such as this, a fuller analytical index would have been helpful—such as was provided in earlier volumes in the *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* series. Furthermore, in his very helpful general introduction, the editor remarks that the aesthetic theory of Aquinas was 'beloved' of Joyce's Stephen Dedalus (p. xvii). A number of readers of Joyce have detected more than a hint of irony and mock seriousness in the relevant passage from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. There are those who would argue that the whole presentation of Aquinas's aesthetics there is something of a parody.

At the close of the final chapter of *The Texture of Being*, 'The Witness of Beauty: The Profile of God,' the major headline themes of the book—'Being,' 'Man' and 'God'—are brought together for Schmitz in the human recognition that being is a gift received. Such recognition of the gift of being is, for Schmitz, an aesthetic matter, a matter of perception of beauty. Beauty is, for Schmitz, a personal calling and public discourse. In recognizing the gift of being, Schmitz concludes, 'we glimpse that beauty which is greatest of all: the beauty of unconditioned, gratuitous, and fairest love' (p. 315).

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CHURCH HISTORY

SCM Core Text: Modern Church History. By Tim Grass. London: SCM Press, 2008. Pp. x+415. Price £24.99 (pbk). ISBN 978-0-334-04062-0.

This book presents itself as an entry point for students who are beginning to study the history of Christianity in the modern period for the first time. It takes a broad view, beginning its survey of Europe in 1648 at the conclusion of the Thirty Years War, and for Britain, Ireland and North America in 1688, the year of the 'Glorious Revolution.' The rationale behind the different starting points is not apparent as there seems to be no reason (other than to prevent the text running longer than its 400 pages) that this section could not have begun in the lead-up to King Charles I's execution in 1649, an iconic event in its own right. Secondly, the period immediately preceding 1648 in the British Isles had seen many Puritans depart for New England and thus 1648 could have functioned quite well as a starting point for a treatment of Christianity in North America. However, this is merely a quibble.

The textbook is divided into three parts—1648–1789, 1789–1914 and 1914 to the present. Grass has an eye