The idea of Continental Philosophy has never been properly explained in philosophical terms. This book attempts finally to succeed where others have failed, although not by giving an account of its internal unity but by showing instead why no such account can be given. Providing a clear picture of the current state of the contemporary philosophical culture, it traces the origins and development of the idea of a distinctive Continental tradition, critiquing current attempts to survey the field of contemporary philosophy. The main argument of the book is that the very idea of a fruitfully distinguishable philosophical tradition of Continental philosophy is part of the mythological history of the movement that came to call itself analytic philosophy: the very idea of such a tradition is best thought of as an item that has its original home in the conceptual armoury of analytic philosophy. In this respect, “Continental philosophy” is less the name for another kind of philosophy than analytic philosophy, but a term that functions within analytic philosophy as the name of its own other, that part of its lexicon which represents what is not part of it: it is “the Other” of analytic philosophy.

Starting Points
Simon Glendinning

in The Idea of Continental Philosophy

This chapter introduces the project of trying to make sense of the idea of a kind of philosophy called “Continental philosophy”. It explains why this project seems to be one that should be capable of completion, and why, in reality, efforts to do so inevitably prove inadequate and
distorting. The claim is not that there are no significant differences between work that is typically identified as “analytic” work typically identified as “Continental”, or that the differences at issue here are often sufficient to ruin every effort to engage in positive discussion. Rather, the claim is that appeals to the idea of division accentuate and do not explain the failures of communication here. In a situation where communication between different parts of our philosophical culture has all but broken down, the thinking about the breakdown that is an appeal to the idea of a division between analytic and Continental philosophy does not so much as capture the scene as it is part of it.

A New Idealism
Donald J. Morse

in Faith in Life: John Dewey's Early Philosophy
Published in print: 2011 Published Online: January 2012
Publisher: Fordham University Press DOI: 10.5422/fordham/9780823234707.003.0009

This chapter seeks to show, in particular, that Dewey's view comprises an original version of idealism that contributes to both nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinking. It then shows how this underlying logic differentiates his early ideas from the philosophies of both Morris and Hegel, two of Dewey's most important influences. To underscore the continuing relevance of Dewey's early ideas, this chapter compares them with those of some important contemporary thinkers in Continental philosophy, most notably Theodor Adorno and Jean-Luc Nancy. Dewey's early ideas are still fresh and vital today. Lastly, this chapter shows that Dewey's early philosophy is important in another way: it actually poses a significant challenge to Dewey's later philosophy in important respects. In sum, Dewey's early philosophy is far more sophisticated than generally supposed and makes genuine contributions to philosophical inquiry, including, above all, its ability to confront philosophical pessimism.

Schelling, Bloch, And The Continental Philosophy Of Religion
Wayne Hudson

in Rethinking Philosophy of Religion: Approaches from Continental Philosophy
Published in print: 2002 Published Online: March 2011
Publisher: Fordham University Press DOI: 10.5422/9780823222063.003.0014

Item type: chapter
This chapter discusses some aspects of the approach to religion that philosopher J. W. F. Schelling developed in his late “positive philosophy”. It examines how Schelling's thoughts and ideas were taken up and revoked by Ernst Bloch. This chapter suggests that despite their differences, Schelling and Bloch both challenged contemporary continental philosophy of religion to clarify its ontology of freedom in the context of a possible religion after religion.

Reimagining the Sacred
Richard Kearney and Jens Zimmermann (eds)

Published in print: 2015 Published Online: May 2016
Publisher: Columbia University Press
columbia/9780231161039.001.0001
Item type: book

Contemporary conversations about religion and culture are framed by two reductive definitions of secularity. In one, multiple faiths and nonfaiths coexist free from a dominant belief in God. In the other, we deny the sacred altogether and exclude religion from rational thought and behavior. But is there a third way for those who wish to rediscover the sacred in a skeptical society? What kind of faith, if any, can be proclaimed after the ravages of the Holocaust and the many religion-based terrors since? Richard Kearney explores these questions with a host of philosophers known for their inclusive, forward-thinking work on the intersection of secularism, politics, and religion. An interreligious dialogue that refuses to paper over religious difference, these conversations locate the sacred within secular society and affirm a positive role for religion in human reflection and action. Drawing on his own philosophical formulations, literary analysis, and personal interreligious experiences, Kearney develops through these engagements a basic gesture of hospitality for approaching the question of God. His work facilitates a fresh encounter with our best-known voices in continental philosophy and their views on issues of importance to all spiritually minded individuals and skeptics: how to reconcile God’s goodness with human evil, how to believe in both God and natural science, how to talk about God without indulging in fundamentalist rhetoric, and how to balance God’s sovereignty with God’s love.
“Saying and the Said”
Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel

in The Death of Philosophy: Reference and Self-reference in Contemporary Thought

Published in print: 2011 Published Online: November 2015
DOI: 10.7312/columbia/9780231147781.003.0002
Item type: chapter

This chapter offers a critique of two philosophical traditions—both the most widely practiced and the most different in style—within the context of the death of philosophy: Continental philosophy and analytic philosophy. The Continental and analytic traditions have as a common horizon a questioning of the concept of representation. In this chapter, critique of representation and of philosophy takes the form of a theory of saying and the said—clearly in John Austin’s case, but also in the case of Emmanuel Levinas. The discussion begins with a comparison of the views of Austin, John Searle, and Stanley Cavell regarding “ordinary language” philosophy before turning to an analysis of the tendency of contemporary philosophy to oscillate between positivism and skepticism, as well as to self-refutation. The chapter then examines Edmund Husserl’s arguments concerning the “scientism” of phenomenology, along with Levinas’s reading of Husserl. It also considers the oscillation from metaphysics to literature, a process that it suggests means escaping from philosophy.

Counter-Currents
Noëlle Vahanian

in The Rebellious No: Variations on a Secular Theology of Language

Published in print: 2014 Published Online: September 2014
DOI: 10.5422/fordham/9780823256952.003.0009
Item type: chapter

This chapter maintains that the artificial separation between theology and philosophy is untenable in a postmodern world, that the recent turn of phenomenology to religion only makes evident how language is theological and how thought is animated by theological desire, and finally, that the future of Continental philosophy of religion is most certainly not theology as it is proclaimed in most of today’s seminaries. The chapter makes the counter-current claim that the theological dimension of thinking is not a historical moment that can be overcome à la Feuerbach. At the same time, this theological dimension of a thinking
that is open to desire is not the prerogative of theology alone. Theology is a secular discourse.

Theism, Atheism, Anatheism
Richard Kearney and Jens Zimmermann (eds)

in Reimagining the Sacred: Richard Kearney Debates God with James Wood, Catherine Keller, Charles Taylor, Julia Kristeva, Gianni Vattimo, Simon Critchley, Jean-Luc Marion, John Caputo, David Tracey, Jens Zimmermann, and Merold Westphal

Published in print: 2015 Published Online: May 2016
Item type: chapter

In this chapter, Kearney's anatheism is challenged by well-known theologians and philosophers who are sympathetic to anatheism but are also very critical of it. In an eloquent epilogue, Kearney responds to these well-meaning critics to defend anatheism.

What Is an Intervention? Metaphilosophical Critique and the Reinvention of Contemporary Theory
Gabriel Rockhill

in Interventions in Contemporary Thought: History, Politics, Aesthetics

Published in print: 2016 Published Online: January 2018
Item type: chapter

The introduction distinguishes between two different modalities of theoretical practice: one that plays by the rules of an established discourse (an interpretation) and another that seeks to contest these norms in order to introduce alternative forms of intellectual practice (an intervention). Based on this distinction, it outlines the basic stakes of the book as a whole: to intervene in the discourse of contemporary continental philosophy. It then provides an overview of the methodological orientation of the various essays by detailing three different forms of intervention that are operative—to varying degrees—in all of them. To begin with, the essays contribute to a descriptive intervention that seeks to develop the broad lines of a counter-history of contemporary thought in which the dominant schematizations are called into question. Secondly, the chapters contribute either explicitly or implicitly to a metaphilosophical critique of contemporary theoretical practice by questioning many of the unspoken norms that govern
philosophic work in the present. This form of critical or metaphilosophical intervention is closely intertwined with a discursive intervention, which consists in elaborating new discursive strategies for thinking and alternative models for doing philosophy.

