

The Stranger, the Wager and the Ethics of Office

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Venue: TBC

Centre for Philosophy and Political Economy, University of Leicester

Respondent: TBC

Abstract

The ‘post-religious’ theology of Richard Kearney hinges on the ‘encounter with the radical stranger’ whom, he writes, ‘we choose, or don’t choose, to call God’. As such, Kearney’s thinking enjoys a commonality with the Levinasian ethics of the other. But Kearney finds such radical alterity unsettling and overwhelming. How, for example, should we distinguish the benevolent other from the monstrous? The moment of meeting demands judgement as well as kenosis: imagination, humour, commitment, discernment and hospitality, ‘equiprimordial aspects of a single hermeneutic arc’. Yet how are we to discern? Kearney’s move is to invoke narratives as context for his wager. My seminar explores another possible source of discernment: the ‘ethics of office’ as understood by recent work in cultural economy. The challenge is to link visions of individual moral discernment with pragmatist accounts of proliferating forms of institutional rationality, in pursuit of a genuinely helpful normative account of management ethics. My own wager is that Kearney’s work may make a valuable contribution to such discussions. My stake, visiting Leicester, is my skin.

Biography

Philip Roscoe is a Reader in management at the University of St Andrews. His research focuses on the role that markets play in contemporary organizing: how markets form, how they configure organizations, and how individuals shape – and are shaped – by market practice. He is particularly interested in the moral issues that surround markets and the discourses, valuations and justifications invoked in market settings. He has published in leading journals in the fields of sociology and management. He is committed to broader intellectual engagement in the field of management. In 2011 he was one of the winners of the inaugural *AHRC BBC Radio 3 ‘New Generation Thinkers’* scheme. His book *‘I Spend Therefore I Am’* was published by Viking (Penguin) in February 2014, and republished in paperback as *A Richer Life*; the German translation was shortlisted for *2014 Deutscher Wirtschaftsbuchpreis*. He has written for the *Guardian*, *Times Higher Education* and the *Literary Review*, and has appeared frequently on radio and television. Philip has a PhD in management, an MPhil in medieval Arabic thought and a BA in theology.

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