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# Hegel's Political Theology, by Andrew Shanks

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## Peer Reviewed

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importance of the Crucified One in Christian faith and practice, highlighting the potential for a spiritual ecumenism rooted in the mystical experience of participation in the cross of Christ. M. suggests that there is an affinity between the mysticism of Paul of the Cross and the *anthropologia crucis* which underpins the theologies of liberation. He intimates that in Paulacrucian spirituality lie rich resources for a spirituality of solidarity with the weak, wounded, and suffering; a spirituality particularly appropriate to address present needs and exigencies; a tradition pertinent to contemporary modes of being and perceiving.

However, if there are in fact ecumenical or social-political ramifications of Paul Danei's mysticism of the passion which might contribute to a contemporary praxis of the gospel, B. himself does not adequately address these. His treatment gives the impression that, all protestations notwithstanding, spirituality and mysticism are rather individual, private matters isolated from wider ecclesial and sociopolitical concerns.

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HEGEL'S POLITICAL THEOLOGY. By Andrew Shanks. New York: Cambridge University, 1991. Pp. xii + 234. \$49.50.

Hegel so often seems to be all things to all people. In the present work, Shanks sets out on one of the more imaginative tracks of reinterpretation, arguing that Hegel's "inclusive" Christology and anti-authoritarian political theology render him both a continuing resource for the modern world and a useful dialogue partner in debates with, among others, Hannah Arendt, Johann-Baptist Metz, and Eric Voegelin.

S. starts from Milan Kundera's notion of kitsch. An easy and cheap attitude to life which promotes and celebrates premature harmony in human relations, it is an obvious partner for all forms of authoritarianism. Kitsch in this sense is no stranger to religion, and neither is authoritarianism, but what governs S.'s approach to Hegel is his belief that the inclusive Christology championed by Hegel challenges this religious kitsch. Christ on the cross, representing humanity, gives the lie to cheap grace and to the religious authoritarianism that put him there. Religious orthodoxies prefer an exclusivist Christology so that the crucifixion can be raised above ordinary human experience.

Two lengthy chapters discuss Hegel's Christology and his understanding of the relationship between philosophy and dogmatics, both issues on which much ink has been spilled. The first of these argues that Hegel's Christology is the definitive overcoming of "the Unhappy

Consciousness," that condition of mental estrangement from the "Unchangeable." The second sees Hegel principally as a religious reformer, insisting on the theological value of philosophy. While neither chapter is particularly original, they are both very clear considerations of the complex field of Hegelian religious thought, particularly in its earlier formulations in the *Phenomenology of Mind*.

The later chapters of the work are the more impressive. The lengthy central chapter on the philosophy of history, e.g., engages Voegelin, Kierkegaard, Adorno, and Foucault in a debate on modernity intended to show that Hegel's doctrine of the self-actualizing idea works as a Christocentric response to the idea of modernity as fate. For Hegel, thinks S., modernity is a space for freedom, but the Christian gospel has become kitsch, and opened the way for authoritarianism. Once again, the principal claim is not especially unusual, but the use of the language of kitsch puts it in an interestingly and quite suggestively new way. As for the debates with Voegelin et al., these seem less helpful, obscuring the focus on Hegel's concerns with relatively lengthy excursions on the other figures. This distracting shift of focus takes over in the final chapter on Hegel's political theology. We have here a right, it seems to me, to expect that Hegel will be the focus of discussion, but the debate is between Arendt, Isaiah Berlin, Metz and Hegel, and inevitably Hegel's share of the limelight is reduced.

There is a very interesting insight lurking behind the pages of this book, namely, that Hegel's Christology can be utilized in the modern world as a defence of freedom against both political and religious authoritarianism. For that to emerge more clearly than in fact it does would require more sustained attention to Hegel, interesting as the digressions are. S. also seems to have some pastoral concern, and that too might seem to the reader to be less frustrated if the focus had been more clearly upon the political theology. It may indeed be that the book is mistitled: *Studies in the Unhappy Consciousness* would be a much more accurate reflection of the contents. But for all these minor disappointments, the present work represents the emergence of a significant new voice in Hegelian interpretation.

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CLEAR HEADS AND HOLY HEARTS: THE RELIGIOUS AND THEOLOGICAL IDEAL OF JOHN HENRY NEWMAN. By Terrence Merrigan. Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs. Louvain: Peeters, 1991. Pp. xvi + 272. Fr.b. 695.

The title of this work, a citation from Newman's epistemological study *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, conveys the model of