

Volume 2, no. 1 | January 2014

RADICAL ORTHODOXY

Theology, Philosophy, Politics

Radical Orthodoxy:

Theology, Philosophy, Politics

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Radical Orthodoxy: Theology, Philosophy, Politics

FOUCAULT'S POLYPHONIC GENEALOGIES AND RETHINKING EPISTEME CHANGE VIA MUSICAL METAPHORS

Cynthia Nielsen

I. FOUCAULT: A POSTMODERN KANTIAN OR PARODIC NIETZSCHEAN?

Under the pseudonym Maurice Florence, Foucault writes that if it is possible for him to find a “home in the philosophical tradition,” then his at least semi-comfortable dwelling place is “within the *critical* tradition of Kant, and his undertaking could be called *A Critical History of Thought*.”¹ “Florence” then explains what comprises a Foucauldian critical history of thought. To begin with, such a history must not be equated with a history of

¹ Maurice Florence [Foucault's pseudonym], “Foucault, Michel, 1926–,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, trans. Catherine Porter and ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 314.

ideas; rather, if we understand thought as “the act that posits a subject and an object in their various possible relations,” then Foucault’s project is “an analysis of the conditions under which certain relations between subject and object are formed or modified, to the extent that these relations are constitutive of a possible knowledge.”² Clearly, with his choice of terminology, Foucault is evoking Kantian resonances. Reference, for example, to “conditions” in conjunction with what constitutes “possible knowledge,” brings to mind Kantian concerns; yet, as “Florence” continues his explanation we realize that the Kantian terminology has been infused with new meanings. For example, in contrast with Kant’s focus upon stable, transcultural structures of the human mind that make possible and intelligible the objects of our experience, Foucault’s critical history of thought is not concerned with “defining the formal conditions of a relation to objects”; nor is it “a matter [...] of determining the empirical conditions that at a given moment might have permitted the subject in general to become conscious of an object already given in reality.”³ Rather, with an emphasis on historical specificities, local context, and the contingent, mutable nature of our existence, Foucault is interested in how a subject comes to be a particular kind of subject at a particular moment in history. As he explains,

the question is one of determining what the subject must be, what condition is imposed on it, what status it is to have, and what position it is to occupy in reality or in the imaginary, in order to become the legitimate subject of one type of knowledge or another. In short, it is a matter of determining its mode of “subjectivization.”⁴

Correlative to this process of subjectivization is the process of objectivization. That is, the subject itself, as the result of the emergence of various truth games—the rules structuring discursive fields and practices and thus creating the context

² Ibid., 314.

³ Ibid., 314–15.

⁴ Ibid.

for statements to be seen as true or false—becomes an object of possible knowledge. Here the idea is to analyze why, for instance, certain practices, institutions, and disciplines give rise to specific objects of knowledge. The principal objects in view are, of course, subjects. As “Florence” explains, “Foucault also tried to analyze the constitution of the subject as it might appear on the other side of a normative distribution and become an object of knowledge—as an insane, ill, or delinquent individual.”⁵ Since institutions, along with established disciplinary practices, tend to produce and to articulate norms, Foucault’s study of the subject-turned-object of knowledge involves examinations of psychiatric practices, the penal system, and other related fields that problematize subject-objects. Determining a subject’s mode of objectivization thus entails “determining under what conditions something can become an object of a possible knowledge, how it could be problematized as an object to be known, to what procedure of division it could be subjected, and what part of it is considered pertinent.”⁶ In short, such an approach once again recalls Kantian themes, but themes re-harmonized, transposed, and translated in order to address post-Kantian philosophical concerns.

In addition to his Kantian lineage, others emphasize Foucault’s Nietzschean heritage. Often when his Nietzschean notes are stressed, a dissonant and somewhat sinister Foucault emerges, one whose portrayal of power relations is more or less a postmodern variation on the will to power and the death of “Man” themes, both of which in some sense presuppose the death of “metaphysics.”⁷ For example, in his essay, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Foucault opposes the genealogist to the metaphysician, or at least to the

⁵ Ibid., 316.

⁶ Ibid., 315.

