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Review: Talking About God: Exploring the meaning of religious life with Kierkegaard, Buber, Tillich and Heschel (by Daniel F. Polish)

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Daniel F. Polish, *Talking about God: Exploring the Meaning of Religious Life with Kierkegaard, Buber, Tillich, and Heschel*. The Center for Religious Inquiry Series. Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2007. Pp. 133. \$21.99.

This book's argument is evident in the "Preface" and the "Conclusion," though not clearly in its body. In the preface, Polish notes the increase in interfaith dialogues and repeats the oft-heard lament that such dialogues frequently "lack substance and challenging content" (p. xii). He argues that his analysis of the thought of Kierkegaard, Buber, Tillich, and Heschel can lead to a more substantive interaction with the beliefs and especially the experiences that lie at the heart of both Christianity and Judaism (and perhaps at the heart of other religions as well).

The body of the book is comprised of four chapters that sequentially deal with the thought of the aforementioned authors. The exposition of these thinkers is not a detailed analysis of their respective philosophies but, rather, an overview that eventually arrives at the same two points for each thinker: the acknowledgement that the true nature of God transcends human comprehension, and the concordant turn to an analysis of human experience of the divine. The former is seen as the cause of the latter, since each of these thinkers is portrayed as shifting the focus from "what cannot be known . . . to what can" (p. 126). This, in turn, leads to the conclusion that, although particular religious traditions are of value, of even greater value is the ultimate reality toward which each symbolically points. Objections to this viewpoint are not addressed.

Since many readers might skip over the preface, and since the conclusion is only three pages, the book's argument, its apparent *raison d'être*, could be missed. Nonetheless, even those readers who miss the argument will still enjoy the journey. The book is a very-well-written introduction to the aforesaid aspects of these influential writers, so much so that it verges on devotional. It would be excellent reading for the intellectual nonspecialist and would also be suitable as collateral reading for use in undergraduate classes on existentialism or interreligious relations.

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