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Klaus Müller. *Glauben – Fragen – Denken, Vol. 1. Basisthemen in der Begegnung von Philosophie und Theologie*. Münster: Aschendorff-Verlag, 2006.
[Klaus Müller. *Believing – Questioning – Thinking. Main Topics in the Encounter of Philosophy and Theology*. Münster: Aschendorff-Verlag, 2006.]

Klaus Müller (M.) is one of the leading philosophers of religion in the German speaking world. His contribution to the field is large and impressive. Throughout the past two decades M. has set the stage and the agenda for a variety of discussions in German systematic theology. Some important debates are connected to his name – one might think of the discussions around an »ultimate justification« of faith or of the more recent debates related to the »atrocities of a personal God« and the problem of »religion, truth, and violence«. M.'s philosophy reconnects to the tradition of German Idealism and to Immanuel Kant; nevertheless, M. is one of the few in the German speaking world who are aware of major tendencies in analytic metaphysics and analytic philosophy of religion on the one hand and, also, of post-modernism on the other. The result is a promising starting point for a further reconciliation of Continental and Analytic philosophy established on what M. calls a "metaphysics of the self" in many of his writings.

   Given this background it is thrilling to have a fresh source published which allows us to dig deeper into M.'s philosophical thinking. During the last four years M. has published a three-volume opus which is meant to serve as textbook[1] for his students. Given the wide range of topics and the sheer magnitude of the books (volumes 2 and 3 have over 800 pages each) the single volumes need to be reviewed separately. This also makes

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[1] "Textbook" in the German speaking world usually means a collection or anthology of classic texts and sources. In this regard M's opus is not a textbook but what in Germany is called "handbook". The American phrase "textbook" as used in this review means any kind of book that serves as a companion for classes on different topics and subjects. It is part of the German tradition to present textbooks as handbooks that introduce a systematically connected variety of topics but are authored by one author only.

sense given the different focuses of the volumes in question. Volume 1 – the concern of the present review – is meant to serve as a stepping stone for students of theology to get immersed in philosophical thinking while volumes 2 and 3 are written for already advanced students of theology that have to take certain, topic-oriented classes in systematic philosophy. It is noteworthy that M.'s textbook-series reflects the particularities of the German educational system as well as the specifics of studying theology in Europe and its traditional background: Philosophy plays a major role in any advanced study of theology. This is an advantage as well as a challenge. The advantage has to do with the fact that German students of theology will be educated philosophers at the end of their university program and will be able to address current philosophical discussions and their relevance for theological thinking. The challenge, however, can be regarded as the question of how to build up a philosophical curriculum that reveals the relevance and impact of philosophy in relation to systematic theology and to the in-depth education of future theologians. Given these challenges, M.'s three volume opus is not just the presentation of sophisticatedly interconnected and interwoven textbooks* but also the programmatic outline of his genuine concept of how to educate future theologians philosophically.

In the first volume of *Believing – Questioning – Thinking* M. presents and discusses the main topics of epistemology, hermeneutics, philosophy of language, metaphysics, philosophical theology, philosophy of religion, ethics and philosophy of mind. He does so in accordance with the history of philosophy, which is presented in certain excursus-sections in volumes 1 to 3 and built around classic profiles and names; but, moreover, philosophy of religion, which he bases on an idealistic form of philosophy of mind (within his metaphysics of the self), serves as the guiding light for the whole opus as such. The result is a genuine contribution to the field that surpasses the standards of average study-oriented textbooks* by far. The contents of study-oriented information are presented through the lens of genuine and stand-alone philosophical reflection. It is also of benefit for any reader that M. is a really gifted writer. His writing style is very consistent but never dry; the tone is very self-aware but sometimes also casual or anecdotal – so that the result is a really entertaining philosophy book (which may sound oxymoronic at first glance).

As mentioned before, volume 1 serves as a basic entry into doing philosophy within a theological setting. Consequently the first chapter (pp. 1-23) is dedicated to the use and to the necessity of philosophy within the curriculum of theology. M. has the gift of addressing rather complicated issues through historical anecdotes and through the lens of a systematic evaluation of historical developments or historically realized patterns and brands of thinking. In this case M. refers to historical incidents (in late antiquity or in the early middle ages) that demonstrate the need for in-depth reflections on pastoral or liturgical practices, which – as a consequence - trigger theological considerations and presuppose philosophical reflections. A second door into philosophy within the realm of theology is, according to M., provided by the fact that basic human ways of relating to the world necessarily involve philosophical thinking: the modes of desire, awe, doubt but also the gifts of communication and the basic principles of understanding, present the foundation upon which the architecture of philosophical thinking can and must be built.

