Dale M. Schlitt

German Idealism's Trinitarian Legacy. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2016. Pp. x + 445. Hb, \$95.

Two centuries ago in Berlin classrooms, some now famous philosophers of religion prosecuted contending systematic treatments of the Trinity that, for certain, challenged their students. Today these philosophies are still taught and prove as daunting as ever for students and teachers alike. With Dale Schlitt's new book on German Idealism's Trinitarian legacy, we have an expert teacher to guide us all.

This multifariously praiseworthy text's chief merit lies in its pedagogical sensibility. Schlitt's introduction concisely lays out how the book resulted from decades of teaching at St. Paul University in Ottawa and Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio. Even better, the introduction presents a lucid, welcoming justification for the reader for the slate of ten thinkers to be treated later, and an equally clear statement on method. Then with an eye to future scholars' potential contributions, Schlitt states that he offers this text as a celebration of the Idealist legacy, which should impel continuation of the Idealist Trinitarian adventure (see the detailed suggestions for further study in the book's conclusion). Schlitt's pedagogical sensibility manifests itself in each chapter with his judicious selection of examples and representative texts. Given the subject's difficulty, this is absolutely worth lauding.

The book has four parts. The first recounts the beginning of the Trinitarian adventure with Johann G. Fichte, Georg W.F. Hegel, and Friedrich W.J. Schelling. The second identifies and reviews three nineteenth-century testimonies to idealist influences: Hegel's friend and editor Philipp Marheineke, Isaak August Dorner (successor to Friedrich Schleiermacher's chair of theology), and the Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov. The third detects and traces "German Idealist family resemblances" in three twentieth-century German-language theologians: Reformed theologian Karl Barth, Catholic Karl Rahner, S.J., and Lutheran Wolfhart Pannenberg—the ecumenism of this grouping and that of the next part should be appreciated. The fourth hops the Atlantic Ocean to discover how the legacy of Hegel and Schelling endures in twentieth- and twenty-first-century North American theology, with Lutheran systematician Robert Jenson, Catholic feminist Catherine Mowry LaCugna, Jesuit process theologian Joseph Bracken, S.J., then Schlitt himself.

In each of the first three parts, one figure receives lengthier treatment than others: Schelling, Solovyov, and Pannenberg. This editorial choice relates to Schlitt's evident intention to fill in the literature on theology and German Idealism on the Schellingian side. This is particularly admirable because Schlitt's

proclivities lie more with Hegel. As more Schellingian, I found his efforts invigorating.

Helpful are Schlitt's heuristic suggestions for differentiating Hegel and Schelling on the Trinity. While both aim to develop the "triadic structure of dynamically developing subjectivity" (11) into a revised framework for thinking the Trinity as "self-determining inclusive subjectivity" (21), they exhibit opposite inertial tendencies. Hegel's thinking proves more nearly monosubjectival, tending toward modalism, and Schelling presents subjectivity as more sharply differentiated, tending toward tritheism (41–43); consequently, both must be treated with care. Also, Schlitt retains conventional (and correct) readings of Hegel as more interested in reason and necessity, and Schelling in freedom and facticity. These differences between Hegel and Schelling become crucial for much of the detective work in parts three and four, where Schlitt makes cases for German Idealist influence in thinkers increasingly distant in time and geography from Hegel and Schelling.

Given this book's vast scope, I must be highly selective in responding to specific chapters. Readers of varying interests will be richly rewarded no matter where they turn. I highly recommend the chapters on Pannenberg, from which I learned an enormous amount, and LaCugna, where Schlitt's methodological acuity shines. But for the *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, I should comment substantively on Schlitt's chapters on two Jesuits, one German and one American: Rahner and Bracken. These chapters show how Jesuit theologians have offered central contributions to German Idealism's Trinitarian legacy (one could also think of Xavier Tilliette, S.J.'s extensive work on Schelling). It is certainly notable that of the twelve authors Schlitt considers, two are Jesuits.

Schlitt makes a brisk and compelling case for Hegelian influence on Rahner by examining three thematics: uncreated grace, experience and transcendental anthropology, and Trinity. Recognizably Hegelian in Rahner's work is his consistent figuration of revelation as God's self-communication, which Schlitt interprets as "a single movement of divine subjectivity" (145). Most fascinating is Schlitt's closing suggestion that Rahner's Trinitarian theology be read through Hegel's (or the Schlittian Hegel's) philosophy of generosity. This thought is worth pursuing with gusto. I have just two criticisms: Schlitt comes tantalizingly close to finding Schellingian resonances in Rahner—e.g., that Rahner revises the "ground" of the middle Schelling into his theology of Mystery—but leaves them unthematized. And Schlitt erroneously discusses the term "Vorbegriff" in Rahner, which is not Rahnerian, and which unduly greases the wheels for Hegelian classification. But overall, as a person who works on Rahner and German Idealism, I deem this chapter instructive and inspiring.

The chapter on Bracken is truly extraordinary. Schlitt carefully unwinds the theoretical knots in the work of this omnivorous (yet remarkably coherent!) thinker to display the pivotal influence of German Idealists, especially Schelling. Bracken's major insight into the Trinity is that it is "a dynamic society which is a field of activity of mutually interacting divine Persons or subjects" (243). Bracken develops this insight in dialogue with many thinkers, but significantly for Schlitt in conversation with Schelling (especially of the 1809 *Freiheitschrift*) and Hegel (who provides traction for constructive development of Whitehead). The notion of "field," which Bracken cultivates out of his reading of Schelling on ground, combined with Hegel's views on society, yield a unique perspective on Trinitarian theology, which for Bracken includes cosmology. Schlitt's chapter constitutes a resounding tribute to this creative American Jesuit.

This book should interest anyone working in Trinitarian theology and/or German Idealist philosophy and those interested in specifically Jesuit contributions to both of these conversations. And for anyone who attempts to teach any of this material, at the college level or above, one could hardly find a better model than Professor Schlitt.

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