



Beyond the Between: The Desmondian Metaxological Way to God

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Conceptual Paper

Volume 5 Issue 2

Received Date: March 30, 2022

Published Date: April 27, 2022

DOI: 10.23880/phij-16000239

Abstract

We are living in an era that has a deep silence on the philosophy of God. One of the prominent reasons for the silence is the 'beyond' philosophies that kept God in an unreachable height and that resulted in the mere immanence. The 'immanence' philosophies have no place for God in their thinking. This article tries to revive the 'beyond' with the 'between' philosophy of William Desmond, with the help of his fourfold senses of God. The article analyses the determinate, the indeterminate and the self-determinate ways to God to arrive at the metaxological other-determinate way to God. The metaxological way indicates the beyond from the surplus overdeterminate reality of the between.

Keywords: God; Religion; Metaphysics; Equivocity

Introduction

The Postmodern era, in which we live, has a strong bent on nihilism. The 'beyond' concept - beyond metaphysics, beyond philosophy, beyond ethics, beyond God, and beyond religion - has culminated in the concept 'no', that is, no metaphysics, no philosophy, no ethics, no God, and no religion. This has a great impact on philosophy, leaving us in speculative nothingness and in philosophical diaspora. Troubled by this, William Desmond, an Irish contemporary living philosopher, ventures to reconstruct or redirect the 'beyond' concept with 'between' philosophy.

In his philosophical search, Desmond found that the problem with the modern philosophy is that it applies scientific method to philosophical discourse on God, which asserts human's absolute autonomy over the divine mystery: reason downplays mystery. For example, René Descartes argues that we need a *Mathesis Universalis* (Universal Mathematics) and declares it as the universal model for knowledge. Modernity unfolds God as merely a thought, a postulation of the rational mind and not as a deity that

surpasses human rationality.¹ Desmond's contention is that reason's movement should be towards God, its other. He affirms it by analysing three undercurrent ways of thinking and doing - determinate (univocal), indeterminate (equivocal), and self-determinate (dialectical) - to introduce the metaxological way to God.

Determinate Way to God

The determinant way to God stresses on simple sameness, an unmediated unity, say, of the self and of the other.² It entails an objectification of God, leading to absolutizing univocity,³ which is pervasive in the western philosophical tradition.⁴ This can be seen as an expression of onto-theology, as an idealized projection of the objective

1 Dennis Vanden Auweele, "Metaxological 'Yes' and Existential 'No': William Desmond and Atheism," in *Sophia*, 52 (2013), 641.

2 William Desmond, "Being Between," in *Clio*, 20/4 (1991), 317.

3 William Desmond, *Being Between: Conditions of Irish Thought*, Galway, Leabhar Breac / Centre for Irish Studies, 2008, 96.

4 William Desmond, *Desire, Dialectic, and Otherness: An Essay on Origins*, 2nd ed., Eugene, Cascade Books, 2014, 89-90.

mind.⁵ Desmond argues that the univocal determinate thinking on God is our own self-projection of power,⁶ which makes God useless from its own understanding. It makes God redundant and dispensable when we speak about the order of the world and the self.⁷

Desmond critiques the determinate way to God, because God cannot be the product of our thinking, rather God is utterly transcendent. All the attributes that we give of God is only our ideas of God and not God in itself. The determinate attributes and the ideas that we envisage on God cages God in the immanence alienating its transcendence, which is far more than the determinate way. Further, the determinate generates an oppositional dualism, an indeterminate difference between God and the world, moving away from the initial toomuchness.⁸

Desmond is aware of many forms of determinate intelligibility, such as common sense, mathematical, scientific, and so on. However, the univocal determinacy pervades all. The general attitude is, "To be is to be intelligible; to be intelligible is to be determinate; and to be determinate is to be univocal."⁹ This transcends the initial toomuchness culminating in excess of intelligible determination, where the mystery is replaced, by determinate intelligibility at the end. As a result, there is conquering of wonder and vanishing of the marvel of being, which has a great influence on the thinking about God. He suspects that we tailor God too much in terms of determinate intelligibility, which in turn, he contends, concludes by occluding God. The result would be such that the more we determine God, we end up without God, the more we relentlessly univocalize God, the more equivocally emerges, producing its own atheism.

5 William Desmond, *Perplexity and Ultimacy: Metaphysical Thoughts from the Middle*, Albany, SUNY Press, 1995, 111.

6 William Desmond, *Philosophy and Religion in German Idealism*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 2004, 109.

7 William Desmond, "On God and the Between," in L. Boeve and C. Brabant (eds.), *Between Philosophy and Theology: Contemporary Interpretations of Christianity*, Farnham, Ashgate Publishers, 2010, 116.