The second chapter (pp. 25-60) elaborates in a more detailed way on related issues, namely the complicated connections between philosophy and theology based on the tensions between faith and reason. M. introduces two main trends within the history of theology: One branch (identified with St. Paul, Tertullian, Bernard of Clairvaux and others) seems to regard philosophy as the wisdom of the world which must not play any role when it comes to reflections on the mysteries of faith. The other branch is identified with Justin the Martyr, St. Anselm and others and can be seen as a role-model for the tendency to embrace philosophy and reason within religion. M. discusses the contributions of Aquinas and identifies further realizations of the above-mentioned antagonistic tendencies in modern and in contemporary philosophy and theology and related eras of history. But, already at this point, it becomes clear that M. himself is eager to defend a reason-based orientation of theology, especially in the contemporary situation in which theology is confronted with the challenges of post-modernism.

The following chapters, 3 to 10, try to get the reader involved in very basic topics of systematic philosophy: epistemology, philosophy of language, hermeneutics, ethics, philosophy of religion and philosophical theology. The guiding principle and the net that holds the variety of topics together is addressed in the title of the three-volume-opus:

believing – questioning – thinking. M. presupposes that any critical believer that opens his or her eyes to the world and to the culture around him/her will have to raise basic questions and, therefore, will be immersed in philosophical thinking almost automatically: What is truth? How can I communicate? What does it mean to be a human being? How can I pursue happiness? Will I ever be in position to justify my religious faith? And why do I even believe in God? Based on these questions religious faith and philosophy overlap and can develop the potential of being mutually enriching. In a university setting in which philosophy has to fight against the impression of being disturbing or superfluously hypocritical in relation to theology M. defends the classic role of philosophy as the foundation for systematic theology.

Within this program chapter 3 (pp. 61-94) is written to address the basic problems in epistemology. M. wraps them around the distinction between 'to be' and 'to appear' – a distinction that helps him to present insights coming from classical philosophy as well as from modern thinking. Interestingly enough, M. closes this chapter with a very up-to-date reflection on the philosophical consequences of virtual entities and cyber-reality.

Chapter 4 (pp. 95-134) presents some main insights into philosophy of language and gives basic information about classical philosophy of language (in Plato, Aristotle and Aquinas) as well as an overview of rivalling brands of contemporary philosophy of language (identified as dialogical philosophy of language, hermeneutical philosophy of language, and finally analytic philosophy of language). But chapter 4 does not just present encyclopaedic information concerning everlasting issues in the field, rather – and this is the true strength of M.'s treatment – it illustrates the problems addressed in the light of their theological relevance and further theological discussions. Consequently M. closes chapter 4 with a reflection on 'naming God', the impact of the analogy of being for the analogy of predicating, and metaphorical theology.

Chapter 5 (pp. 135-158) is developed as a logical consequence of the previous considerations since it is meant to deal with basic hermeneutical topics. M. explains the relevance of interpretation and interpretation-theory for theology, presents the role-models of classic hermeneutics (especially Schleiermacher) and discusses the contemporary challenges of interpretation-theory given the post-modern framework of current

hermeneutical theory-formation. After having discussed the basic ideas that can be found in Gadamer and Ricoeur, M. establishes interpretation as the *ethical* problem of 'reading'. The ethics of reading ultimately open the door to ethics in general.

In chapter 6 (pp. 159-180) M. discusses basic paradigms in ethical theory-formation. Therefore, he contrasts Aristotle's ethics of happiness and virtue with Immanuel Kant's ethics of duty. And, to bring the reader up to date, he discusses what he calls the blind spots of so-called discursive ethics. M.s conclusions are written between the lines. Nevertheless, they are outspoken enough: He argues for a combination of virtues and duties that serve as a non-negotiable basis for the procedural negotiations within ethical discourses.