⁷ I am not, of course, denying Nietzsche’s influence on Foucault. After all, Foucault himself acknowledges his indebtedness to Nietzsche, whose insights no doubt aided the development of Foucault’s project.

historian whose account depends upon metahistorical criteria. The task of the genealogist is *not* "an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities";⁸ nor does it presuppose the "existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession."⁹ Rather, the genealogist attentive to the contours, fissures, fractures, and rugged topography of various historical landscapes must, for the sake of accurate analyses, recoil from placing his "faith in metaphysics."¹⁰ If he does so, he will find that not only do the purported static essences "behind things" not exist as assumed, but likewise "their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms."¹¹ As if these claims are not sufficiently scandalous, Foucault continues,

[e]xamining the history of reason, he [the genealogist] learns that it was born in an altogether "reasonable" fashion—from chance;¹² devotion to truth and the precision of scientific methods arose from the passion of scholars, their reciprocal hatred, their fanatical and unending discussions, and their spirit of competition—the personal conflicts that slowly forged the weapons of reason.¹³ Further, genealogical analysis shows that the concept of liberty is an "invention of the ruling classes"¹⁴ and not fundamental to man's nature or at the root of his attachment to being and truth.¹⁵

⁸ Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 78.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, "Reason," in *The Dawn of Day* (New York: Gordon Press, 1974), no. 123.

¹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (New York: Gordon Press, 1974), no. 34.

¹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow* (1880), in *Complete Works* (New York: Gordon Press, 1974), no. 9.

¹⁵ Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 78–9.

With this passage it appears that not only does reason itself have a history, a narrative of its various emergences and culturally contingent instantiations, but freedom as well is a ruse and is in no way constitutive of what it is to be a human. For those who have not condemned metaphysics to the flames, these statements paint a rather bleak and despairing picture. However, one of the difficulties with this passage—and the essay as a whole—is discerning precisely where Nietzsche ends and Foucault begins. In other words, is every conclusion voiced in the text an expression of Foucault's own position, or is he offering a detailed, sympathetic reading of Nietzsche? If the latter is the case (and I tend to favor this suggestion), then one need not equate every aspect, perspective, and stance articulated therein with Foucault's own position, much less with his later views on freedom, resistance, and the interrelation between freedom and thought.

So within what genealogical line should one situate Foucault with respect to the Western philosophical tradition? Those wanting an unambiguous, univocal answer to this question shall no doubt be disappointed with my response and even frustrated with my improvisational "methodology." That is, my purpose in mapping out the diverse interpretations of Foucault that follow is not to come to a definitive stance as to which one gets Foucault "right." Rather, it is to highlight the complexity of Foucault's thought and the rich, polysemous texture of his writings, to show the diverse philosophical traditions upon which he draws to develop his own distinctive, and not easily categorized project, and lastly, to identify key Foucauldian themes worthy of continued reflection and dialogical development. My own contribution to the Foucauldian problematic which surfaces consists in offering various musical analogies—some concrete, others quite abstract—so that we might hear new ways of harmonizing philosophical problems dating back (at least) to Plato. That is, how ought we harmonize the

relationship between the universal and the particular—or as our dialogue partners put it, the transcendental and the historical?

II. A METHODOLOGICAL SKETCH

In addition to Kantian and Nietzschean undertones, others, as we shall see, interpret Foucault in relation to the phenomenological tradition, comparing and contrasting his expanded archaeology-plus-genealogy project with key themes in Husserl, as well as later thinkers influenced by, yet departing from, Husserl in significant ways. As my brief sketch of some of Foucault's sources and influences suggests, understanding Foucault's relationship with the Enlightenment, modernity, and various thinkers associated with these socio-political movements, as well as the wide-ranging intellectual currents constituting them, is a notoriously difficult task. In what follows, I shall engage three of Foucault's commentators, summarizing and critically interacting with their very different interpretations of his work. I begin with Béatrice Han-Pile, whose book, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*, has become standard reading in Foucault scholarship.¹⁶ In addition, I engage two more recent and lesser-known commentators, Kevin Thompson and Colin Koopman. I have chosen Thompson and Koopman as dialogue partners because both challenge crucial elements constituting a rather entrenched and negative interpretation of Foucault—what one might call the “consensus” view. Specifically, neither Thompson nor Koopman views Foucault's late work as a radical departure from

¹⁶ Although it may seem counterintuitive given Han-Pile's prominence in the literature and the fact that my present purposes intersect more with the problem that the lesser figures foreground, I devote significant space to explaining their positions. In addition, because the Thompson/Koopman exchange brings to the fore a crucial theoretical tension in Foucault's project, a detailed mapping of their respective views is required. Having explicated and commented upon their interpretations, I am poised to offer my own contribution as a possible way forward.

his earlier analyses, nor do they interpret his notion of power as merely or primarily repressive.¹⁷ Likewise, as will eventually become clear, both highlight themes that allow me to develop my own “musical corrective” as new metaphor for thinking through the complex of problem related to *epistemai* change. Koopman, for example, draws our attention to Foucault’s emphasis on the contingent and thus potentially transformable character of subjectivities. Thompson, like Koopman, sees Foucault as concerned with how we have come to be who we are at present. Yet, contra Han-Pile, Thompson argues for a more integrative view of the transcendental and historical. Though all three thinkers present diverse and at times incompatible readings of Foucault’s texts, each provides helpful explications of essential Foucauldian themes—for example, his understanding of power as productive and not simply repressive, his introduction of the historical *a priori*, his relation to the phenomenological tradition and the Kantian tradition, the relationship of archaeology to genealogy, and his notion of problematizations.

