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"The Bush Burned with Fire and the Bush Was Not Consumed"

"Anatheism" from a Jewish Theological Perspective: A Dialogic Study of Richard Kearney's Critique of the Burning Bush (*EXODUS 3*)

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Abstract

This paper explores the post-metaphysical theology of Richard Kearney (1954–) from a Jewish theological perspective. It seeks to provide an original analysis of his project "anatheism," considering the prominence of Jewish texts in the development of the concept of anatheism. Rooted in deconstructionist and Continental philosophical discourses, Jewish hermeneutics also plays a central role in anatheism. This discursive intersection has received scarce scholarly attention to date. Biblical and other texts which he interprets, include the rabbinic exegesis of Rashi and of modern Jewish hermeneutical philosophy notably of Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and Emmanuel Levinas. I analyse elements of Kearney's interpretation primarily of the "Burning Bush" biblical narrative as a test case for anatheistic reading of Jewish texts as they appear in one particular text "I Am Who May Be" in *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion* (2001). Kearney's textual reading of the Burning Bush offers an unusual example of a Christian engagement with Jewish interpretations of the biblical parable as well as of Levinas, Derrida, and others. Kearney's effort highlights an approach of a mutual search for ways of interpreting texts not "of" the other, but "with" the other, in a mutual engagement of post-metaphysical theology. More broadly, this examination offers an important contribution to the developing field of post-metaphysical theology in the Jewish and Christian traditions, ultimately posing questions as to how and whether elements of Jewish scriptural interpretative techniques might or can imbue contemporary Christian post-metaphysical theologies. Conversely, the question can be asked as to what a Jewish version of anatheism might look like. This examination presents a test case for possibilities of reading and learning from discourses across different religions.

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Keywords

theology – deconstructionism – Christian-Jewish theology – Jewish philosophy – textual hermeneutics

1 Introduction

This essay explores the post-metaphysical theology of Richard Kearney (1954–) from a Jewish theological perspective.[1] It seeks to provide an original analysis of his project "anatheism" from a Jewish theological perspective. Rooted in deconstructionist and Continental phenomenological modes of analysis, Jewish hermeneutics also plays a central role in anatheism – one that has not received sufficient recognition to date. This essay addresses the need for such a consideration, and to this end, will sustain an analysis of his challenging yet unique interpretation of Jewish commentaries on biblical texts.

I will focus on one text, "I Am Who May Be," which appears in a collection of essays titled, *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion*.[2] This essay exemplifies Kearney's creative textual analysis of Jewish theological commentaries as interconnected with his project, "anatheism." In turn this provides a useful place to examine connections between primarily modern Jewish hermeneutics and anatheism. I will conclude with the claim that Kearney is keen to distance himself from metaphysical theology – and because of this, or as a result of this, he finds credence in Jewish theologies, which he takes to provide a grounding for the hermeneutic that he seeks to develop.[3]

1 Amidst a growing body of literature around Kearney's work, there is a need for Jewish theologians to engage with his work, and with this idea. There is a difficulty in locating current research considering anatheism from Jewish perspectives. One example of a dearth of Jewish perspectives can be seen in Chris Doude van Troostwijk and Matthew Clemente, eds., *Richard Kearney's Anatheistic Wager: Philosophy, Theology, Poetics*, Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018), which considers interreligious perspectives, though demands a need for a Jewish conversation around the concept. Though an additional edited title, includes Jewish theology on biblical passages.

2 Richard Kearney, *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion*, Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 20–38.

3 This line of thinking is not new in Jewish thought, however, its appropriation in contemporary postmodern Christian discourse is original, with Kearney as one of the first to engage with Jewish hermeneutic methods as unrolling the project of anatheism. See for example Peter Ochs and Nancy Levene, eds., *Textual Reasonings: Jewish Philosophy and Text Study at the End of the Twentieth Century* (London: SCM Press, 2002).

I analyse elements of his interpretation of the Burning Bush biblical narrative in order to develop a Jewish interpretation of anatheism. Kearney's textual reading of the Burning Bush offers an unusual example of a Christian engagement with Jewish interpretations of the parable, which includes rabbinic exegesis, modern Jewish hermeneutical philosophy, and deconstructionist critique. It would be too far of a generalisation, and perhaps not even necessary, to tease out neat distinctions between these changing fields of thought. Nevertheless, we will focus primarily on some notably Jewish theological elements of anatheism.[4] Additionally and conversely, how might anatheist readings of texts lend themselves to projects of contemporary Jewish thought? Methodologically, it could present a test case for a consideration of Jewish theological contributions to post-metaphysical Christian theologies.

2 Context

Kearney is grouped with post-metaphysical Christian theologians, such as John D. Caputo, Carl Raschke, Julia Kristeva, and Jean-Luc Marion, amongst others.[5] His outlook is closely aligned to those of Continental philosophical and theological interests, having studied under the tutelage of Paul Ricoeur at the University of Paris, and as a theologian engaged with the thinking of the deconstructionist philosopher and social critic, Jacques Derrida.[6] Much of the discourse in this field is concerned with the intersections between deconstructionism and theology.

Modern Jewish theologies of the latter part of the twentieth century have been a different story, but not entirely, given a mutual disenchantment with theology, and its repercussions in coming to terms with new theologies – which have included and continue to include, religious fundamentalism, and athe-

4 It is worth considering parallel explorations of contemporary Christian approaches to Jewish theology, so although I consider one such example from the Continental field, see also Peter Ochs, *Another Reformation: Postliberal Christianity and the Jews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).

5 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). See also the claim for the "end of foundationalism" which actually paves a path for new theology in Gavin Hyman, *The Predicament of Postmodern Theology: Radical Orthodoxy or Textual Nihilism?* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 2. It also presents some other trends in Christian thought such as of Radical Orthodoxy.

6 Explorations of relationships between deconstructionism and contemporary Christian theology have developed over the decades, since at least, if not before, the 1980s.

ism. An element of reticence in "comparing" religious traditions is warranted.[7] However, this does not rule out comparative enquiry altogether.

