

4, 2024, Marquette University Bookshelf Interview: “*Christology and Global Ethics* is a part of an existential commitment to serve impoverished communities grounded in the Catholic social principle of the option for the poor.” It is this personal inspiration, along with its scholarly excellence that shines through this work, making it most convincing.

This timely contribution is certainly welcome in a world that seems increasingly poised toward authoritarianism and progressively neglectful of our sisters and brothers who are poor, and amid poverty, striving to simply live.

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Wonder as a New Starting Point for Theological Anthropology: Opened by the World. By José Francisco Morales Torres. Lexington, 2023. x + 213 pages. \$100.00 hardcover, \$35.00 e-book.

Torres’s project is both diagnostic and prescriptive: alienated humans, living in a modern, data-driven, techno-capitalist world, need to be re-attuned to the fundamental generosity which constitutes and saturates existence itself. If theology is to respond compellingly to the human situation today, Torres argues, it must develop a more robust conception of wonder. The book is organized with great care and clarity and proceeds in four movements: from phenomenology, to metaphysics, to theology, and finally to ethics. As such, this book is wide in its scope—but, since Torres keeps his argument so tight and reiterates the book’s overarching line of thought regularly, he moves from one discipline to the next seamlessly (and the reader along with him).

Chapter 1 inverts the way we normally discuss the experience of wonder. The main claim here hinges on the distinctions between subject-object and activity-receptivity. We typically think about wonder as an emotion, i.e., something the rational subject experiences in the self. Torres, however, contends that “the subject as agent . . . is opened by the world” (30). In the event of wonder, the object gains a certain subjective agency because it is the thing itself which “‘grasps’ one” (31). Torres gives great emphasis to enfleshment, an integral aspect of being-in-the-world which places us, as Marcel says, “in sympathy [and in communion] with things,” things which not only are perceived but which grasp us (29). This radical intersubjectivity sometimes seems to go too far, and Torres often comes dangerously close to collapsing the distinction between the subject caught in wonder and the object doing the grasping. However, he never falls into this trap, always maintaining the distinction between subjects (this is

due to his strong metaphysical commitments, highlighted in chapter 2). Thus, this is a dialectical characterization of wonder: the “grip of wonder comes from without and yet it is sensed within” (25). Today, when objects more often than not enslave persons, to attribute an enchanting—rather than controlling—agency to the world of objects seems more urgent now more than ever.

But we cannot stay in the bracketed realm of phenomenology indefinitely. Thus, in chapter 2, Torres offers a metaphysics to ontologically ground his phenomenological account of wonder. This chapter shows that this book is comparative: Torres surveys, with care and great intellectual charity, three medievals of the metaphysical Golden Age: Shlomo Ben Yehuda Ibn Gabirol, Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn‘ Arabī, and St. Thomas Aquinas—and never falls into a saccharine syncretism. Torres grounds his phenomenology via the enduring metaphysical doctrine of participation as explained by these three, appealing especially to Aquinas’s distinction between essence and existence and their confluence in God. By maintaining God’s radical self-sufficiency, Torres can more vividly highlight divine generosity: “Divine generosity is the transcendental Excess that ontologically grounds the excess-within of creation, which in turn makes possible the experience of wonder” (96). If wonder is an experience of excess, and if creation itself is a gift, “the doctrine of participation in generosity makes sense of the ontological tension between identity and difference at the base of wonder because participation and generosity ground all relations excessively” (98).

In chapter 3 Torres makes his explicitly theological-anthropological turn. Following Karl Rahner and Max Scheler, Torres argues that the human person is not merely radically open to the world: rather, the human “capacity for wonder is an anticipatory reaching out that is at the core of the human being in response to being grasped by the O/other,” a “reaching out [which] is infinite” (148). Torres posits that wonder is essential to the human person as such: “in order to know oneself, one must be opened by the world, sense part of one’s center is out there” (139). Scheler says humanity is “world-open” (138), that its “opened-by-ness” is what makes the experience of wonder possible (145). Because Torres follows Rahner, I believe his account is not sufficiently Christocentric: this openness to the infinite horizon of being, while perhaps truly an openness to God, is not yet specifically an openness to the God of the Incarnation.

This being said, in chapter 4, Torres draws deeply from the Christian ethical tradition. Here, he tells us why his anthropology centered on wonder matters morally for Christians. Because the object which grasps us in wonder “sets its limits and its focus for the recipient” (161), wonder “calls humanity to heed the way in which the other both gives itself and sets limits to its givenness” and thus exhorts us to an ethics of

sustainability (162). Because the experience of wonder draws attention to the communality of existence—“one is intensely aware of the other and of oneself (difference) and one senses a depth connection with oneself and the other (identity)” (165)—it calls us to stand in solidarity with that which is not-me in creation. Because the human person is fundamentally “opened to” and “opened by the world” (166), one must be vulnerable and not exploitative (167–170).

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Encountering Artificial Intelligence: Ethical and Anthropological Investigations (Theological Investigations of Artificial Intelligence). Edited by Matthew J. Gaudet, Noreen Herzfeld, Paul Scherz, and Jordan J. Wales. Pickwick Publications, 2024. xii + 262. \$52.00 hardcover, \$37.00 paperback, \$9.99 e-book. [This volume can also be downloaded via open-access from the *Journal of Moral Theology* website, doi.org/10.55476/001c.91230.]

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) causes the moral and theological spheres, including pastoral ministry, to address its pervasive influence on human experience. These imperatives form the foundation of the dialogical process that emerged from extensive discussions on AI and human existence, culminating in the publication of the Theological Investigations of Artificial Intelligence series, the first volume of which is *Encountering Artificial Intelligence: Ethical and Anthropological Investigations*.

A collaborative work of inquiry “born from dialogue” by the AI Research Group convened under the Vatican’s Centre for Digital Culture, this work brings theologians, philosophers, and ethicists into conversation to explore and “facilitate further dialogue both within and beyond the Catholic world” about how contemporary artificial intelligence challenges our theological anthropology, moral reasoning, and modes of encounter. The collection thoughtfully explores technological changes through the resources of Catholic social teaching. Working out of Pope Francis’s insistence on a “culture of encounter,” this work does not just offer ethical and policy-oriented reflections through moral inquiry; it also explores pastoral questions regarding AI and culture, which further allows for a deepening of understanding of how AI and human personhood intersect in the twenty-first century’s digital renaissance.

The volume is structured for easy reading, using well-connected thematic arcs. The first arc focuses on theological anthropology, exploring human dignity, personhood, and relationships in the context of AI. Other themes include an examination of AI’s effects upon