8 Christopher Ben Simpson, *Religion, Metaphysics, and the Postmodern: William Desmond and John D. Caputo*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2009, 103. Desmond is convinced that in the beginning, there is overdeterminacy or the primal ethos or the ethos of the between, which is shadowed by certain toomuchness, surplus, and excess and a kind of mystery pervades the overdeterminacy. The original toomuchness seems like determinate, but it exceeds all determination. It is not indeterminate either, rather it is overdeterminate that endows the promise of self-determining. Hence, there is both sameness and multiplicity in the beginning. William Desmond, "Ways of Wondering: Beyond the Barbarism of Reflection," in *Philosophy Begins in Wonder: An Introduction to Early Modern Philosophy, Theology, and Science*, ed. Michael Funk Deckard and Péter Losonszi, Eugene, Pickwick Publications, 2010, 322.

9 Desmond, *God and the Between: Illuminations, Theory and Religion*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2008, 50.

Desmond explores the western philosophical tradition, which shadows atheism of the determinate at the end, starting with the undifferentiated determinacy in the primitive time. He analyses its tremendous influence on the thinking of God, in a special way, that of Parmenides. Parmenides propagates God as a whole, absolutely one with itself, entirely homogeneous throughout, has no lack within it, a necessary being, and resting within the firm boundaries of its own well-ordered sphere. The whole is eternal, immovable, one, neither comes to be nor becomes, and eternal necessity. In addition, it is at home with itself, there is nothing beyond its own sphere, and nothing can constrain it from outside in any way. For Desmond, this way of thinking introduces the notion of 'outside', which seems to be unintelligible, thus, having a keen eye on equivocality of inside and outside, intelligible and unintelligible. He claims, here, the plurality of doubles, indicating a circle of definite and indefinite points.¹⁰

The Platonic One is attentive to another order of univocity beyond all classes of unity, distinguishing between a world of ideas and a world of copies and hence beyond all classification, which indicates the equivocality of beyond and immanent. The Platonic understanding takes God further into heights that it becomes blur for the people in the world of copies and would culminate in forgetting about the height. The Plotinian way approaches the One in terms of height, a vertical transcendence, indicating a separation of up and down, culminating in radical unity. The radical unity points towards its radical other. Desmond argues that when the One further elevates, it always retreats. Looking to the transcendent One, which is more and more elevated on high, seeming to find nothing, we return to our own self-transcendence and taste the ashes of our own nothingness, which is evident in the mathematization of the modern period.¹¹

Mathematization of nature, which marks the early modernity, has repercussions on the thinking of God, particularly dominated in the western culture. God is looked as the heightened univocity of mathematical order against heightened equivocality of the happening of the finite transience. Seeking God does not reach up to the One on high, but returns back to the immanent transcendence. The idea of world as thrown, fallen, thrown there with its own intelligibility, has culminated with the valueless thrown, which distances God from the world, a dualistic understanding of God and creation, and at the end, culminates with atheism. Desmond asserts that in modernity, God is looked at as a kind of mathematical master beyond equivocality of ourselves

10 Desmond, *God and the Between*, 53.

11 Desmond, *God and the Between* 56-61.

and the valueless thereness. The dominant figuration is that of a clockmaker, where the world is a machine, in itself has no value. It is a structure amendable to mathematical univocalization. The world is a machine concretized by the efficient power and in itself has no value, no life, and no love. The parts can be easily and clearly taken apart and seen in their connectedness. God has the power to effect, a maker of the world-machine and occasionally intervenes when the machine has a problem for the effective functioning. Hence, God is considered as the absolute mathematical univocity, source of all mechanical determination, engineers the clock of creation with eternal geometry.¹²

The mathematical master has less intimate communication with the world, because the abstraction of the world produces an abstract of God, but abstraction is slow death. There is no community between God and creation, no urging of reverence, much less love and leads to deistic theism, whose shadow, for Desmond, is scientific atheism. The long travel from the incomparable One of Plotinus to absolute mathematical univocity later results in the absolute autonomy of humans. This has created a massive gulf between God and the world, pushing God more and more on high and sinks the world low on the horizon. Confining God to this type of mathematical determinacy, makes God progressively redundant.¹³ However, Desmond is strongly convinced that God will not become redundant, because we cannot confine the original grounding fully in terms of the determinate.