3 Anatheism

Kearney seeks to navigate between the oft-situated opposites of theism and atheism, delineating a "third way beyond the extremes of dogmatic theism and militant atheism."[8] Anatheism is not meant to constitute an all-encompassing "system": "not an end, but a way."[9] Kearney describes his term anatheism as follows:

> My point is not to describe anatheism as some necessary historical dialectic – a pretentious temptation – but to indicate how certain bold minds of the twentieth century responded to spiritual questions of our age; namely, how might one speak of the sacred after the disappearance of God? Or how might one continue to have faith after the scientific enlightenment dispensed with superstition and submission and after two world wars exposed the fallacy of history as some Divine Plot? … this is what I mean by a return to God after God. God must die so that God might be reborn. Anatheistically.[10]

The term "anatheism" (from the Greek "ana–theos," literally, "again–God"), applies to the project of "returning to God after God."[11] The term implies that theism "comes back again" in a radically different format.[12] It is to "see what has always been there a second time around – 'ana' ",[13] but on different terms.[14]

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7 See Kimberley Patton and Benjamin C. Ray, *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age* (Los Angeles, CA; London: University of California Press, 2000) and on comparative religion as reductionism see Thomas A. Idinopulos, Brian C. Wilson, and James Constantine Hanges, eds., *Comparing Religions: Possibilities and Perils*, Numen Book Series 119 (Leiden; Boston, MA: Brill, 2006).

8 Richard Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God After God*, Insurrections: Critical Studies in Religion, Politics, and Culture (New York, NY; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2010), 3.

9 Kearney, *Anatheism*, 166.

10 Kearney, *Anatheism*, xvii.

11 Kearney, *Anatheism*.

12 I thank David Ford for this insight into the meaning of Kearney's term.

13 Kearney, *Anatheism*, 167.

14 See John Panteleimon Manoussakis, *God after Metaphysics: A Theological Aesthetic*, Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007).

How is this different to agnosticism? Positing both theism and atheism as intellectual constructions which suffer from their own forms of extremism, anatheism explores "post-theism."[15]

> Almost all of the great mystics and sages attested to a moment of agnostic abandonment as crucial transition to deeper faith … a faith beyond faith in a God beyond God.[16]

In a review of Kearney's writings, Burkey has described anatheism as a *mediation* between theism and atheism through hermeneutical perspectives:

> Anatheism does not offer a dialectical synthesis of the theism–atheism opposition, yet it is committed to the necessity of mediation in a concrete, hermeneutical sense. Anatheism finds footing in the space between theism and atheism with a gesture of non-knowing, aligning itself with the venerable traditions of Socrates, Augustine, Nicholas of Cusa, Kierkegaard, Husserl … Thus, anatheism works back from the experience of God-loss toward a genuine renewal of the sacred to recover forward a second, more mature faith. While insisting that anatheism is "nothing particularly new" (7), it seems to be of particular moment in this age where the gods have withdrawn. "Ana" – seeking "after" (toward) God "after" (subsequent to) the death of God. Anatheism – seeking a rebirth of faith after the loss of faith.[17]

I suggest that anatheism is relevant to contemporary Jewish thought, in its commitment to a post-metaphysical "God-loss" where "the gods have withdrawn," and to the interpretative methods upon which it flourishes.[18] The notion of "God-loss" has its roots in existentialist philosophical literature of the early nineteenth century with Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and others, and becomes quite prominent in Jewish thought towards the end of the twentieth century in the genre now known as post-Holocaust theology. Evil and suffering in a world where God's "presence" had been acknowledged became undermined even

15 Kearney, *Anatheism*, 57.

16 Kearney, *Anatheism*, 10.

17 John Burkey, review of *Anatheism: Returning to God After God*, by Richard Kearney, *Journal for Culture and Religious Theory* 10, no. 3 (2010), https://jcrt.org/archives/10.3/burkey.pdf.

18 These are well-addressed in Zachary Braiterman, (*God*) *After Auschwitz: Tradition and Change in Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought* (Princeton, NJ; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1998).

through some of the more traditionalist Jewish theologians, and resulting in new responses to the idea of "theodicy": the idea that evil and suffering, particularly of Jews in the Holocaust, could be squared with the existence of God. Many wrote of an eclipse of absence of God's presence which could align to "post-metaphysical" theology and certainly to a notion that God is "not yet." Kearney himself relates to Jewish post-Holocaust theology with reference to the philosophers Hannah Arendt and Yitz Greenberg.[19]

This study is focused on Kearney's reading of the Burning Bush as a narrative which offers an anatheistic textual analysis that illustrates my twofold claim: the theory of post-metaphysical eschatology, and the centralisation of the Other. In "The God who May Be," we are presented with two main biblical texts.[20] Both display rich comparative analysis from linguistic, phenomenological, deconstructionist, mystical and Jewish hermeneutics: the Song of Songs and the parable of the Burning Bush.[21]

4 Jewish Theological Interpretation in Anatheism: Kearney's Reading of the Burning Bush

First – a reading of the Burning Bush: the biblical imagery of a smouldering bush offers a literary scene of total irony as the reader is called to witness the possibility of the impossible: of supposed opposites in concomitant existence, alive and dead – wherein revelation is promised and never confirmed.

The biblical scene of fiery nature as a divine revelation, is paradoxically tempered with an absence of devastation. The question asked by Moses, as to why the bush is not destroyed, could present an image of continued deferral of a response – and a resistance for a static "answer" to a question on the move with the famous phrase as central to this revelatory encounter: אהיה אשר אהיה – '*eheye asher eheye*', "I will be what I will be," which I will refer to as the *eheye*.

19 Kearney, *Anatheism*, Part 1, chapter 3: "Who Can Say God?"

20 Kearney, "I Am Who I May Be," in *The God Who May Be*, 20–38.

21 It is possible that this is one of the places where Kearney was influenced by Franz Rosenzweig in Rosenzweig's twentieth-century interpretation of Song of Songs. On this, see Ephraim Meir, *Philosophim kiyumiim yehudim be-rav siah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2003), 98–102. Specifically, on the significance of the Song of Songs in post-metaphysical theology see for example Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Between Sensual and Heavenly Love. Franz Rosenzweig's Reading of the Song of Songs," in *Scriptural Exegesis: The Shapes of Culture and the Religious Imagination. Essays in honor of Michael Fishbane*, eds. Deborah A. Green and Laura S. Lieber (Oxford; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009) 310–318.

