Joseph A. Edelheit, James F. Moore and Mark I. Wallace (eds.) *Refiguring the Sacred: Conversations with Paul Ricoeur* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2024), ix + 221, ISBN 978-1666919097. £85.00

Paul Ricoeur was one of the most significant contributors to philosophical thought in the latter half of the twentieth century and continued to be active in writing almost up to his death in 2005. His influence extended across continental Europe, the United States and beyond.

This advanced scholarly volume, *Refiguring the Sacred*, is a collection of essays by eight significant international Ricoeur scholars. Especially noteworthy in this book is the combination of 'new' Ricoeur scholars with those whose own pathways in philosophy and religious thought were shaped through personal contact with Ricoeur himself, notably at the Divinity School in Chicago. Likewise valuable is the collaboration between representatives of Jewish and Christian traditions. The primary resource used by these authors is Mark I. Wallace's edited collection of twenty-one Ricoeur essays published as *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination* (translated by David Pellauer; Fortress Press, 1995). The volume is in two parts, the second featuring two essays by Ricoeur himself.

Part One is introduced by two of the volume's editors, Joseph A. Edelheit and James F. Moore, with the chapter "All You Have Is the Text: Paul Ricoeur's Relationship with the Sacred". In what follows, five authors develop a configuration of familiar Ricoeur themes: Steven Kepnes contributes a chapter on "Paul Ricoeur's Biblical Theology and Jewish Theology"; George H. Taylor, on "Ricoeur and the Religious Imagination"; Timo Helenius, on "The Bible: A Polyphonic Medium for Self-Identification"; Stephanie Arel, on "Ricoeur and Hope: Living after Rupture", and Dan R. Stiver concludes with "Practical Theology as Practical Poetics: Building a Bridge between Prose, Poetics, and Praxis".

Part Two is introduced by the third editor, Mark Wallace, whose "The Crisis of Faith in a World Where God is Not Yet God" speaks to themes in the two chapters that follow, both penned by Ricoeur himself. These essays were 'left on the cutting room floor' when Wallace was compiling the aforementioned anthology *Figuring the Sacred*, one at the request of Ricoeur and the other to comply with the publisher's length restrictions (p. 141): they are titled "The Self in the Mirror of the Scriptures"; and "*Fides Quaerens Intellectum*: Biblical Antecedent?"

The other editors, Edelheit and Moore, conclude the volume with an "Afterword", and comment on the inclusion of these Ricoeur essays: 'The point is not to focus on Ricoeur but rather to take his lead in forming new directions of thought and new partners in conversation' (p. 207). This is something Helenius, from the University of Turku, achieves when considering the work of British biblical exegetes John Barton and James D. G. Dunn in light of Ricoeur. This represents a novel comparative and contrastive engagement, standing as a bridge between the approaches of Ricoeur and his British counterparts.

Ricoeur would have welcomed all this. The closing stanza in his majestic *Memory, History, Forgetting* (University of Chicago Press, 2004; p. 506) reads:

> Under history, memory and forgetting.
> Under memory and forgetting, life.
> But writing a life is another story.
> Incompletion.

Ricoeur's specific enterprise in *Memory* had come to its end but the task remained to be continued. The authors in the volume before us develop that dialogical dialectic to construct 'a new interpretative horizon […] a refiguring' (p. 17), with few references to the personal life, the sorrows and the joys, of the family man behind the text. Nonetheless Ricoeur's cordially genial warmth comes through directly along, as well as in-between, the lines of each chapter (cf. p. 142).

In their Introductions the editors map out clearly the orientation of the book; it is the interrelation of the sacred and the text. As the biblical text speaks of God, so God is disclosed in biblical discourse. Steven Kepnes comments, 'God not only revealed the Torah but God remains accessible through Torah as God's living word'; and continues, 'I see no reason why we could not still say that God uses the techniques and genres of literature just as God uses Moses as an instrument of His revelation' (p. 33).