Modernity, thus, wants to have a completely rational God and Desmond observes that this can end up with irrational consequences: extreme rationality ends with extreme irrationality. It lacks enough space for freedom and the overdeterminacy that releases it. For example, Leibniz was a theist, but could not offer a God of agapeic love, which guarantees freedom of the other, even to the point of coming to be evil.¹⁴ Rather, Desmond reasons that the modernity made God an object of study, objectifying God under the rational intelligibilities, with the help of the process of objectifying the subject.

Further, René Descartes affirms that faith has nothing to do with rationality, which seeks to consummate its own autonomy, wherein the mathematical determination of intelligibility comes to dominate more and more. The self-elevation of reason augments the height of religion, it goes out of sight, and now it is out of mind. It is not a compliment

to mystery, in fact, Desmond claims that it is the reversal of irrational mystery. Descartes' God becomes immanent, rather than Transcendent in Spinoza. He wonders whether the inherent intelligibility is in itself unintelligible on univocal terms. With Spinoza, the finite instrumental values become the centers of effective power, determine in their *conatus*, and later, they dominate to secure and perpetuate their own hold on being.¹⁵ The transcendent God, slowly becomes a mathematical principle, a material monad in Leibniz.

However, Kant's Transcendental univocity does not refer to God directly, but God, for Kant, remains transcendent.¹⁶ Desmond argues that Kant's transcendence itself has a dualistic attitude, finding a way 'down here' to God 'up there'¹⁷ and at the end, we are struck on this side of the dualism, 'down here'. It indirectly points towards self-transcendence. In knowing God, he gives primary place to the transcending power of self-being, forgetting God and nature.¹⁸ Desmond, thus, claims that the modern search for the transcendent One switches to self-transcendence in a complex transcendental way.¹⁹

Desmond argues that the absolute determinate way has its other, the indeterminate and the between impels the determinate to indeterminate, the more it stresses on the determinate way to God, it paves ways to its other, the indeterminate way. The urge to determine God in an absolute univocal way impels to and is enmeshed in the doubleness of equivocalities. Desmond claims that with the mathematical univocalization, we determine God intelligibly and end up making God unintelligible,²⁰ paving way for indeterminacy.

Indeterminate Way to God

The second way of the fourfold understanding of God is the indeterminate way. It urges a doubling of voices that cannot be brought into any kind of unity.²¹ The indeterminate highlights manyness, sheer plurality, fragmentation, equivocity, and calls attention to unmediated difference.²² In the unmediated difference between self and the other, the otherness recedes into unintelligibility and tends to be

15 Desmond, *God and the Between*, 66.

16 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, 277.

17 Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 277.

18 William Desmond, "Is there Metaphysics after Critique?" in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 45/2 (2005), 225.

19 Desmond, *God and the Between*, 69.

20 Desmond, *God and the Between*, 64.

21 Desmond, *Desire, Dialectic, and Otherness*, 1.

22 William Desmond, "Being, Determination, and Dialectic: On the Sources of Metaphysical Thinking," in *The Review of Metaphysics*, 48/192 (1995), 762.

12 Desmond, *God and the Between*, 62.

13 Desmond, *God and the Between*, 62-63.

14 Renee Köhler Ryan, "No Block Creation': Good and Evil in William Desmond's Augustinian Philosophy of Elemental Order," in Frederiek Depoortere - Jacques Haers, ed., *To Discern Creation in a Scattering World*, Lueven, 2013, 210.

at the opposite pole to determinacy. The oscillation moves to the indetermination, the other of the determination. In the interplay between being/between, objective/subjective, divine/human, faith/reason, unity/difference, the latter comes to dominate the former without any intermediation. The difference and the plurality is fragmented in this second way. That is, against the absolute determinate way of the univocal, the equivocal bends towards the indeterminate and the unmediated ways. In calling attention to aspects of unmediated difference, Desmond explores zones of tension and ambiguity. The indeterminate sense often helps to recognize a certain rich ambiguity in the interplay between the human and the divine.²³

By the rejection of the claims of intelligibility, Desmond does not mean to disown intelligibility completely, rather his claims always follow from the determinate intelligibility. It is not a complete negation, but an inclusion. From the interplay between determinate and indeterminate, one comes to dominate the other and perhaps the former was more forceful than the latter. Desmond is convinced that the indeterminate tells more about the primal source than the late-born reason of science and philosophy. Although, the dominant determinate philosophical tradition has looked suspiciously on the indeterminate and yet there are philosophers who have convincingly put across their ideas on the latter.²⁴ The western philosophical tradition always had a parallel thinking against the dominant determinate way of approaching the reality. Philosophers from pre-Socratic period up to now stand as valid examples of the fact and Desmond mentions a few of them, starting from Heraclitus.