The "encounter" is both one of statis – that of entire stability, and simultaneously one of fleeting impermanence, "eschatology in the now."[22] This "now" links us to the chain of hermeneutics in postmodern readings of Jewish thought and reading.[23] The influence of Derrida and the deconstructionist hermeneutic are becoming increasingly recognised in Jewish theological circles. In Jewish thought, through a deconstructive lens, this focus on multi-layered interpretative reading, constitutes nothing short of a "revelation." The idea of an endlessness of interpretation, spanning multiple generations and locations, highlights how the notion of a perpetual flux is becoming a recognised theological tool to speak of religion after metaphysics. This theory is engaged with increasingly through Jewish approaches to textual commentary.[24] I propose to explore anatheism as a potential proposed model for post-metaphysical theology given its moorings in the Jewish exegetical and philosophical traditions.

5 Jewish Hermeneutics as Post-Metaphysical Theology

Steven Kepnes calls attention to a resemblance between Jewish interpretative methodology and literary deconstructionism:

> All literature, whether it be rabbinic, philosophic, or poetic, exists in a long tradition of texts built upon texts that came before, and attempt to make significant textual innovations in that tradition so that texts in the future will refer to them. The literary term for this is "intertextuality", and what this term means is that it is often the textual tradition in which, out of which, and to which the writers write that is more important than the "original historical context" in which the writer lives.[25]

Like the Burning Bush, revelation is perpetual, non-static, and forever in motion. The discussion of the Burning Bush presents anatheistic hermeneutics

22 Kearney, *Anatheism*, 166.

23 Susan Handelman, *The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory*, SUNY Series in Modern Jewish Literature and Culture (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1983), 31.

24 See Miriam Feldmann Kaye, *Jewish Theology for a Postmodern Age* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), 99–124.

25 Steven Kepnes, review of *New Directions in Jewish Philosophy*, eds. Aaron W. Hughes and Elliot R. Wolfson, *H-Net Humanities and Social Sciences Online*, H-Judaic, April 2013, https://networks.h-net.org/node/28655/reviews/30774/kepnes-hughes-and-wolfson-new-directions-jewish-philosophy.

not only in its talking about the image, but also in the methodology of reading and interpreting the text. Consider Kearney's use of thinkers over times:

> … the anatheist wager is at all times dynamic and attentive, moving intrepidly between engagement and critique, recovery and loss, sadness and joy. Instead of *never* making up its mind, it is *always* making up its mind.[26]

Intertextuality is endless, multi-layered, and multi-vocal. This could be said to frame elements of Kearney's phenomenological reading of the Burning Bush, led by deconstructionist and Jewish hermeneutics.[27] One of Elliot Wolfson's readings of Jewish hermeneutics cites Kearney's anatheism on this point:

> In his defence for an anatheism that "signals the possibility of God after God," Kearney … means that the transcendence of the divine involves a "surplus of meaning" that educes "a process of an interpretation" that can never entirely remove the "strangeness" of God.[28]

It is here that Wolfson reads a hermeneutic multiplicity of anatheism as a possibility for a theology which remains open to plural interpretations. This in turn, forms an impetus for an original "recovery" of religious discourse as per Kepnes. The notion of interpretation as perpetual, is embedded in contemporary Jewish conceptualisations of rabbinic exegesis, as well as of the modern Jewish thinkers, for whom a cornerstone of reading is that of endlessness. This too supports the suggestion that Jewish theological readings enable an eschatology which he finds to be more persuasive:

> There is a powerful counter-tradition which resists ontological approaches to God. This second tradition of interpretation – which I call eschatological – is arguably more attuned to the original biblical context of meaning. Here the emphasis is on the ethical and dynamic character of God … Such an understanding of the Exodic Name contrasts sharply

26 Kearney, *Anatheism*, 184 (italics in original).

27 The current theology and practice of Scriptural Reasoning, which has developed over the past two decades, encourages biblical interpretation, and stresses the significance of discord between interpretations as creating and strengthening a theology of our times, between religions.

28 Elliot R. Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift: Apophasis and Overcoming Theomania* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2014), 230.

> with the more essentialist conceptions of divine Being in medieval and post-medieval metaphysics.[29]

Specifically, he does so through interpretations of the famed eleventh century Biblical and Talmudic exegete Rashi, and then with modern philosophical biblical readings of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig. We will examine these key passages as examples of anatheistic readings.

6 A-Historicity: Rashi and Anatheism

Intertextuality invokes the role of the commentator on a text as fundamental. The text itself is then given to multiple meanings. Further, this endlessness of interpretations might be read as a dialogue across generations.[30] Sidestepping historical and even cultural limitations of historical texts, a-historical readings become a focal point in the interpretative method of Kearney.[31] This has also become a feat in other contemporary theologies, one example is that of the renewal of the relevance of certain historical figures: an apt example of this is the renewal of the figure of Paul, in the volume of Milbank, Žižek and Davis, *Pauls' New Moment: Continental Philosophy and the Future of Christian Theology*.[32] A second case in point could be of Michael Allen's more contemporary critical reading of St. Augustine's reading of the Exodus 3 Burning Bush narrative itself (it is of interest that this research was based on a paper written for one of Kearney's tutors and colleagues, Jean-Luc Marion, in his course on St. Augustine).[33]

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29 Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, 25.

30 Kepnes, alongside Peter Ochs and Robert Gibbs, points to the a-historicity of reading texts, see Steven Kepnes, Peter Ochs, and Robert Gibbs, *Reasoning after Revelation: Dialogues in Postmodern Jewish Philosophy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998). See also Peter Ochs, ed., *The Return to Scripture in Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Postcritical Scriptural Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 3–52.

31 Helgard Pretorius, "Is it Possible to Be a Reformed Anatheist?" in *Richard Kearney's Anatheistic Wager: Philosophy, Theology, Poetics*, eds. Chris Doude van Troostwijk and Matthew Clemente, Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018), 149.

32 John Milbank, Slavoj Žižek, and Creston Davis, eds., *Pauls' New Moment: Continental Philosophy and the Future of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010). For a Jewish response to these contemporary Christian theological writings, see Ochs, *Another Reformation*.