Chapter 7 (pp. 181-237) is clearly the most important part of the book since it sets the stage for M.'s philosophy of religion and the combination of both idealistic and analytic methods. Chapter 7 is dedicated to basic discussions in philosophical anthropology but focuses especially on the philosophy of consciousness. Thus, this chapter starts with a main introduction to the philosophy of mind (addressing the mind-body and the mind-brain debates) but ends with an extended reflection on 'being a self', subjectivity and the idealistic and existentialistic philosophy of self-awareness and self-sustainment presented by the German philosopher Dieter Henrich and its theologically modified version which was developed by M. himself. Already at this point M. presents the paradox of the self as the need to reconcile two antagonistic insights coming from an analysis of self-awareness: that each self is unique and autonomous but is simultaneously just one among many others and entirely dependent on others as well. For M. this paradox serves as the main tool for spelling out different phenomenological observations regarding anthropology, and for doing philosophy of religion by establishing the roles and 'functions' of religion in reconciling the abovementioned antagonistic insights and tendencies.

Chapter 8 (pp. 239-256) however looks somewhat erratic at first glance, given the systematic outline of the book. Its connection to chapter 7 is a more indirect and implicit one since it deals with an appropriate concept of God in relation to idealistic paradigms for a philosophy of the self. Within this (rather implicitly noted) line of thinking it becomes, nevertheless, understandable why M. discusses the ideas of pantheism

and panentheism and the advantages of establishing a somewhat panentheistic concept of God, given the need to address the paradoxes of the human self in a mature concept of God. Although chapter 8 remains a bit short it serves as a track-switch to the further philosophical theology developed in volumes 2 and 3 and it presents the kernel of M.'s concept of God enclosed in the idea that the difference between God and the world is overridden and simultaneously sustained by the (speculatively and idealistically conceived) identity of God and the world.

Chapter 9 discusses the main models of the modern critique of religion. The discussions of Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud and Comte can be seen as a contrast to the optimistic message of chapter 7 which involved saying that religion is ultimately necessary to resolve a problem (namely the paradox of the self) by way of symbolic and conceptual reconciliation. To address the 'virtues' of questioning and doubting M. forces the reader to consider the need for religion in the light of basic suspicions that the concept of God might just be a projection of human idols, or a socially distributed and approved drug used to sedate human anxieties, or a psychological sickness and disorder, or an expression of a pre-scientific worldview. M. discusses each suspicion separately, points out its validity and also its shortcomings. His conclusion remains convincing: that we cannot do away with the task of reconciling the paradoxes of our very own self-aware existence – a task that is addressed and worked out in religion – and that, therefore, religion is necessary, healthy, truth-oriented, and related to a transcendent reality which is described as the metaphysical contrast to the worldly reality as such.

The final chapter 10 (pp. 291-338) discusses the heart of modern and contemporary philosophy of religion: namely the questions concerning God's existence. M. presents the classic and modern forms of the so-called 'proofs of God's existence'. He introduces the reader to the main types of arguments (the ontological argument, the five ways of Aquinas etc.) and to the most prominent criticisms of these (associated with Immanuel Kant). Moreover, M. also discusses the revitalization of such arguments by Richard Swinburne and the criticism presented by John L. Mackie. However, chapter 10 is not just an overview of the pros and cons of the types of arguments evaluated but also presents a rather speculative conclusion: In accordance with Robert Spaemann's so-called "last proof of God's existence" M. elaborates a way to identify

God as the (necessarily existing) necessity and eternity of truth which guarantees the truth of states of affairs for now and for the future, when the states of affairs themselves will be past and gone entirely. Although this argument is just a somewhat modified and refurbished version of the so-called "alethological" argument (and although it is within this paradigm open to a certain criticism) M.'s conclusion makes sense given his philosophical program, which is based on the metaphysics of the self and of self-awareness. Consequently, any proof of God's existence needs nothing less than a combination of epistemological and ontological categories to establish an idealistic platform.

M.'s textbook* is way more than just an everyday introduction to philosophy within the curriculum of theology. It is a masterpiece written by a master philosopher and theologian – a masterpiece that reveals the benefits of a very German tradition: the ability to combine introductory remarks with speculative thinking, to relate encyclopaedic information with fresh, stand-alone deliberations. The idealistic framework of the book might be a provocation to postmodern as well as rather 'orthodox' analytic philosophers. But it serves as the proposal of a project and as an offer to contemporary philosophy of religion which, at the least, should learn from M.'s programmatic ideas that a reconciliation of the Continental and Anglo-American traditions is unavoidable if philosophy of religion does not want to be swept away by secularism and agnosticism.