Whilst God is to be found within biblical discourse, God nonetheless 'escapes' from the text for God is beyond the text, existing outside it. Herein is Ricoeurian dialectic. Kepnes again: 'Ricoeur […] speaks of the "double power" of Biblical language […] the power to point to God with language and, at the same time, to assert that God exists outside of and beyond language" (p. 35). Wallace cites Ricoeur: 'the [biblical] text aims

at nothing outside itself, it only has us as its outside, we who, in receiving the text, assimilate ourselves to it and make the book a mirror. At this moment, the language which *in itself* is poetic becomes kerygmatic *for us*.' And he sums this up, 'To *under-stand* this summons is to *stand-under* its overarching rhetorical canopy […] subordinating my assumptions to its all-consuming solicitation' (p. 149).

Unsurprisingly, in an appreciative volume on Ricoeur, the philosophical and theological resolutions of theodicy are rounded on. In Wallace's introductory essay he insists that, 'For God's wounded followers, their focus falls not on atheism, but on protest theism. They learn to nurture not anger for its own sake, but righteous indignation toward God.' Sorrow, lament and mourning are the believer's responses when confronting intractable wrong alongside anger against God in the face of such wrong. This is a 'lived catharsis, not theological speculation, that undergirds the possibility of faith in spite of all evidence to the contrary' (p. 155). Ricoeur's 'passion for the possible', set in the context of his understanding of hope, leads to 'human agency and freedom' (p. 106), 'an opening' (p. 105), as distinct from what I characterise as acquiescence or submission.

Stephanie Arel, a distinguished Ricoeur scholar, also writing from the professional perspective of a researcher of post-9/11 trauma, recalls Ricoeur's rejection of closed solutions to tragedy. It is such things as 9/11, along with much else that is traumatic, that create constraint upon persons. 'Disrupting', breaking out of this constraint whilst acknowledging its reality, is the occasion for 'new possibilities […] for thinking, translation, and discernment' (p. 112). Examples, from what comes across as 'on the ground experience', give Arel's essay a 'real-live' sense to her explication of Ricoeur. In a poignant reflection on play as a therapeutic means of responding to tragedy, she writes, 'a child can enact what happened, using play to speak, and employ play to enact other alternative endings [to their trauma] thus building coping and resilience' (p. 115). Arel offers no commodified response that guarantees comfort: 'We must resist the expectation of the eradication of suffering emphasized by a viewpoint in some patterns of Christianity and adopted by contemporary culture that suffering is an aberration or that we are unbroken. We are broken' (p. 117). It is in this posture that we remain vulnerable, 'suspended in ambiguity', with hope 'unveiling possibilities in conflict' (pp. 117–18). Hope is 'regeneration […] not saving, not an answer, but a process that leads to human agency and freedom.' (p. 118)

This book is not for the philosophically faint-hearted. But it presents an intellectually credible challenge to any worldview, practical or theoretical, which offers ready-made, fix-it explanations of, or solutions for, the human situation and its dilemmas. Where there is irreconcilable difference, 'Everyone can be brought together in a generous, all-encompassing discourse' (p. 9), not to seek easy resolution but to work for new openings and possibilities amidst ongoing conflict, constraint and ambiguity.

Robert A. Gillies

Robert Gillies is Honorary Research Fellow in Theology and Religious Studies, University of Glasgow.

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Saul M. Olyan, *Animal Rights and the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023) pp. 160, ISBN 978-0197609385. £65.55

The Bible is saturated with references to non-human animals but only recently has this aspect of scripture come into focus as biblical scholars have turned their attention to animal studies.

Saul Olyan's chief goal in this short monograph is to complexify simplistic readings of the Hebrew Bible which rely solely on Genesis 1:26 –28 and Genesis 9:2–3, and which in consequence assert for human beings unfettered dominion over non-human animals, including the right to eat them. His chosen method is to select for close examination a set of texts, mostly from the Torah, Hosea and Proverbs, which shed light on the extent to which animals can be said to have the same legal rights and protections as well as some of the same duties and responsibilities as humans.

The book's introduction gives an overview of the current legal status of animals in different jurisdictions, and of attempts to establish for animals legal personhood and legal rights. Olyan uses Gary Francione's concept of rights as 'a type of protection that does not evaporate [...] because of conflict with the rights of another legal person' (p. 4). Most of the work here is done by careful and well-referenced footnotes.

Chapter One discusses two pairs of legal texts that evince a concern for animal rights. Exodus 23:10–11 mandates a fallow year in the seventh year