33 Michael Allen, "Exodus 3 after the Hellenization Thesis," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 3, no. 2 (2009): 179–196, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26421288. See also Kearney

Noting a wide conceptual gap between these strands (described in detail in Vanhoozer), Kearney's effort in aligning historic figures with contemporary theologians can be likened to this a-historic approach. This could serve as a parallel between Jewish engagements with deconstructionism regarding their commonality in the idea of a-historicity, as Kepnes describes in a continuation of the passage above:

> The primacy of intertextuality over historical context also means that problems and solutions that are formulated in one historical period by a thinker writing in and for his/her textual tradition, may very well be productive for a thinker writing in a very different historical period.[34]

Taking on the "intertextuality" described, we can now understand how actually Kearney's engagement with Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki, arguably the most prominent Jewish mediaeval Bible and Talmud commentator) is less surprising than what was at first suggested. Rashi's commentary on the Burning Bush episode, is replete with cross-referencing to and between numerous Biblical sources.[35] Kearney rests upon Jewish exegesis to understand transfiguration, in his reading of Rashi: "Rashi tells us, the transfiguring God of the burning bush is pledging to remain with those who continue to suffer in future historical moments."[36]

Kearney's assumption that Rashi is telling "us" is indicative that Kearney views Rashi, albeit a Jewish commentator, as a source from whom he can learn. Perhaps Kearney recognises how important the Rashi commentary is in Jewish understandings of biblical texts. However, Kearney's reading of Rashi is decidedly Christian, firstly with his description of God as "transfigurative," and secondly with his reference to Christ as suffering servant. Herein lies a further example of how anatheistic biblical reading rests upon dialogic Christian-Jewish readings. Following this, one could even trace research which shows the extent to which Rashi was supposedly responding to the Christian French society in which he lived.[37] In this sense Jewish and Christian interpretations

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on the Augustinian interpretation of the Burning Bush, Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, 23.

34 Kepnes, review of *New Directions in Jewish Philosophy*.

35 On Ex. 3 verse 2 alone, Rashi cross-references the scene of an angel appearing to Moses in the Burning Bush to Deuteronomy (4:11 and 21:3), II Samuel (18:14), Ezekiel (16:30), Psalms (91:15) and Genesis (3:23).

36 Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, 25.

37 See for example Esra Shereshevsky, "Rashi's and Christian Interpretations," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 61, no. 1 (1970): 76–86, doi.org/10.2307/1453590.

could be viewed as cross-generational conversations and embodied in anatheism. Further, Jewish exegetical commentary *as well as* Christian theologies are required in a truly conversatory anatheism between these religious traditions.

Further understandings of anatheism can be gleaned from Kearney's understanding of Rashi's commentary on the *eheye* scene in relation to the role of revelation. The Rashi text reads as follows:

> "I will be with them" in this predicament "what I will be" with them in their subjugation by other communities. He (Moses) said before Him, "O Lord of the Universe! Why should I mention to them another trouble?"[38]

In Rashi's commentary, the issue of how to impart this experience to others is critical. Rashi's imagined dialogue between Moses and God continues:

> "God said to him, you have spoken well, so shall you say, etc." *He told this to Moses alone and he did not mean that he should tell it to Israel.*[39]

In this commentary, Rashi is envisioning a situation where Moses could well misconstrue divine intention. Moses calls for divine intervention and guidance as to the inevitable conversation he will need to have with others after the event. The irony is that he will never be able to impart this sublime experience to those around him. The whole story in a sense, one of the major textual accounts of the monotheistic religions, depends on what Moses imparts to those around him through conversation, dialogue, interpretation and thus, understanding the responsibility thrust upon them.[40]

This clearly echoes to the Levinasian concept of "testimony" or "bearing witness to an encounter," stressing the significance of "otherness" in the encoun-

38 On v. 14 אהיה אשר אהיה.

39 My italics. Rashi then cites the Babylonian Talmud Tractate Berakhoth 9.

40 The emphasis on the verbal conversation I refer to here (God to Moses, Moses to Israel) about the "efficacy" of the Mosaic account of revelation also depends on visual elements. As Eliezer Schweid points out, "there is a physical as well as a verbal element in Moses's fear as to how to impart the experience to others: he demands physical signs. In order that they will believe his words, Moses requires a 'demonstration' that can be seen by others and he is answered by way of several 'signs' such as the rod that turns into a snake … a visual phenomenon that can show something to observers and thus provide grounds for knowledge … which is not the case with a verbal report unaccompanied by visual support." See Eliezer Schweid, *The Philosophy of the Bible as Foundation of Jewish Culture: Philosophy of Biblical Narrative*, trans. Leonard Levin, The Reference Library of Jewish Intellectual History (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2009), 47.

ter.[41] In fact, from a Levinasian viewpoint, one to which Kearney alignes himself, the testimony of the community, or "multitudes," is critical in its being able to impart meaning. The efficacy of revelation rests on its "turn" to others, as the "multiplicity of irreducible people is necessary to the dimensions of meaning; the multiple meanings are multiple people."[42] Even though Levinas resists the idea of "transfiguration" in relation to "revelation in the Jewish tradition," the notion of revelation as "call to exegesis" does demand some sort of transformation on behalf of those who witness revelation.[43] This underscores Kearney's citation of Rashi as closely linked to Levinas's understanding of revelation in Jewish thought.

7 Revelation as Continual Dialogue according to the Existentialist and Dialogic Jewish Philosophers Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, in Kearney's Interpretation

A principle of anatheistic reading of revelation – here, in the instance of the Burning Bush – rests upon concepts developed by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig. Kearney is likely not heavily influenced by Buber and Rosenzweig only for their content, but also for what they represent. Both are dialogical philosophers, a method which Kearney himself is teasing out. Further, both placed a great significance on Christian-Jewish relations which, as Ephraim Meir has pointed out in his chapter "Jewish Dialogical Thinkers and Interreligiosity," should actually be part of dialogical philosophy. One must *be* what one calls for, in his view.[44]

The turn to "other" demonstrated by Moses at the burning bush has also been highlighted by the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, with the purpose

41 See in particular Levinas's discussion on "The Glory of Testimony" in Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 105–110.

42 Emmanuel Levinas, *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures*, Continuum Impacts (London; New York, NY: Continuum, 2007), 131. See also Levinas's development of the idea of the "voices of Israel" wherein the "ethical relation" between those voices is of religious significance or "religious relation," in Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Sean Hand, Johns Hopkins Jewish Studies (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 11–22.