Saintly Influence
Eric Boynton and Martin Kavka (eds)

Since the publication of her first book, Emmanuel Levinas: The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics, in 1974 — the first book about Levinas published in English — Edith Wyschogrod has been at the forefront of the fields of Continental philosophy and philosophy of religion. Her work has crossed many disciplinary boundaries, making peregrinations from phenomenology and moral philosophy to historiography, the history of religions (both Western and non-Western), aesthetics, and the philosophy of biology. In all of these discourses, she has sought to cultivate an awareness of how the self is situated and influenced, as well as the ways in which a self can influence others. In this book, twelve scholars examine and display the influence of Wyschogrod’s work in essays that take up the thematics of influence in a variety of contexts: Christian theology, the saintly behavior of the villagers of Le Chambon sur Lignon, the texts of the medieval Jewish mystic Abraham Abulafia, the philosophies of Levinas, Derrida, and Benjamin, the practice of intellectual history, the cultural memory of the New Testament, and pedagogy. In response, Wyschogrod shows how her interlocutors have brought to light her multiple authorial personae and have thus marked the ambiguity of selfhood, its position at the nexus of being influenced by and influencing others.

The Rebellious No
Noëlle Vahanian

Beginning where the great masters of suspicion ended, this book aims for a renewal of theological thinking not by way of an argument against the death of God or on behalf of the postmodern turn of religion, but instead by extending and radicalizing an iconoclastic and existentialist mode of thought. A theological thinking whose point of departure assumes and
accepts the critiques of religion launched by Nietzsche, Freud, Marx, and Feuerbach can make no metaphysical or ontological claims: theology is a strictly secular discourse, like any other discourse, but it is aware of its limitations and wary of great promises-its own included. It is a thinking that takes theological desire seriously as a rebellious force working within, but against an anthropomorphic, phallogocentric worldview. Its faith is that secular theological desire can be a force against the constitutive indifference of thought, the myopic fundamentalism of any literalism, the rule of nobody, or even the biopower that produces docile subjectivities in an age of capitalism. Theological thinking thus becomes a meditative act of rebellion and a way not to forget not to say nothing. Meditative and aphoristic instead of argumentative, this book offers an original and constructive engagement with issues such as indifference, belief, madness, and love.

Beyond the Impossible
Richard Kearney and Jens Zimmermann (eds)

in Reimagining the Sacred: Richard Kearney Debates God with James Wood, Catherine Keller, Charles Taylor, Julia Kristeva, Gianni Vattimo, Simon Critchley, Jean-Luc Marion, John Caputo, David Tracey, Jens Zimmermann, and Merold Westphal

Catherine Keller, well known for her interdisciplinary work on theology and science converses with Kearney to reveal parallels and differences between anatheism and her own approach to theology.

Transcendent Humanism in a Secular Age
Richard Kearney and Jens Zimmermann (eds)

in Reimagining the Sacred: Richard Kearney Debates God with James Wood, Catherine Keller, Charles Taylor, Julia Kristeva, Gianni Vattimo, Simon Critchley, Jean-Luc Marion, John Caputo, David Tracey, Jens Zimmermann, and Merold Westphal
The dialogue between Kearny and one of the best known cultural philosophers of our time shows how much both thinkers are influenced by the hermeneutical tradition and thus arrive at similar outlooks.

**Anatheism and Radical Hermeneutics**
Richard Kearney and Jens Zimmermann (eds)

in Reimagining the Sacred: Richard Kearney Debates God with James Wood, Catherine Keller, Charles Taylor, Julia Kristeva, Gianni Vattimo, Simon Critchley, Jean-Luc Marion, John Caputo, David Tracey, Jens Zimmermann, and Merold Westphal

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Item type: chapter

Caputo and Kearney have been in friendly debate with each other for decades. They engage each other and questions from the audience on anatheism with accustomed wit and verve.

**God After God**
Richard Kearney

in Reimagining the Sacred: Richard Kearney Debates God with James Wood, Catherine Keller, Charles Taylor, Julia Kristeva, Gianni Vattimo, Simon Critchley, Jean-Luc Marion, John Caputo, David Tracey, Jens Zimmermann, and Merold Westphal

Published in print: 2015 Published Online: May 2016
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Item type: chapter

In this chapter, Richard Kearney introduces and summarizes his idea of Anatheism to provide the reader with the necessary framework for understanding the subsequent debates.

**New Humanism and the Need to Believe**
Richard Kearney and Jens Zimmermann (eds)

in Reimagining the Sacred: Richard Kearney Debates God with James Wood, Catherine Keller, Charles Taylor, Julia Kristeva, Gianni Vattimo, Simon Critchley,
In this dialogue, well known psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva shows the anatheistic tension of our times: young people require ideals of what it means to be human; yet this need to believe is also tested by the worm of doubt that comes with the need to know.

Anatheism, Nihilism, and Weak Thought
Richard Kearney and Jens Zimmermann (eds)

In this conversation with the Heideggerian philosopher Vattimo, weak thought and anatheism illume each other.

Trauma and Transcendence
Eric Boynton and Peter Capretto (eds)

Within the humanities, specifically in the past decade, trauma theory has become a robust site of interdisciplinary work. Trauma resonates with scholars in and across disciplines and has become a trope with a distinctive significance. The scope of scholarship on trauma has always been challenged by the temporal, affective, and corporeal dimensions of trauma itself, yet it has recently been rendered all the more complex by theoretical and methodological issues that have emerged for these disciplines in their attempts to think trauma. This volume gathers scholars in a variety of disciplines to meet the challenge of how to think trauma in light of its burgeoning interdisciplinarity, and often its theoretical splintering. From distinctive disciplinary vectors,
the work of philosophers, social theorists, philosophical psychologists and theologians consider the limits and prospects of theory when thinking trauma and transcendence. By bringing together scholars at the intersections of trauma, social theory, and especially the continental philosophy of religion, this volume draws attention to the increasing challenge of deciding whether trauma’s transcendent, evental, or unassimilable quality is being wielded as a defense of traumatic experience against reductionism, or whether it is promulgated as a form of obscurantism.

Postmodern Apologetics?
Christina M. Gschwandtner

Published in print: 2012 Published Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.5422/fordham/9780823242740.001.0001
Item type: book

This book provides an introduction to the emerging field of Continental philosophy of religion by treating the philosophical thought of its most important representatives, including its appropriations by several thinkers in the US. Part I provides a context to the field by looking at the religious aspects of the thought of Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Lévinas, and Jacques Derrida. It contends that although the work of these thinkers is not apologetic in nature (does not provide an argument for religion, whether Christianity or Judaism), it prepares the ground for the more religiously motivated work of more recent thinkers by giving religious language and ideas some legitimacy in philosophical discussions. Part II devotes a chapter to each of the contemporary French thinkers who articulate a phenomenology of religious experience: Paul Ricoeur, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Jean-Yves Lacoste and Emmanuel Falque. This part argues that their respective philosophies can be read as an apologetics of sort, namely as making arguments for the coherence of thought about God and the viability of religious experience, though each does so in a different fashion and to a different degree. Part III considers the three major thinkers who have popularized and extended this phenomenology in the US context: Merold Westphal, John D. Caputo, and Richard Kearney. The book thus both provides an introduction to important contemporary thinkers many of whom have not yet received much treatment in English and also argues that their philosophies can be read as providing an argument for Christian faith.
Many of the most controversial moral decisions we face hinge upon competing descriptions of life, and never is this truer than at the beginning of life. This book draws upon the branch of Continental philosophy, which is phenomenology, to question the descriptive adequacy, the essential ‘purchase upon reality’, of many of the approaches, attitudes, and arguments which make up beginning of life ethics today. It argues that many of the most prevalent positions and practices in our late modern culture have simply failed to take into account the reality of human emergence, the particular way that new members of our species first appear in the world. Historically, phenomenologists have been far more interested in death than in birth. And therefore this book has first to develop its own phenomenological investigation of human emergence, taking leads and developing approaches from phenomenologists both French and German, both living and dead. When in the second half of the book the phenomenology is finally applied to ethics, acute moral questions are divided into two kinds: first those concerning ‘what’ it is with which we are dealing; and, second, the more contextual ‘where’ questions relating to the situation in which the subject is found. Finally, though this book primarily constitutes a philosophical rather than a religious critique of contemporary ethics—with the findings from Continental philosophy being brought to bear upon core convictions of English speaking ‘liberal’, moral, and political philosophers—it does conclude by exploring an alternative theological basis for human rights which might fill the vacuum created.