

**Martin Koci and Jason Alvis, eds.** *Transforming the Theological Turn: Phenomenology with Emmanuel Falque*. Rowman & Littlefield 2020. 264 pp. \$130.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9781786616227).

This rich and diverse collection of essays dedicated to the work of Emmanuel Falque is, as the editors note, the first of its kind to appear in English. As a result, the most immediate merit of the collection is that it will introduce Falque and the stakes of his work to English-speaking readers who have not yet or only recently discovered his translated books and essays. As a voice within the emerging tradition of French phenomenology initiated by Levinas, Michel Henry, and Jean-Luc Marion, Falque's work and this collection of essays will be of interest to students and scholars of contemporary phenomenology and philosophy of religion.

The collection includes a Foreword by Richard Kearney, a lengthy Introduction by the editors, an original essay and concluding reflection by Falque himself, and thirteen essays dedicated to various aspects of Falque's work, focusing in particular on his *Crossing the Rubicon: The Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology* (translated by Reuben Shank, Fordham University Press 2016). My review will take shape around a concept that is dear to Falque himself: controversy. In the first instance, Falque's work is controversial for its bold position on the relationship between philosophy and theology. More deeply than this, however, Falque himself is inspired by the spirit of *disputatio* to such an extent that he identifies the stakes of his work by situating them in critical relationship to one of his predecessors.

The Introduction by Martin Koci and Jason Alvis provides a helpful introduction to Falque's work by addressing the controversial context in which it has arisen and to which it has given rise. Along this trajectory they do an excellent job of identifying key concepts in Falque's thought and assessing the challenging metaphor at the heart of it. For more than his careful phenomenological analyses of corporeality or his learned reflections on medieval philosophers, the controversy of Falque's work arises with the claim that philosophers must 'cross the Rubicon' and, thus, enter into theological territory where they will learn that 'the more we theologize, the better we philosophize' (16). In light of this ambiguous claim—and in light of Falque's far less ambiguous argument that philosophy must be *converted* and *transformed* by theology (18)—Koci and Alvis urge the reader to read deeply and carefully in order to avoid what seems to present itself as a straightforward and blunt theologization of philosophy. What follows is a description of the three parts of the volume and an overview of each essay. I would suggest that readers pay little attention to the overview and simply read all the essays. For, despite the editors' intentions, it is clear that various essays throughout the volume complete the three specified tasks—interpretation, comparative analysis, and constructive-critical engagement—to greater and lesser degrees despite their location in the volume. For example, Bruce Benson's and Tamsin Jones' essays do little to 'interpret' Falque's work (though they are in the first part) while William Woody (part one), William Connelly and Francesca Peruzzotti (part two), and Andrew Sackin-Poll (part three) provide exemplary instances of an interpretation worthy of Falque's philosophical thought.

It is not possible to comment adequately on the learning and insight present in each essay in the collection. Instead, I will draw attention to two strengths of the collection and conclude by noting a particular space left open for further work. As I've suggested, the most acute controversy surrounding Falque's work pertains to the relationship between philosophy and theology, particularly as he discusses this relationship in *Crossing the Rubicon*. Among the essays in the volume, we find three types of engagement with this issue. In the first case, Falque's account of the relationship between

philosophy and theology is generalized in order to be discussed in relation to politics (Benson) or applied within an American academic context (Jones). In the second case, Falque's account of the relationship is criticized. We see this particularly in the essays by Jakub Čapek and Francesca Peruzzotti. Čapek's essay agrees with earlier criticisms that Falque's position collapses philosophy into theology and it seeks to address the relationship properly with reference to Ricoeur's notion of 'mutual enveloping' (46). This is fitting, as Falque's own critical interaction with Ricoeur's work is central to his project. The latter essay by Peruzzotti locates her criticism of Falque in relation to a notion of textually grounded critical reason to which both philosophy and theology relate as critical discourses. This allows her to take aim at Falque's turn away from the 'text' and toward the 'body' as she fears that, for Falque, both philosophy and theology are reduced to analyses of subjective experience that ultimately compromise the very sacramental vision that he seeks (129-131). While this article is dense and difficult to follow, Peruzzotti's claims represent very well a deeply considered hermeneutic response to Falque.

Finally, the third type of engagement with Falque's account of philosophy and theology is probably the most important in a collection that introduces his work to English readers. As the editors themselves make clear and as the essays by William Woody, William Connelly, and particularly Andrew Sackin-Poll show, in order to assess Falque's controversial proposals concerning 'philosophy' and 'theology,' we need to be clear what he means by these terms. To my mind, Sackin-Poll's essay is the most helpful and the best place to start among the three. By framing his discussion in terms of Falque's relationship to metaphysics, he shows that Falque seeks to rethink the traditional definitions of 'philosophy' and 'theology' precisely by rethinking the nature of 'metaphysics.' For Falque, once the body becomes the site around which these discourses are organized, each of them can be seen to reflect a modality of incarnate experience rather than a competitive theoretical science. These ideas are reflected and developed in the essay by Woody, who argues that the relationship between theology and philosophy in Falque's work stands in second place to Falque's overall concern to recalibrate the phenomenological debate by focusing on the body and, therefore, by giving privilege to immanence over the previous focus on transcendence in figures like Levinas and Marion. Finally, Connelly's essay completes this important analysis by drawing attention to Falque's more recent work with psychoanalysis, his phenomenological category of the 'extra-phenomenal,' and his efforts to develop a 'phenomenology of force.' In the same spirit as both Sackin-Poll and Woody, he shows how Falque's work requires careful and specific reading in phenomenology and the history of philosophy in order to understand properly its stakes. Taken together, these three essays form a perfectly creative contrary to the pair of essays by Čapek and Peruzzotti.

Falque's work gives rise to controversy because it places itself in creative controversy with its interlocutors. The editors are not unaware of this fact, though a more diverse presentation of it would have been much appreciated. Here I draw attention to the essays by Katerina Koci, on Falque's relation to Ricoeur and Gadamer; Lorenza Bottacin Cantoni, on Falque's relationship to Levinas; and Barnabas Aspray, on Falque's relation to Heidegger. At the risk of asking for more from an already lengthy and rich collection, I must point out the obvious missing piece: a careful study of Falque's explicit and intense debate with Jean-Luc Marion. It is this debate, in fact, that leads to my final comment.

As all of the contributors agree, the category of finitude is Falque's crucial category. Moreover, Falque advances his commitment to the constitutive finitude of human experience *against* those thinkers he deems to be entangled within a Cartesian obsession with the Infinite, especially Jean-Luc Marion. Two important essays in the collection cover this topic of finitude explicitly. While I would caution that Aspray's essay aligns Falque too closely to Heidegger, he most certainly succeeds in

showing the problems that arise when finitude is posited in opposition to the infinite. Furthermore, as Victor Emma-Adamah shows in reference to Blondel, there is a compelling philosophical case to be made for a less oppositional notion of finitude and infinitude (176-177). It is precisely here, on this crucial issue, that the dispute between Falque and Marion must be decided in future engagements with Falque's work. Finally, it is important to add that sorting out Falque's relation to Marion on this issue is no peripheral matter. For Falque's central commitment to immanence, to fluid boundary-crossing, and to metamorphosis is jeopardized by a notion of finitude capable of transformation only by the alien facticity of the Resurrection. Indeed, Falque's asserted 'Catholic hermeneutic' and his distaste for a philosophy of 'leaps' sits very uneasily with a notion of finitude so enclosed by its own immanence that it relies on the intervention of a Wholly Other.

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