43 Levinas, *Beyond the Verse*, 127–133.

44 See Ephraim Meir, *Interreligious Theology: Its Value and Mooring in Modern Jewish Philosophy* (Berlin; Boston, MA: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), 19–49, doi.org/10.1515/9783110430455-003.

of demonstrating that dialogue is inherent in revelation.[45] Indeed, in his essay, "The Burning Bush," Buber emphasises simultaneous closeness and distance.[46] Buber questions the paradox of granting "their liberation wishes, at that hour of all hours," and yet "merely to secure his distance, and not to grant and warrant proximity as well?"[47] His response to this is to point to the irony of divine accompaniment of "his steady assistance" in continual interpretations of the bush.[48] Here, accordingly, revelation at the Burning Bush embodies direct revelatory, ongoing experience or "duologue" as he calls it, between Moses and God, as Nicholas de Lange has described, "the verb *ehye* here, and in the divine name *yhvh*, denotes not *existence*, but *presence*."[49]

Presence in the lives of those engaged in the dialogue – one engages in this dialogue through ongoing interpretation. The focus on textual interpretation likely appeals to Kearney as aligned in some senses with his theory of anatheism, in its nature as an endless process, and continual dialogue. Kearney notes Buber's emphasis on the discrepancy between distance and presence "[a]s the one who will always be there, so shall I be present in every time" – mixing up the tenses – where God "promises" *to be* present at the "revelation at the burning bush."[50] In this discussion, the notion of temporality, as well as that of the other, comes into play. Anatheism has a clear eschatological component as it is less concerned with the nature of *what* is revealed [stasis], but rather, in the dialogic element of what happens next, or, what could happen next [noesis].

We are presented with a selective choice of Jewish theologies of the Burning Bush – the first of the modern period having been the Kantian Jewish philosopher, Hermann Cohen. For Cohen, the Burning Bush is the ultimate symbol of being – and specifically – of the "being" of revelation, as Andrea Poma has suggested,

45 Buber, Martin, *Moses*, East & West Library (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1946).

46 Buber, *Moses*, 39–55.

47 Buber, *Moses*, 52. See also Paul Mendes-Flohr's contextualization of the dialogic element of Martin Buber's thought in Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Martin Buber: A Life of Faith and Dissent*, Jewish Lives (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2019).

48 Buber, *Moses*, 52.

49 Nicholas de Lange, who has considered the Burning Bush episode, through the lens of Buber, as "… the first meeting between God and Moses …," Nicholas de Lange, *An Introduction to Judaism*, Introduction to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 179.

50 Cited in Kearney, *The God who May Be*, 122 n. 23.

> In the burning bush, God revealed himself to Moses as "he who is." In this revelation it was not only affirmed that "God is," but also that "this God manifests himself as the being."[51]

The "being" of the Bush, according to Cohen, is distinct from an anatheist position of the stasis of the bush, with its flickering, changing form, representing an ongoing event.

Elliot Wolfson draws attention to Hermann Cohen's exegetical use of the burning bush in the latter's discussion of anthropomorphism and mythology. Wolfson notes Cohen's unusual translation of these words, to the German, as "I am who I am" (*Ich bin wer ich bin*), rather than "I am that I am" (*Ich bin, der ich bin*), which, suggests Wolfson, actually reflects a central element of Cohen's philosophy.[52] For our discussion on anatheism, the notion of being and becoming are implicated by Wolfson's reading that "[T]he removal of God from all temporal becoming … is derived from the name '*ehyeh asher ehyeh*.'"[53]

Elaborating on Cohen's position, Wolfson contends that it "only by maintaining the distinction between the becoming of nature and the being of the divine could the metaphysics of monotheism evolve into the origin of the unique God of ethics" even though "the consequence of such a move is the imaginary construction of the divine being as a person."[54] This hints at the developing contrast with later modern theories of the Burning Bush, such as those of Buber and Rosenzweig, for whom the Burning Bush represents a deferral of revelation, which necessarily denotes an original Jewish theological meaning of "being."

Kearney's selection of later Jewish commentaries on the Burning Bush highlights the ways in which he is trying to take the discussion: one of these is an emphasis on Buber's deferral of the moment – wherein the question of being "can only be understood as avoiding the question, as a statement that unfolds without any information …"[55] In the opinion of de Lange, Buber's concept of revelation in its first guise at the Burning Bush was developed as part of an ongoing conversation with Rosenzweig.[56] If so, it is interesting that, accord-

51 Andrea Poma, *Yearning for Form and Other Essays on Hermann Cohen's Thought*, Studies in German Idealism (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 178, see also 313–380.

52 Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 19–20.

53 Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 21.

54 Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 21.

55 Actually, Buber attributes this to Ludwig Koehler, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Tübingen: Paul Siebeck, 1936), 234.

56 De Lange, *Introduction to Judaism*, 179. He refers the reader to Pamela Vermes, *Buber on God and the Perfect Man* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994), 90–100.

ing to Panteleimon Manoussakis's review of Kearney's writings of the Burning Bush, Buber and Rosenzweig translated *eheye* slightly differently: Rosenzweig's translation as "I will be there as I will be there," and Buber's translation is: "As the one who will always be there, so shall I be present in every time." Indeed both Buber and Rosenzweig made an eschatological shift in translating these words. Both moved from the translation to the German "Ich bin da" ("I am there") to: "Ich werde dasein, als der ich dasein werde" roughly translated as "I will be-there, as the one being there"[57] However, their translations of these words changed over time, and there are also records of the translation of Buber as: "As the one who will always be there, so shall I be present in every time," but for Rosenzweig: "I will be there as I will be there".[58] Rosenzweig discusses this feature in *Star of Redemption* where he draws a similarity between "I am" (*Ich bin*) and: "I shall be" (*Ich werde sein*):

> For the future is not, for God, anticipation … In his mouth, "I am" is like "I shall be" and finds explanation for it.[59]

8 Translation and Mistranslation in Anatheism

Turning this study on its head, one should also ask in addition to how Kearney reads Jewish sources, (how) have Jewish thinkers read Kearney? If, for Buber, the translation of the *eheye* is so important, to the extent that its entire meaning depends on it, how might the notion of translation bear relevance to later modern thinking?

Direct Jewish theological engagements with Kearney's writing on the *eheye* are few – one which I would like to point to briefly is that of Jonathan Sacks. Sacks draws on Kearney's concept framing it as the "Great Mistranslation" – which refers to the translation of the phrase *eheye asher eheye*. According to Sacks, its translation has served as a fundamental pointer to the way in which revelations have been understood over the centuries:

57 Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, *Die fünf Bücher der Weisung* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1976).