Before directly engaging my first commentator, let me sketch briefly how my dialogue with these three thinkers will facilitate my own improvisations on Foucault. Han-Pile, as we shall see, concludes that Foucault has so redefined the transcendental by historicizing the *a prioris* as to evacuate it of its traditional meaning, thus effectively reducing it to the historico-empirical dimension. Thompson agrees that Foucault has in fact historicized the *a prioris*; nonetheless, he views these structures as retaining a transcendental function. After all, they, like Kantian *a priori* structures, serve as the conditions for the possibility of objects of experience appearing intelligibly to us. The difference, however, is that Foucauldian *a priori* structures are mutable and *episteme*-specific. Thompson

¹⁷ See, for example, Kevin Thompson, “Historicity and Transcendentality: Foucault, Cavailles, and The Phenomenology of the Concept,” *History and Theory* 47 (2008): 1–18. See also, Colin Koopman, “Revising Foucault: The History and Critique of Modernity,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 36 (2010): 545–65.

concludes that one ought not construe the relation between the transcendental and the historical as a rigid dichotomy, but one ought instead interpret it, as he claims Foucault does, in a more integrative manner. Koopman, in contrast to both Han-Pile and Thompson, sees Foucault as ridding his project completely of any transcendental tainting and rendering it all the better for having done so. According to Koopman's interpretation, Foucault's expansion of archaeology to include genealogy allows him to account for how *epistemai* change over time. In an exchange between the two, Thompson challenges Koopman's reading of Foucault, with the former claiming that purely historicized *epistemai* would seem to unfold like a series of efficient causes describable in the language of pure physics; yet, given Foucault's affirmation—particularly in his later works—of human freedom and the reciprocal relations between freedom and power and freedom and resistance,¹⁸ such a conclusion is less than desirable, as it renders Foucault's position incoherent. Koopman responds to Thompson's charge by asserting that one need not understand the transformations of *epistemai* over time merely in terms of efficient causality à la pure physics; rather, they can be understood as historical states of affairs providing the conditions of possibility for the emergence of various discourses, practices, and so forth. With this reply, Koopman has not explained precisely how Foucault's genealogical method sufficiently addresses Thompson's critique. Toward the end of my essay, I build upon Koopman's insights and attempt to clarify the role of genealogy via a series of musical analogies in order to address Thompson's concerns. With these introductory remarks in view, I begin with the first commentator, Béatrice Han-Pile.

¹⁸ See, for example, Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1982): 777–795.

III. FOUCAULT: A FAILED PHENOMENOLOGIST?

Han-Pile reads Foucault as a failed transcendental phenomenologist of sorts, one who attempted to solve certain tensions bequeathed by Kant and taken up by the phenomenological tradition.¹⁹ Principal among these tensions is how to make sense of the relation between the ever-shifting historico-empirical realm, the phenomena, and the ever-fixed transcendental realm, the noumena. In a move that simultaneously places him within a Kantian trajectory and yet clearly distinguishes his project from Kant's, Foucault historicizes the *a priori*s.²⁰ That is, for Foucault, the *a priori*s of each historical epoch or *episteme* are neither ahistorical nor transcultural but are instead subject to change and in fact do change; the *a priori*s are not static but rather are dynamic. As Han-Pile puts it, Foucault sets forth "the hypothesis of an *a priori* fully given in history, which transforms itself with it, and which nevertheless somehow lies beyond it in defining the conditions of possibility, themselves variable, from which the knowledge of an epoch can and must form itself."²¹ Given the at least seemingly puzzling, yet no doubt innovative, character of his proposal, a crucial part of Foucault's project becomes a quest to provide a compelling account of his unique formulation of historical *a priori*s of experience.

According to Han-Pile, both his archaeological and his genealogical methods prove unsuccessful for the task. During his archaeological phase, a central aim of which was to provide "a coherent response to the question of the conditions of

¹⁹ See, for example, Béatrice Han [now, Han-Pile], *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*, trans. Edward Pile (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

²⁰ See also, Amy Allen's helpful discussion of Foucault's relationship to Kant in her book, *The Politics of Our Selves: Power, Autonomy, and Gender in Contemporary Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), esp. chapter two, where she offers insightful interpretations of Foucault's earlier work on Kant's *Anthropology*, as well as *The Order of Things*.

²¹ Han [Han-Pile], *Foucault's Critical Project*, 4.

the possibility of knowledge,"²² Foucault's failed attempts to theoretically ground his project led him to abandon this method of inquiry and to develop a new one, a genealogical method. During his genealogical phase, we encounter the power-knowledge couplet and are introduced to topics now considered as standard Foucauldian themes: disciplinary practices, socio-political mechanisms and apparatuses, biopower, regimes of truth, and normalization. Whereas the archaeological period had a distinctively, at times narrowly qualified and discursive epistemological character and focus, the genealogical period broadens the field of inquiry to include the ways in which socio-cultural practices shape and form knowledge, the objects of knowledge, institutions, power complexes, and subjectivities. Although acknowledging that "the genealogical reinterpretation of the historical *a priori* is one of the most fertile elements in Foucault's work," Han-Pile nonetheless concludes that it too "display[s] the same lack of coherence" as his failed method of archaeology.²³ In short, despite his efforts to escape the dichotomy thematized by Kant, Foucault's re-articulations remain Janus-faced, torn in two opposing directions, one transcendental, the other historico-empirical. Stated more precisely, his attempts to reintroduce the transcendental are unmasked as little more than the empirical in transcendental disguise.²⁴

In the third part of her book Han-Pile discusses Foucault's final phase, variously labeled in the literature as the care of the self, the aesthetics of existence, the technologies of self, and the (re)turn to the subject. On Han-Pile's reading, Foucault's late work on the active self-constituting subject cannot be

²² Ibid., 68.

²³ Ibid., 144, 145.

²⁴ For a different reading of Foucault's notion of historical *a prioris*, see Philipp W. Rosemann, "The Historicization of the Transcendental in Postmodern Philosophy," in *Die Logik des Transzendentalen: Festschrift für Jan A. Aertsen zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Martin Pickavé, 701–13 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), esp. 74.

reconciled with his view of the (expelled) subject and the (socially constructed) subjectivities in the archaeological and genealogical periods. Not only are these different subjects un-harmonizable, but likewise the self-constituting subject brings us once again to the irreconcilability of transcendentalism and the historico-empirical realm. In the last phase of his work, Foucault focuses his analyses on an active subject which constitutes itself through the non-coerced activities of self-reflexivity and self-recognition. For Han-Pile, the articulation of this new subject presents us with a seemingly irresolvable issue, namely, Foucault's final "definition of the subject and of subjectivation seems implicitly to revive the transcendental understanding that archaeology had always sought to banish, [...] How is it possible to return to the idea of a constitutive subjectivity without reopening the aporiae of transcendentalism?"²⁵ In other words, it appears that once again, Foucault's attempts to ground the historical *a priori*s fail because here he makes the very ahistorical or suprahistorical move that he had condemned in his archaeological works with respect to Kant and the later phenomenological tradition. Summarizing her findings in the final pages of chapter six, Han-Pile states,

Foucault's constant insistence on the historicity and plurality of the different understandings of truth, as well as the attention he gives to the study of the historical development of their relations with power, have as a paradoxical counterpart an ahistorical and monolithic conception of *recognition* as the agent of the constitution of the self. [...] Despite his efforts, his last work remains haunted by a pseudo-transcendental understanding of the subject, in which the structure of recognition, although experiencing different historical contents, nonetheless appears to function *in itself* as an unthematized *a priori*.²⁶

²⁵ Han [Han-Pile], Foucault's Critical Project, 11.

²⁶ Ibid., 186–7.

IV. FOUCAULT: A SEMI-SUCCESSFUL PHENOMENOLOGIST?

Kevin Thompson also places Foucault within the phenomenological tradition; yet, contra Han-Pile, he argues that Foucault's efforts to bridge the gulf between pure transcendentalism and historico-empirical banality produce a sound project whose coherence

lies in its development of a historical methodology to unearth the stratum of experience that governs the thought and practice of the epochs that have shaped the present age. [...] Foucault's research is dedicated to unearthing the transcendental-historical conditions in and through which we have come to be what we are. It therefore stands squarely within the broader tradition of transcendental philosophy. It seeks to isolate the strictures that govern knowledge and practice, the work of critique, so that we can clearly see where and how we might begin to constitute ourselves otherwise, the task of enlightenment.²⁷

Several aspects of this passage are worth highlighting. