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Review of "A Theology of the Sublime," by Clayton Crockett

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A THEOLOGY OF THE SUBLIME. By Clayton Crockett. New York: Routledge, 2001. Pp. xiii + 142. \$80; \$20.

The stated intent of Crockett's study is "to read Kantian critical philosophy as theology" (3). The theological optic for such reading is Tillich's notion of "ultimate concern," radicalized in terms of American "death of God" theology. Heidegger, Derrida, Deleuze, Lyotard, and Vattimo are key philosophical interlocutors for C.'s engagement with a range of texts drawn principally from the First and the Third *Critiques*, that bear upon Kant's articulation of a notion of the sublime. C. also addresses claims that Milbank and other proponents of Radical Orthodoxy make about the Kantian sublime as a central token of the modernity from which God is absent. C. agrees that the sublime is central to the project of modernity but argues that Milbank "recoils from the theological implications of this insight" (28) which, on C.'s reading of Kant, places the radically decentering power of imagination at the core of subjectivity.

The adequacy of C.'s philosophical analysis of Kant turns on the plausibility of efforts to exploit *aporias* in Kant's texts in service of a postmodern fissuring of subjectivity. C.'s use of these efforts signals the importance of Kant's work as a locus for identifying inner tensions in the projects of both modernity and postmodernity, but does not yield much that is useful for discerning the actual lineaments of Kant's critical philosophy. Even more problematic is C.'s theological proposal, which takes it as given that "traditional" theology—i.e., one grounded upon the faith of the Church—has been rendered irrelevant, if not impossible, by contemporary intellectual culture. C. acknowledges that his alternative—"the most negative of negative theologies" (112), emergent upon a fractured subjectivity of imagination and desire that overthrows all boundedness and yields only and at most an immanent God—bears the stamp of Feuerbach and Freud. He concludes, with Lacan: "God is (the) unconscious" (111).

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ON BEING HUMAN: U.S. HISPANIC AND RAHNERIAN PERSPECTIVES. By Miguel Díaz. Faith and Culture. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001. Pp. xvii + 156. \$25.

This revision of Miguel Díaz's dissertation convincingly argues that a dialog between emerging U.S. Hispanic theologies and the theological vision of Karl Rahner can enrich both perspectives. Beginning with an overview of contemporary U.S. Hispanic theology, D. highlights points of convergence and diversity within U.S. Hispanic thought to illustrate its diversity. This overview allows him to characterize U.S. Hispanic self-understanding and experience in general terms without falling into a reductionistic essentialism.

Two themes consistently emerge in D.'s development of U.S. Hispanic theological sensibilities: (1) attention to the role of the particular cultural matrix in shaping the self-understanding of the individual person before God, and (2) the awareness permeating U.S. Hispanic culture that local, particular realities in general and the distinctive religious practices shaping that culture in particular are sacramentally charged. They are vehicles of grace.

These themes, finely elaborated in chapters 1–3, set the stage for the exposition of Rahner's theological anthropology in chapter 4, where D. attends to how the essentialistic, transcendental anthropology of Rahner's earlier years evolved in his postconciliar writings, as he gave greater attention to the particularity of human experience. This observation lends greater weight to D.'s thesis that Rahner's theology can enter into fruitful dialog with emerging contextual theologies, thereby paving the way for the "conversation" presented in the fifth and final chapter. There D. demonstrates the thesis presented in his introduction that U.S. Hispanic theologies can find "further grounding in the Catholic tradition" (xiv) by drawing on Rahner's transcendental anthropology and theology of grace, and that Rahner's transcendental anthropology acquires breadth, particularity, and concreteness when read through the lens of U.S. Hispanic experience.

Regrettably, this fine work suffers from multiple editorial oversights. The