58 I would like to thank Paul Mendes-Flohr and Hanoch Ben Pazi on the point of translations of these biblical words. Mendes Flohr also pointed out that both Buber and Rosenzweig wished for the following words to be engraved on their gravestones, hinting at the utmost significance of this issue: אני תמיד עמך ("I will be with you") Psalm 73.

59 Franz Rosenzweig, *Star of Redemption*, trans. William H. Hallo (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 272.

> These are all mistranslations, and the error is ancient. In Greek, *Ehyeh asher ehyeh* became *ego eimi ho on*, and in Latin, *ego sum qui sum*: "I am he who is." Augustine in the Confessions writes: "Because he is Is, that is to say, God is being itself, *ipsum esse*, in its most absolute and full sense." Centuries later, Aquinas explains that it means God is "true being, that is being that is eternal, immutable, simple, self-sufficient, and the cause and principle of every creature". And so it continued in German philosophy. God became Hegel's "concrete universal", Schelling's "transcendental ego", Gilson's "God-is-Being" and Heidegger's "onto-theology".[60]

Sacks wishes to emphasise the fundamental importance of the *eheye* phrase. Focusing on its implications in Jewish thinking, these mistranslations have had dramatic conceptual permutations which have led to critically different readings of the passage that have even influenced theology over the centuries. One could even draw a comparison between Sacks and Kearney on the specific point of Sacks that the Burning Bush signifies a theology of future, as opposed to that of present:

> My ultimate suggestion is that we might do better to interpret the Transfiguring God of Exodus 3 neither as "I who am" nor as "I who am not" but rather as "I am who may be" – that is, as the possibility to be, which obviates the extremes of being and non-being.[61]

This indicates an additional intersection between Jewish and Christian approaches to the Burning Bush – through the translation of the enigmatic phrase of the *eheye*.

Invoking anatheism, it can be said that a deconstructionist approach allows for a position in which translation itself is always interpretation – which is a main theme in Derrida and Ricoeur which also underpins Kearney's focus on the *eheye*. In this way, Kearney gives considerable attention to the significance of the plethora of translations of the *eheye*. It is clear that the key commonality between the translations he prefers, are those where the future tense is employed. He interprets Rosenzweig's translation of the concept through Ricoeur's theory of translation.[62] The translation, Ricoeur notes of

60 Jonathan Sacks, *Future Tense: A Vision for Jews and Judaism in the Global Culture* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2010), 201.

61 Kearney, *The God who May Be*, 22.

62 Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation*, trans. Eileen Brennan, intro. Richard Kearney, Thinking in Action (Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 22; in the introduction Kearney cites

Rosenzweig, points to "the distant God with the near,"[63] and is thus emphasised by Kearney.[64]

Further it can be suggested that Rosenzweig's idea of the Eternal, was dependent on the translation of the Hebrew word *eheye* – from the Burning Bush biblical narrative.[65] If this is the case, it would be difficult to overstate the significance of the translation of *eheye*, in its contribution to Jewish thought of the twentieth century.

In contrast, the "Eternal" of Rosenzweig presents a model in which the encounter of the Burning Bush "forges the bible into a unity in the divine name" and marks the "essence of Judaism" as a "uniting [force] …"[66] which calls into question Kearney's attention to the notion of essence. It is at this point where drawing on Rosenzweig supports the endlessness and unexpected nature of encounter that an enriched interpretation of *eheye* lends itself to anatheism.

9 Derrida's Deconstructionism and Levinas's Other: Kearney's Reading of the Burning Bush

Moses arrives at the bush and witnesses the scene of a fire that does not burn out. He is faced with an "epiphany" of salvific nature.[67] However, Moses cannot look at the bush, and is instructed not to approach it – a very real visible and tangible calling out, concurrent with a formidable warning not to come close. The Bush "burns without burning out."[68] Kearney interprets the story as presenting a theology wherein divine revelation is both present and absent – both ablaze and calm at the same time. Seemingly, the arrival of Moses at the Bush and the confrontation it demands, would identify God or the angel as the one who demands, or the one who activates the encounter and what will happen. Seemingly, the eschatology of the moment is predetermined by the divine forces.

Ricoeur's reading of Rosenzweig, 4–5. See also Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination*, trans. David Pellauer, ed. Mark I. Wallace (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 129–145.

63 Ricoeur, *On Translation*, 22.

64 Kearney, *The God who May Be*, 122 n. 23.

65 Kearney, *The God who May Be*, 122 n. 23.

66 Kearney states that the Jewish philosopher Robert Gibbs advised him on this Rosenzweig text.

67 Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, 20.

68 Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, 20.

Taken further, Kearney's anatheistic reading of the burning bush illustrates a deconstruction of attempts to place God as central to an encounter or its designator/designer, but rather, in an interpretation reminiscent of Levinas, the individual – or eschaton – is now irreducibly responsible for what is to follow, and what must follow, in its state of alterity. The reader of the scriptural account of the Burning Bush is therefore held accountable for how it is understood, from their particular viewpoint.[69]

The turn to the individual as responsible for their experience, and then their interpretation, is central to an anatheistic reading of the Burning Bush.[70] It is the individual, the one who encounters, represents the eschaton, and not the telos – forever experiencing, and deferring an outcome. Moses is the potential eschaton who is "confronted with an angel who eludes him, a fire that won't burn out, and a voice that answers his question with a riddle …"[71]

Influenced by Ricoeur, Kearney's reading suggests that the infinite triumphs over attempts to make finite the moment of encounter, which correlates with the notion of defining or naming God in Christian and Jewish theological traditions.[72] Developing on the idea of the "fire that won't burn out," Kearney suggests that the Song of Songs directly refers to the encounter at the Burning Bush:[73]

> There is even a telling allusion to the burning bush episode of Exodus 3:14 in the beloved's claim that "love is as strong as death/… The flash of it is a flash of fire,/ a flame of Yahweh himself (Song 8:6)." The transfiguring fire of the burning bush here becomes the fire of a devouring desire … where the ecstasy of the beloved crosses over with, without consuming or being consumed … lover and beloved, both are transfigured.[74]

Critically, this alterity, as portrayed by the Burning Bush, is sustained through the notion that encounter will always exceed the individual. It is possible to see

69 In Jewish thought, and Jewish readings of Christian scripture see Hanoch Ben-Pazi, *Interpretation as an Ethical Act: Levinas' Hermeneutics* (Heb) (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2012).