Heraclitus of Ephesus is perhaps the first of the many philosophers to take the indeterminate way seriously in his effort to think about becoming.²⁵ It was sensed as a threat to intelligibility by his opponents. However, Desmond argues that in the finesse of Heraclitus, the *logos* is not denied. In the resistance of static universal determination, more complex sense of *logos* and intelligibility emerge and it is not a denial of intelligibility. Again, the *logos* of Heraclitus is dynamic and runs through all things, hence it is beyond static determinacy. It speaks about an intelligibility, which is more demanding and rigorous in its search to do justice to the complex dynamism of becoming and not entirely beyond a more complex determination.²⁶ Hence, for Desmond, Heraclitus' becoming includes being of *logos*, proving the equivocal thinking against the way of the determination.

Socrates is standardly presented as one seeking precise definitions and hence a determinist, but Desmond finds in him an equivocal philosopher. The famous Socratic irony is one such relevant philosophical expression of equivocity. Philosophical irony cannot be intelligible without the equivocal. The best example is the ambiguity of his own self-presentation: he is a dissembler, a pretender, a masked thinker, and rarely reveals himself simply and directly. He is a philosophical liar. In the human search for truth, he did not neglect the essential role of the indeterminacy. In fact, when Socrates asked his students questions pertaining to truth, he asks as if he does not know the answer, though he knows it. It looks as if he is the student and the student is the teacher. Unlike the determinate way, this way of deriving the truth from his students is indeterminate. Desmond calls him an idiotic thinker, who hides himself in his self-presentation, though what he hides is a divine interior and not the opposite. He himself equivocates about his own identity. The Sophists are the master exploiters of the indetermination. As itinerant intellectuals, their primary duty was to bring about the truth equivocally and the philosophical struggle is for the truth of the indeterminate.²⁷ Protagoras' entreaty to argue from both points of view unfolds that the truth cannot be limited to just one side of the argument. Investigating the relationship between what appears and what is real; the relation between language, thought, and reality; and discussing on the theoretical and the practical problems of living in the society are indications towards the indeterminate thinking.²⁸

The sceptics are not exemption to the indeterminacy. The articulation of indeterminacy can be found with the ancient skepticism against the repeated frustration to determine the nature of being in one noncontroversial univocal logic. Desmond mentions Pyrrho and his understanding of equipollence. Another example is of Sextus Empiricus who said that "to every *logos* an equal and opposite *logos* can be given."²⁹ It is a logistic determinacy generating its own impasse and its own opposite. There is a proposition posing contradictory proposition in itself. The determinate sense has within an indeterminate sense and for Desmond, logic of sceptics demands *epochē* of logic.³⁰

The underground man of Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevski seems like the complete opposite of Kant's man of pure reason, but rereading it one understands that the dreams of reason gives rise to such monsters. The underground man is perversely indeterminate against the absolutely

23 Desmond, "Being Between," 317.

24 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 117-120.

25 Stavros J. Baloyannis, "The Philosophy of Heraclitus Today," in *Encephalos*, 20 (2013), 2.

26 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 117.

27 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 118.

28 B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, 2.

29 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 119.

30 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 119.

mathematical determinate equation of the man. Desmond is convinced that this perversity of human is the sign of an ontological complexity beyond determinacy. It expresses indeterminacy, an ambiguity, and the transcendence of determinate univocity. "The revolt against univocal reason has reasons of which univocal reason knows nothing. We might say that the very mindlessness of univocal mind itself incites this revolt against reason."³¹ Thus, for Desmond determinate reason itself impels to the indeterminate.

Søren Kierkegaard revolts against the idealistic reason and proposes the stages of life. The experience of the limits of one stage and the struggle to move to another evidences the indeterminate sense. The movement from aesthetic to the ethical and to the religious limits the previous stage. There is no determinate way forward that can guarantee an objective *ratio* and entails a leap beyond univocal determination. This is a leap into the indeterminate; the equivocity of the indeterminate; and it is a leap beyond itself into the excess of other-being. The leap into the religious is the most terrifying, because the self-transcendence paradoxically leaps entirely beyond itself towards the absolute other. This transcendence - going beyond - germinates indeterminacy.³²

Friedrich Nietzsche offers a way beyond determinacy, which returns to the aesthetics of becoming itself. The world can be justified only as aesthetic - as a work of art - and thus an aesthetic theodicy would be the only possible way. He wants to overcome the deadening of being produced by the determinate *mathēsis* of modern science. He exemplifies the indeterminate mind in his own ways of writing and speaking and goes beyond determinate intelligibility, exposing the excess of becoming. For Desmond, Nietzsche remains captive to an aesthetic oscillation between a determinate intelligibility reaching its limits and an indeterminate poetical speech about what is more.³³

Deconstruction philosophy is understood as the reduction of all becoming to substantial determinacy. It has a tendency to deny any absolute, whether human or divine. In deconstructing a narrative, its main activity is to dissolve all absolutes. Rebelling against the meta-narratives, it sides with small-narratives. Center becomes the periphery and the periphery becomes the center, where the wholeness is put into question. It creates an ambiguity and it pervades the whole of deconstruction philosophy.³⁴ In addition, it

continues to be dragged by the hounds of negation.³⁵ The thinking of the other, though positive, is too often shaped within a certain ethos of negativity. Instead of thought thinking itself, here it is thought negating itself. The temper of deconstruction withdraws from all that is affirmative, though it posits quasi-affirmatively.³⁶ Desmond argues that in the long run, it is left with no absolutes and has resulted with claims that we can never be absolutely certain.³⁷

Blaise Pascal, according to Desmond, is one of the few modern thinkers who sought to preserve the play between determinacy and indeterminacy. His central discussion was between the *esprit géométrique* and the *esprit de finesse*. He is one of the greatest determinists of mathematical science and at the same time an indeterminist of heart. The former deals with the self-certainty of determinate mind and the latter is the source of self-transcendence and produces certain ambiguity. Pascal lives the tension of the two, where the heart implies no rejection of intelligibility, neither is it absurd. However, Desmond claims that in some way Pascal is struck with the indeterminate results and the erotic perplexity than agapeic astonishment of the between.³⁸ However, the oscillation between the determinate and the indeterminate is evident, continual without intermediation and having augmented incommensurability. Desmond quotes Thomas Samuel Kuhn to explain about the indeterminacy of incommensurability.

The concept 'paradigm' is famously introduced by Thomas Samuel Kuhn and is defined as a set of assumptions, definitions, laws, and techniques that are shared by the members of a scientific community or any particular community. According to Kuhn, no two paradigms are identical and a paradigm shift constitutes a 'gestalt switch'. In a gestalt, there are two images: a chalice and two faces facing each other. One can see the chalice or the faces and cannot see both of them simultaneously. One can see the chalice and then the other (or vice versa) and for which, the mind needs to switch from one to the other. This is called as Gestalt Switch. The movement from one to the other is abrupt and unmediated. As with the indeterminate, the stress falls on difference to the exclusion of mediation. Kuhn proposes other considerations that enter a decision, such as accuracy, scope, simplicity, coherence, consistency, and fruitfulness. There do not seem to be determinate criteria, but he calls them the norms of value. They have a constitutive ambiguity

31 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 120.

32 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 120.

33 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 120.

34 William Desmond, *Art and the Absolute: A Study of Hegel's Aesthetics*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1986, 79-80.

35 William Desmond, *Neither Deconstruction or Reconstruction: Metaphysics and the Intimate Strangeness of Being*, in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 40/1 (2000), 39.

36 Desmond, *Neither Deconstruction or Reconstruction*, 40.

37 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 121.

38 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 122-123.

or open-endedness and destroy foundations.³⁹

Desmond distinguishes the determinate thinkers and the indeterminate thinkers as theorists and lovers. The theorists often find themselves more at home with God of the philosophers and the lovers with the God of religion.⁴⁰ Deconstruction tries to address the other to thought thinking itself and stands opposed to the God of philosophers. Their gods are sometimes named as will to power, being, difference, and so on.⁴¹ Indeterminacy is the pathos of religious existence. The religious images impel one to the original, thus leaving the image and the original.⁴² Further, the theorists are stuck with objectivity and the lovers with subjectivity. Unfortunately, both of them end up in two extremes.

The determinate and the indeterminate ways are like the two sides of the same orientation to the immediate. It sees all relation as either/or, total presence/absence, total union/difference, total determinate clarity/indeterminate ambiguity. For Desmond, the mindfulness cannot be stopped with indeterminacy's mere fragments. It calls for a deeper understanding of difference, otherness, and ambiguities in the flux of being. This calls for the mediating work of the self-determinate way to God.

Self-Determination Way to God

The third of the fourfold understanding of God is the dialectical way, which at the end, culminates in self-determination. It emerges from the interplay between determinate and indeterminate ways to God. In its interplay, determinate finds porous to dualistic understanding of God; indeterminate discusses the unmediated difference between self and other, which culminates in nihilism; and the oscillation between the two, which neglects the otherness in the between, paves way to the self-determinate understanding of God. It passes beyond the dualism of the objective determinate and the subjective indeterminate ways into trans-objective and trans-subjective ways, trying to focus on the neglected otherness.⁴³

The self-determinate way, for Desmond, offers an understanding of the interplay between determinate and indeterminate. The very differentiation of the other - the

double faces, one being itself and not itself, other being itself and not itself - surpasses the determinate identity to the indeterminate unfixing. In this way, neither a univocal determinacy nor an equivocal indeterminacy makes a self-becoming, but the togetherness of the two. The way proposes that such an analysis can be applied even to the divine.⁴⁴ In fact, the self-determination culminates making God merely an immanent reality. God may be an absolute other, but may not be absolutely other, that is, it is not absolute in the sense of being purely for itself alone. We cannot elevate the absolute other to an otherness that is just the absolutization of opposition. We have seen that the finite communicates beyond itself to the infinite, so does the infinite communicate beyond itself to the finite. The identity of the divine is a kind of infinite self-othering, and self-othering towards the finite. Dialectic points our way of thinking towards the divine and it borders the divine way towards us. It calls for an attention of the intermediation of the two in the given between of finite passing and indicates beyond dualism. Desmond enumerates his stand starting from Zeno.

Zeno of Elea is considered generally as the inventor of dialectic. Zeno's intention was to defend the 'One' of Parmenides by adopting a hypothesis of many. Zeno's very philosophical strategy tries indirectly to establish the absolute One and ends with his hidden presupposition of pluralized univocity. Zeno assumes the standpoint of many against the One and works indirectly towards his own view point. In a complex interplay between sameness and difference, self and other, the dialectic is concerned with the articulation of the intelligible saying of that interplay. Desmond links the process of Zeno with the sameness of the univocity, the difference of equivocity, and the oscillation between them.⁴⁵

The negative purpose of the dialectic is evident in the sophists. They often used dialectical *technē* to make the weaker appear stronger and the stronger weaker. It can be made into an instrumentalized strategy of thought that can be directed to contradictory ends and thus used to dominate the other or the opponent. This speaks about the double possibility. Protagoras who opposed *logoi* (rational argument) to different subjects proposed, Sextus Empiricus who proposed Pyrrhonism, and Peter Abelard's *sic et non* (*Pro and Con*) are some other examples of the double possibility.⁴⁶

Immanuel Kant uses antinomies, which indicates that both of the opposites might be true, it can also mean that both might be false. Therefore, if both might be true then

39 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 125-126.

40 William Desmond, "Maybe, Maybe Not: Richard Kearney and God," in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 68/2 (2003), 100.

41 William Desmond, *Neither Deconstruction or Reconstruction: Metaphysics and the Intimate Strangeness of Being*, in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 40/1 (2000), 39.

42 William Desmond, "Religious Imagination and the Counterfeit Doubles of God," in *Louvain Studies*, 27/3 (2002), 291.

43 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 134.

44 Desmond, *God and the Between*, 103.

45 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 133-134.

46 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 135.

both might be false and this prepares for a dialectical view that both might be marked by their truth. The falsity of either might contribute to the truth of either and vice versa, disclosing a reciprocal implication between the true and the false. Later, Hegel concurs the dialectics and grasps the clue from Aristotle, who argues that a determination process is more ultimate than determinate products.⁴⁷

Hegel offers no static formalization of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, but the passing of opposites into opposites is more nuanced. It assumes an enhanced role as a way to truth. The dialectic, for him, moves from nature to history to God and he claims to articulate the logical necessity in all this. He offers dialectics as articulating the logic of the whole or the *logos* of the whole. Desmond reconstructs the Hegelian dialectic in terms of an interplay between determinacy, indeterminacy, and their transcendence. Determinacy affirms the immediate expansive plenitude of sensuous thereness. It is the aesthetic immediacy of 'that it is', that is, it is there and it is all but nothing. The rhythm of immediacy ruptures and develops into opposition as indeterminacy and returns to integrated unity as dialectic for Hegel. The 'that it is', later, becomes entirely encapsulated by pure self-determining thinking. Hegel's dialectic, at the end, assumes that Being and Thinking are one. The *dia* of *dialegein* is encompassed in a *mono-logos*, in an *auto-nomos* of thought thinking itself. The thinking being culminates in its pure immanent self-determination.⁴⁸

In the beginning, Hegel was influenced by Enlightenment and its wedding of rational science and moral autonomy; the holistic aesthetic culture of Greece; and Christianity which is questioned by some for being an authority-based religion. In the late eighteenth century, the major consideration to remember is the ambiguous place of the religion in general and Christianity specifically. The ethos of this shapes a desire for a more rationalized version of religion, where religion cannot meet the measure of reason and therefore has to find a place in the new rationalized ethos. Hegel takes his stance in defense of the modernity's immanence and rational against the duality between immanence and transcendence in the middle ages,⁴⁹ giving rise to speculative dialectics.

For Hegel, knowing means not only to be conscious of, but conscious of self in being conscious of. To know truly is always to be conscious of knowing and having known, that is, it is not just being conscious of the object, but also being conscious of the knowing self. In the mere absolute knowing, God is just like subjectivity and not the absolute subjectivity.

47 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 139-141.

48 Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 160-175.

49 William Desmond, *Hegel's God: A Counterfeit Double?* Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2003, 19-20.

Thus, God's transcendence as other is rendered as self-returning self-transcendence. For Hegel, no reach can exceed his grasp. The absolute *Geist* turns out to be within the love that loves itself in and through its own self-othering.⁵⁰ The absolutization of dialectical mediation of Hegel enters into mediation of itself and so returns to itself, forgetting the other-mediation. Desmond calls it as an erotic absolute and asserts that the erotic absolute has porosity towards the agapeic absolute, which he elaborates in the metaxological way, the other-determinate way.

Other-Determinate Way to God

The fourth of the fourfold sense is the metaxological way to God. It stresses plurality, difference and otherness over oneness and sameness while seeking a form of unity, a community. Desmond reconstructs a philosophy of God, exploring the plenitude of the beings in the between. He calls attention to those happenings in the between that exceed the closed whole of the dialectical sense of the being. In the concept of the metaxological, he discusses the excess between beings, which insinuates the infinite. He advocates an affirmative doubleness, which is a genuine plurality. Such a view of genuine doubleness or plurality places an accent on otherness even in the context of togetherness. Thus, affirming otherness and togetherness leads the metaxological way between mind and being, between self and other, between the diversity of beings as a community, as a plurality of singulars.⁵¹ In the play of determination and indetermination, the metaxological way unmasks the nature of the dependency on their other.⁵² The metaxological sense returns to the interplay of the determination, indetermination, and goes beyond the work of self-determination to the overdetermined as other.⁵³ The interplay of the determinate and indeterminate mediates a process from the overdetermined to the determinate to the indefinite to the self-determinate. For Desmond, this is contraction of the overdetermined excess and through the metaxological sense he wants to remind us of the excess that is prior to the contraction. It reminds us of the excess beyond determination, indetermination, and self-determination. In this interplay, the transcendence of being as other resurrects itself again and again. And there remains excess in the origin, in the between, and in the end.⁵⁴

The origin is beyond all determination. It gives possibility of all determinacy, ambiguity, and self-determinacy. Hence,

50 Desmond, *God and the Between* 106.

51 Simpson, *Religion, Metaphysics, and the Postmodern* 32.

52 William Desmond, "Serviceable Disposability and the Blandness of the Good," in *Ethical Perspectives: Journal of the European Ethics Network*, 5/2 (1998) 137.

53 Desmond, *Desire, Dialectic, and Otherness* 7-8.

54 Desmond, *Being and the Between* 180.

there was excess in the beginning. The later ones do not dwell deeply enough with the happening of the between relative to the excess of the origin. However, the excess still is present at the end of all determination. It drives our mindfulness to more and more determinate thinking. Even in the greatest success there is still more, still an other side to the most exhaustive determination of being, an other side transcendent to determinacy. The height of determinate knowing turns into a humble consent to the mystery of being as passing beyond all determinate knowing. The excess in the middle is evident in the play of the determinate in beings. No being can be rendered so absolutely fixed that any reserve of indeterminacy or promise of being other is completely brought to finalized thereness. Ontological freshness lives on, burns still in finite determinate beings. This freshness is being renewed in being, again and again, unclogging its relatedness to the other.⁵⁵

Desmond discovers that there is relativity between beings. One being contributes to the determination of another, another brings about the opening of yet another being. It happens in a continuous dynamic process of becoming. Beings are in their communal interplay beyond singular dialectical determination. It reveals a metaxological intermediation between beings who are open wholes unto themselves, without being completely determined in themselves. Their relativity to others and of others to them shows multiple mediations that cannot be finalized, for the ontological freshness still flares there too. Thus, metaxological sense works beyond the boundaries of finite determination. It marks an opening beyond itself towards the most ultimate other, who cannot be determinately mastered. In short, Desmond's happening of the between is not completely self-determining, but it is unmastered indeterminacy that points beyond the middle to the overdetermined excess of the origin as other. This excess is also the excess of the good, which is the excess of the end.⁵⁶ And in taking a step behind to the excess of the original good, metaxological understanding redirects towards the community of beings.

Desmond's basic contentions is that being is first given and is given into community.⁵⁷ Being is embedded in a community of many voices.⁵⁸ Among the many voices, man finds himself estranged from being, different from things, and alien to himself. Otherness stuns man long before he even begins to think.⁵⁹ The being into the community demands

being in the between, between beings. We are mindfulness of the intimate strangeness of the between. Being there in the between is not a burden for us, because we are overcome by its too muchness. It eventuates a patience to its otherness. In our patience to beings, we are released and lightened. For Desmond, we are that seed in our being mindfulness. The mindfulness indicates certain indirections directing human transcending and Desmond calls them as figurations of transcending. These indirections orient us towards the transcendence as other. Thus, we find our way to the origin by indirection.⁶⁰ He speaks of four indirections: The metaphoric, analogical, symbolic, and hyperbolic. Desmondian metaxology highlights the hyperbolic indirection.

By hyperbolic, Desmond means something exceeding in finitude, which is capable of more than the determinate finiteness. He does not mean something overdone or unusually exaggerated. Human being is a finite being, yet is too much for finitude and infinitely exceeding itself.⁶¹ He takes the understanding of 'Over' from the Greek version of *hyper*, the Latin version of *super* and the German version of *über*.⁶² Desmond re-identifies Being as Over-Being, One as Over-One, Power as Over-Power, Omniscience as Over-Minding, Good as Over-Good. In the word 'hyperbole', we find the idea of 'throwing above', or 'being thrown above' and the respective Greek word is *hyper-ballein*. In the between we are thrown, but also thrown above, above the between into the hyperbolic dimension. Direction to the superior is ingrained in the hyperbolic.⁶³ Thus, hyperboles of being are signs in immanence of that which exceeds exhaustive immanent determination or self-determination. Desmond refers to these overdetermined signs of the divine at work in the world as hyperboles of beings, which he describes as communicating in immanence what exceeds exhaustive immanent determination or self-determination.⁶⁴ Desmond elaborates the happening of the between in four ways: the marvel of the middle in first astonishment, the familiar middle, the perplexing middle, the renewed mystery of the middle in apeic mindfulness.

Thus, the metaxological way to God reconstructs the interplay between determination and indetermination. The interplay highlights a movement towards the other, unlike

55 Desmond, *Being and the Between* 180-182.

56 Desmond, *Being and the Between* 182.

57 Desmond, *Being and the Between* 195.

58 William Desmond, "Interview with Richard Eldridge," in *Ethical Perspectives*, 5/2 (1998) 287.

59 Desmond, *Desire, Dialectic, and Otherness* 5.

60 Desmond, *God and the Between* 122.

61 William Desmond, *Consecrated Love: A Philosophical Reflection on Marriage*, in *Intams Review*, 11/1 (2005) 12.

62 Cyril O'Regan, "Naming God in *God and the Between*," in *Louvain Studies*, 36 (2012) 283.

63 Desmond, "On God and the Between" 119.

64 Corey Benjamin Tutewiler, "On the Cause of Metaphysical Indeterminacy and the Origin of Being," in Christopher Ben Simpson and Brendan Thomas Sammon (eds.), *William Desmond and Contemporary Theology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017) 98.

the self-determination of the dialectical way, where Desmond resurrects the original ontological understanding of being. Being is given and is given in community. In the givenness of being, it is indirected to its origin again and again even in its return to zero. The community of beings unclogs the surplus, excess, toomuchness, and overdetermination in the happening of the between that has hyperbolic indirections towards plenitude, which in turn shows porosity towards superplenitude, the beyond. The basic contention of Desmond is that anything that is given has a giver. Being is given and has a giver. Desmond speaks of superplenitude in the reversal of the innerness and also in the teleological otherness. It can also mount the thinking of omnipresence of God and initiates a new horizon of thinking.

Conclusion

Desmond's metaxology is a continual reminder of the

need to think with faith, with patience, with openness to the otherness. *Metaxu* promises to be a resourceful inspiration for our contemporary philosophical reflection, not only in the Western context, but also in philosophy's cross-cultural dimension. I consider Desmond's metaxological as a 'movement towards' philosophy. There is a movement from finitude towards plenitude and from plenitude towards superplenitude. It moves from the surplus of the between to the beyond. It is a movement towards the other: towards the medieval thinking, especially of Augustine; towards theology, calling for a companionship of reason and faith, philosophy and theology; towards Eastern philosophy, especially of Indian philosophy; and a movement towards the middle path of Buddhism. However, the uniqueness of Desmondian metaxology is that he dwells in the between in the 'moving towards', indicating a beyond.

