

**Beyond Sacred Violence:
A Comparative Study of
Sacrifice**

Kathryn McClymond

The John Hopkins University Press, 2715 North Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218-4363, USA. Website: www.press.jhu.edu. 2008. xii + 216 pp. \$ 57. HB. ISBN 9780801887765.

Imagine the face of a Westerner recoiling in repugnance hearing from a Hindu of a 'sacrifice' coming up in home. Images of gory killings and bloody entrails coming out of animals and even humans, haunts the Westerner, who does not even bother to check up the Hindu meaning of 'sacrifice'. Kathryn McClymond urges the reader to come out of this reductionist understanding of sacrifice or *yajna*, which has a broad meaning, widely different from its Semitic concept. Comparing Vedic and Jewish sacrifices, she shows how *yajna* was synonymous with the entire life, both of the individual and of the universe. Quoting extensively from the scriptures of both the traditions, she gives an authoritative evidence of the needless Western colouring of Eastern religious practices. This book is also a call to situate Eastern religious traditions in their own framework, not borrowing from Western scholarly paradigms and also not being apologetic to the Western ideas of life, religion, and the beyond. Written in an engaging and informative style, this book would be interesting to both scholars and ordinary readers.

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Family Values

Harry Brighthouse and Adam Swift

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540, USA. Website: www.press.princeton.edu. 2014. xx + 216 pp. \$ 35. HB. ISBN 9780691126913.

Spare the rod and spoil the child was the old adage, but now you could end up in jail for using a rod! Increasing media intrusion and excessive unnecessary human-right championing

has made us lose the domains of our families to different societal agencies including law. How does a parent bring up a child in such a society? The authors, from backgrounds of education and political science, stress on the value of family and also the freedom of a parent in raising children. Intimate family relations can never be substituted by the protection of social agencies. This book is at once a work of political science and family relationships. Where and how does politics intrude the family? Investigating the changing nature of various traditional constructs of family, parent, and children, the authors have remarkably brought out a timely work questioning the resignation to collective institutional child-rearing.

The authors definitely become the voice of countless parents when they say: 'Healthy family life requires parents to enjoy a good deal of discretion over their children's lives and to be experienced by their children as exercising authoritative judgments in many areas. ... But parents cannot exercise that discretion and enjoy that unmonitored interaction without being allowed the space to make mistakes ... parents have no right to abuse children—but they do have a right to the space within which abuse may occur' (120). This book forces us to focus on the family, so neglected today, and emphasises its role in shaping values of future generations.

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God Without Being

Jean-Luc Marion
Trans. Thomas A Carlson

The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637, USA. Website: www.press.uchicago.edu. 2012. xxx + 313 pp. ₹ 695. PB. ISBN 9780226505657.

Should God exist? Should God have a form, an icon, or an idol? Marion explores the possibility of a God who would not be, who would not have a being. He sees God in agape, Christian charity, or love and obviates the need for imagining or positing the existence or being of God. He thinks that the 'unthinkable forces us to substitute the idolatrous quotation marks around "God" with the very God that no mark of knowledge can demarcate,

and, in order to say it' (46) he crosses the 'o' in God and continues this notation in the rest of the book. The second edition and a translation of the original French, this book is a volume in the series *Religion and Postmodernism* brought out by the University of Chicago Press. In a daring postmodern spirit, the author tries to do away with a personality of God because he is concerned that 'we manage so poorly to keep silent before that which we cannot express in a statement' (59) Attempts to express the inexpressible creates a false image of God, who exists even before actually being. It is a pity that the author rests his arguments based only on Christian scriptures and does not refer to scriptures from other religions, such as those of the East. Had he done so, he would have come across interesting insights on God without being in those texts. With elaborate notes and references to major thinkers on religion and theology, this book is a profound study on the perception of God with an identity.

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and mystical traditions of the East and how over and again psychologists have resorted to a 'very pathologizing and regressive analysis of spiritual aspirations and experiences' (121). He questions as to 'what extent primary-process thinking and the id constitute spiritual knowing' (122). He locates 'spiritual longings' to 'follow from an appreciation of issues of the self, especially a self driven by intense spiritual yearnings, rather than seeing all motivation as deriving from unconscious psychic conflict ... anxiety and depression' (125). Roland's vast clinical experience and his deep insight makes this volume an appealing read to all concerned with the modern human mind.

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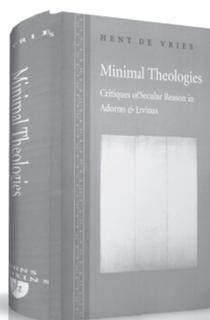


Journey to Foreign Selves

Alan Roland

Oxford University Press, YMCA Library Building, 1 Jai Singh Road, New Delhi 110 001. Website: www.oup.com. 2011. x + 250 pp. ₹ 695. HB. ISBN 9780198069461.

Do people change when they are in a cultural setting other than their own? This century has witnessed inter-culture movements like never before. That has had its share of psychological imbalance. Roland does an excellent job of locating the psychology of the selves at the familial, cultural, and individual levels in a changing cultural backdrop. Drawing from the results of various case studies conducted in India, Japan, China, Korea, and New York, he focuses on the cultural interplay of Asian and American individualities. This century has also witnessed barbarous acts of terrorism. Taking the partition of India and Pakistan and the 9/11 tragedy as his points of departure, Roland traces the trauma and dissociation these events entailed. He also shows us how the Western understanding of psychology has clouded and hindered a true assessment of the spiritual



Minimal Theologies

Hent de Vries

Trans. Geoffrey Hale

The John Hopkins University Press, 2005. xxxvi + 720 pp. \$ 71. PB. ISBN 9780801880179.

Much like its size, this book has a huge task to perform: critiquing secular reason in the thoughts of Theodor Adorno and Emmanuel Levinas. That the author deftly does that is another credit to his immense scholarship. The preface to the translation, which is also a revised edition, distanced from its German original by more than fifteen years, updates the reader with the huge corpus of literature of both the thinkers published since. The author places this book as the last of a trilogy of which his *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* and *Religion and Violence* are the first two. In a fresh approach to religious philosophy, de Vries brings to us the similarities in the thoughts of Adorno and Levinas, and shows us how taken together, they have much deeper impact, than considered separately. That the author discussed this book with Emmanuel Levinas in person adds authenticity to the work. Avowedly a critique of negative dialectics, this volume offers an original exploration of the interactions of philosophy and religion, and is a must read for those interested in theology, critical theory, deconstruction, and dialectics.

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