70 On further characteristics, notably humility and discernment, especially in relation to epistemological uncertainty, see Brian Treanor, "The Anatheistic Wager: Faith after Faith," *Journal of Religion and the Arts* 14, no. 5 (2010): 546–559; doi.org/10.1163/156852910X529322.

71 Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, 21.

72 See Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 223–230.

73 He is partially interpreting transfiguration through the eyes of R. Hayyim of Volozyhn through the lens of Levinas. See for example, Emmanuel Levinas, "'In the Image of God,' according to Rabbi Hayyim Volozhiner," in idem, *Beyond the Verse*, 148–163.

74 Kearney, *The God who May Be*, 54.

how his reading of the encounter of Moses arriving at the Burning Bush, echoes a reading of the encounter of Transfiguration. In the Transfiguration, Jesus appears to three of his disciples on a mountaintop, glowing and illuminating surrounded by a blaze of light.[75] The entire self of Jesus was said to have been transfigured, or changed. The striking likeness to the Burning Bush encounter, raises certain questions, such as if Jesus was figuratively changed through this encounter, could Moses have been transfigured as well? Does Kearney interpret the Mosaic encounter as mirroring that of Christ? "From this transfiguring fire which flares up without being extinguished, the voice of an angel calls …"[76]

Or is Moses the ever-standing potential eschaton described above? The roles of the individual and of God are also explored in modern Jewish thought, in particular by one of the thinkers who inspires Kearney – Franz Rosenzweig – in his interpretation of the Song of Songs, where he draws on notions of longing, desire, and proximity to describe the nature of the God-encounter.[77] This adds to the point that Kearney is making, and he is likely well aware of Rosenzweig's use of Song of Songs and the "encounter," which explores possibilities and limits for anatheism in this new theology.

10 Of Shoes and Veils in an Anatheistic Reading of the Burning Bush

Aesthetic and iconographic comparisons between Jewish and Christian theological understandings of clothing, are also apparent. One example is where Kearney cites Derrida's Burning Bush narrative drawing attention to the "iconography" as integral to the scene – in particular to the role of the shoe in the parable:

> I might refer to Derrida's allusion to the radical alterity of the burning-bush God when he refers to Moses' removal of his sandals before the thornbush as a typically Jewish mark of respect towards the transcendence of the Holy as witnessed in the Mishnah prohibiting the wearing of shoes on the Sabbath.[78]

75 New Testament Matthew 17:2, Mark 9:2–3, Luke 9:28–36. Also 2 Peter 1:16–18.

76 Kearney, *The God Who May Be*, 20.

77 Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 198–205. See also Mendes-Flohr, "Between Sensual and Heavenly Love," 310–318.

78 Richard Kearney, "The God Who May Be," in *Questioning God*, eds. John D. Caputo, Mark Dooley, and Michael, J. Scanlon, Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 182.

In Kearney's wish to draw on rabbinic themes, here, he relies upon Derrida's discussion of the removal of shoes at the burning bush as a recognition of a physical space as holy, which leads to several incongruities. First, turning to Derrida's *The Truth in Painting*, Derrida does not provide a Mishnaic source for this comment on removing shoes on Sabbath, and it is not clear to which Mishnah (rabbinic text) Derrida refers.[79] Derrida was likely referring to entering the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle, however, the Mishnaic source that Kearney relies on via Derrida, is likely incorrect.

Second, the context of Derrida's discussion on shoes is in this instance one of Christian significance. Citing Luke, it concerns Immanuel Kant's aesthetics and Derrida's questions as to whether Kant had visited the St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. There is a further confusion in theological interpretation as actually Derrida's discussion in this instance has less to do with holiness, but more to do with notions of identity and decentring (in light of Martin Heidegger) in his discussion of Vincent van Gogh's painting *Old Shoes with Laces*. In this context, shoes are not only objects but also deconstructive symbols of space, place, and sexuality, especially through the imagery of inserting a foot into a vacuous space.[80]

Third, even though in some religions the practice does exist, such as certain Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist customs at places of worship, it is not common Jewish practice to remove shoes on the Sabbath. In fact, the removal of shoes in Jewish practice is associated either with mourning or with biblical transactions of Levirate marriages, despite the prominence of the removal of shoes in the burning bush narrative.[81] Further, although Kearney seeks to shed light or show awareness of Jewish readings, he gets tied down in Derrida's and/or his own misreading. Whist this anatheistic reading is loyal to interreligious and deconstructive interpretations, it signifies that care needs to be taken in learning across boundaries where sometimes, important nuances can be missed. Perhaps this is simply part of being hosted as other in another's religious tradition. However, intertextual readings should be encouraged to learn or read from original sources and link to their uses in customs if they are to be relied upon. In this sense it could be suggested that anatheism goes further than mere theoretical cross-religious interpretation.

However, despite these discrepancies Kearney does shed light on the meaning of holiness in his anatheistic reading. In the biblical parable at the centre

79 Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago, IL; London: Chicago University Press, 1987), 351.

80 Jacques Derrida, "Restitutions," in *The Truth in Painting*, 260–294.

81 See Deut. 25:5–9 and its permutations in Ruth 3:4.

of our discussion, taking off one's shoes, turning away one's face, are symbols of deference to a moment of holiness, of being "exceeded" and being blinded. Jewish interpretations of the shoe draw links with their mystical meaning in the human experience, as Haviva Pedaya has claimed.[82] This is more blatantly discussed in Kearney's "Sacramental Imagination: Eucharists of the Ordinary Universe," wherein he draws on Julia Kristeva and Paul Ricoeur to draw a connection between the role of aesthetics, and possibly even objects, in anatheism, as part of reintegrating holiness into what has become profane.[83] Thus, icons have their purpose in anatheism, the exemplar of this being through transubstantiation. This would mark a divergence from potential Jewish interpretations of anatheism, which would likely give lesser prominence to the use of objects.

However, a second example, drawing on objects, is one that is shared between Jewish and Christian deconstructionist interpretations – that of concealment. Derrida discusses, primarily with Hélène Cixous, the act of covering with a veil (or *tallith*), what should be unseen; and even the impossible.[84] The notion of the veil which includes Levinas's writings on the theme, is meant to block out the light. This link is made clearly by Timothy Beal and Tod Linafelt.[85] Not incidentally, Rashi appears in their discussion,[86] wherein they link Derridean Christian readings of Jewish biblical commentaries. In this particular example, they discuss revelation and the significance of the illuminated face of Jesus, vis-à-vis Moses: "He (Rashi) is filling out what it means for Moses to have seen God's back, what it means to have a revelation that does not really reveal."

Here, Rashi is interpreted as part of a commentary on Paul's experience in Corinthians.[87] As Frances Gray has noted, Kearney emphasises

82 Haviva Pedaya, "The Secret Depth of the Zohar: Shoes, Closure and Disappearance," in *Kabbalah, Mysticism and Poetry: The Journey to the End of Vision* (Heb), eds. Avi Elqayam and Shlomy Mualem (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2015), 60–120.

83 Richard Kearney, "Sacramental Imagination: Eucharists of the Ordinary Universe," *Analecta Hermeneutica* 1 (2009): 240–288, https://journals.library.mun.ca/ojs/index.php/analecta/article/view/16.

84 Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida, *Veils*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

85 Timothy K. Beal and Tod Linafelt, "To Love the Tallith More Than God," in *Derrida and Religion: Other Testaments*, eds. Yvonne Sherwood and Kevin Hart (New York, NY; Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 175–188, here 183.

86 As cited in Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Particulars of Rapture: Reflections on Exodus* (New York, NY: Schocken, 2001).

87 Beal and Linafelt, "To Love the Tallith," 183.

> the role of human being in the possibilizing of … Kearney moves beyond that simple repetition of Catholic dogma to the startling claim God is powerless and that in bringing about the Kingdom we are actively involved in making God possible, hence enabling God *to be, em-powering God*: God needs us, as creation as much as we need Him. It seems that a sort of co-dependence is thus envisioned between God and God's creation.[88]

Both are implicated in a dialogue of terrifying proportions. One is emblazoned. And the other is blinded. Both are calling for "attention to the divine in the stranger who stands before us in the midst of the world."[89]

11 Conclusion: Towards a Jewish Anatheism – the Other within

The stranger is linked to its theistic permutation of the "encounter with a radical Stranger who we choose, or don't choose, to call God."[90] Where are the boundaries of the "we" and who is included within this? Is "we" the reader, as the one is called upon as Gray notes:

> Who is this we/us? If Kearney is representing the whole of creation, it is exceedingly difficult to reconcile the beliefs of religious faiths and spiritualities which are other than Christian monotheism with what he proposes.[91]

Is Moses the stranger? What is his role in responding to what he faces? The irony of a search to locate God as said Stranger, is taken up by Kearney in his series of interviews with various continental thinkers, including Levinas, Kristeva, Derrida, Marion, Ricoeur, and others, in which we can see the sort of questions for which he was searching for explanations with his contemporaries.[92] Throughout the series of interviews, which also includes his grilling of Gadamer on

88 Frances Gray, review of *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion*, by Richard Kearney, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 3 August 2002, https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/the-god-who-may-be-a-hermeneutics-of-religion/.

89 Kearney, *Anatheism*, 166.

90 Kearney, *Anatheism*, 166.

91 Gray, review of *The God Who May Be* (by Richard Kearny).

92 Richard Kearney, *Debates in Continental Philosophy: Conversations with Contemporary Thinkers*, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2004).

hermeneutics, the focus on the Stranger and the subjects which arise around it, notably politics and aesthetics, are approached from a Christian viewpoint.

Ironically, the exception to this, which could work against my claim, is in his interview with Levinas. In this interview, the Judaic tradition is mentioned in passing. If I am not mistaken, the only question in which he asks Levinas to address his tradition as Other, is the question: "What are the origins of the religious dimensions in your own thinking?"[93] What then, of other religious traditions, in a collection of interviews like this? However, a later volume, *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions*, addresses the need for encounters with other faiths as at the root of positing relations with the stranger.[94] Position and encounter with the other of another faith are critical, and here we must hold up to light Kearney's own position as "standing" inside the text of another – which he deliberately chooses to read as "other" via Rashi. However, this anatheistic Christian reading of Jewish otherness is called into question through his citations of Exodus 3:14 as the central part of the burning bush parable, often excluding the final verse of the burning bush parable, Exodus 3:15, which some would say is inseparable from the parable (it is not clear which version of the Bible Kearney used): "The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you; this is My name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations" (Ex.3:15).

This final verse has overtly particularist connotations, and perhaps because of this Kearney's anatheism was limited in how far intertextual conversation could go. This hints at broader discrepancies in reading texts on the part of Christian commentators, as Hebrew Bible without becoming New Testament, and the potential polemics involved. In turn, this issue hints at hidden questions in reading such a text of "whose narrative is this?" It is possible to view the notion itself of selection of verses in itself as a dialogic engagement with Jewish theology. In this sense the reader becomes an eschaton bearing witness to the complexities of narrative in reading biblical texts, which links to some of the themes in anatheism altogether. The biblical account of the Burning Bush is but one case in point for the anatheistic project of Kearney. However, it is clear that in a broader discussion, the role of the interpretation and deconstructionist hermeneutics is critical in a reading of anatheism.

This study has provided a detailed, albeit preliminary illustration of Jewish elements of anatheism. This study indicates that post-metaphysical theologies share common themes, and that on these themes, particularities are developed.

93 Kearney, *Debates in Continental Philosophy*, 69.

94 Richard Kearney and James Taylor, eds., *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions* (London; New York, NY: Continuum, 2011).

The Burning Bush plays a key role in allowing for an understanding of anatheism, in invoking a significance for eschatology, in bringing into play philosophical discussions of the nature of God, through highlighting the issues of naming and translating, and centring the eschaton as opposed to God. These aspects allow for an original discussion around Jewish and Christian deployments of post-metaphysical theology – making significant steps away from earlier modern interpretations. Conceptions of the divine are formed around the role of the Burning Bush, and through analyses of additional texts. The human role is also critical and is exemplified by the figure of Moses in his concern for how he will relate revelation to others, in his capacity for bearing witness and taking responsibility for the consequences of an unexpected divine encounter. The role of Moses plays out through a post-metaphysical interpretation of what it is to be human, and what it is to be faced with the divine – the role of the eschaton, the other, the commanded, and the role of the Other.

Methodologically, understanding Kearney's interpretative project as infused with Jewish hermeneutics, offers the potential of a mutual engagement of post-metaphysical theology. At the same time, it tests the boundaries of learning between religions and raises new questions as to the role anatheism might play in interreligious theology.

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