is self-sufficient and unconditioned, and who (not remaining content to be so) shares the abundance of God's life with creatures – even becoming conditioned by them (cf. *CD* II/1, pp. 313–15), freely putting himself 'under an obligation' to men and women (II/2, p. 101).

Key to Asbill's exposition is Barth's conviction that this relationship – between God's aseity and pronobeity, God's primary and secondary objectivity – is asymmetrical, moving necessarily only from God to the human creature. It is for this reason that Barth avoids a sort of Hegelian panentheism: God's self-involvement with creation is wholly free and gratuitous, and does not trespass upon God's inner life as Father, Son and Spirit. Conversely, just as the knowledge of God is impossible without divine action, so too human existence depends upon God's gracious extension of God's own life. 'God simply is this trinitarian event of knowing and loving' (p. 177), so that the life God has in himself is one directed towards an other.

Asbill shows himself a capable reader of Barth, demonstrating how God's life *ad intra* need not be affirmed at the expense of God's life *ad extra* – a temptation that contemporary Barth studies has not entirely escaped. Since aseity and freedom are tightly wound in Barth's thought, God's aseity simply cannot be understood apart from God's pronobeity; the two are dialectically ordered, so that 'the teleology of God is God's pronobeity in aseity' (p. 177). This work is a fine contribution to the field, as well as to the growing trinitarian resurgence and the recognition of Barth's place in it. Theologians working today who are about the 'retrieval' of medieval and post-Reformation scholastic thought would do well to maintain an open posture towards Barth's dialectical realism especially at points such as this – where he appropriates dogmatic abstractions critically, showing a willingness to subject them to revision in order that they not float free from the gospel event. The aseity of God need never be neglected, then, so long as the concept is made to serve the church's witness and not vice versa.

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doi:10.1017/S0036930615000472

Kevin Diller, *Theology's Epistemological Dilemma: How Karl Barth and Alvin Plantinga Provide a Unified Response* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), pp. 352. $30.00.

Kevin Diller argues that Christian theology faces an epistemic dilemma rooted in two necessary but conflicting affirmations. On the one hand,

we must affirm that the knowledge of God is a real human possibility; on the other hand, we must concede that humans are unable to secure this knowledge on their own due to their inadequacy and fallibility. So how do we claim that God truly can be known while also accounting for the intrinsic limitations of the human knower? This is the dilemma. One problem in contemporary theology is that many theologians respond to this dilemma by embracing one of the necessary affirmations at the expense of the other. Diller's alternative is to draw upon the work of Karl Barth and Alvin Plantinga to formulate a 'mutually informed Barth/Plantinga theological epistemology' which cogently addresses this dilemma without shortchanging either affirmation.

The challenge Diller faces is that, on the matter of theological epistemology, Barth and Plantinga often are presumed to be rivals rather than allies. Yet Diller insists that this presumption is a mirage arising from the distinct nature of their projects rather than foundational theological or philosophical differences. He seeks to unveil the true state of affairs by clarifying each thinker's commitments in light of the other and their respective critics. So, for example, Diller offers a careful examination of Barth's thought on natural theology, apologetics and the relationship between philosophy and theology – all areas of potential friction with Plantinga. He determines precisely what Barth affirmed and rejected on these topics and, in conversation with Barth's critics, explains why Barth did so in light of his unique commitments and goals. He then offers a close reading of Plantinga to see if a plausible interpretation of Plantinga's thought exists which will both correspond to Barth's affirmations and 'neutralize Barth's main concerns' (p. 206). The same procedure works, to a lesser degree, in reverse: a critical examination of Plantinga's philosophical arguments becomes the lens through which Barth's theological claims are clarified and directed.

The process of clarifying each thinker's epistemological claims in light of the other enriches them both, with 'Barth providing what Plantinga lacks in theological depth and Plantinga providing what Barth lacks in philosophical clarity and defense' (p. 22). The result is an overlapping set of shared fundamental commitments. Barth and Plantinga each adopt a critically realist position undergirded by a 'theo-foundational' commitment that Christian knowledge of God is grounded in God and comes solely through God's action. They agree that this knowledge comes by grace and is transformational, corporately known, personal and cognitive. Even though they both believe that this knowledge is received in and through creaturely forms, neither thinks it comes in such a way that it can be reducible to these forms. And they both are convinced that warrant for this knowledge is not dependent

upon any general theory even though this knowledge is defensible and coherent with respect to just such a theory.

This 'unified Barth/Plantinga approach' forms the basis of the philosophically refined theological epistemology that Diller believes solves theology's dilemma. His proposal presents a challenge, not only to critics of Barth and Plantinga, but also to many of their sympathetic allies. Barth and Plantinga are presumed to be rivals in part because many of their interpreters read them in a way which precludes the claims of the other. In several cases, Diller shows that such readings are simply mistaken, often due to a misunderstanding of the nuances of Barth's and Plantinga's arguments. In other cases, the process of reading Barth and Plantinga in light of one another establishes boundary lines for how their respective claims should be interpreted. One might work out the implications of Plantinga's claims about natural theology and apologetics in a certain way, for instance, precisely in order to avoid falling into the range of Barth's criticism (see pp. 209–10). The benefit of staying within such interpretative limits is the ability to appeal to the coherency and strength of the unified epistemological proposal.

Diller's constructive argument is undergirded by the remarkable clarity of his writing and argumentation. Theological epistemology is inherently complex, and perhaps especially so in the hands of Barth, Plantinga and their critics. All figures involved in the book tend to utilise the same terms and ideas in distinct yet overlapping ways. Such complexity could easily overwhelm, but Diller remains in total command throughout. He describes each figure's claims crisply and with true insight, takes measure of the central issues at stake in their thought, and engages charitably with their critics along the way. His description of Barth's theological epistemology, his rejection of natural theology, his debate with Emil Brunner, his doctrine of the *analogia fidei* and his approach to scripture could stand on their own as clear and succinct introductions to Barth's thought on these matters. The same could be said for his description of Plantinga's philosophical project and its nuances. In the foreword, Plantinga writes that he has 'learned a good deal about my own work' from Diller's volume (p. 11). I suspect that Barth would have said much the same. This volume ranks among the best books on Barth's theology published in the past decade, and it shows the promise of bringing Christian theology and Christian analytic philosophy into conversation around shared fundamental commitments.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930615000472 Published online by Cambridge University Press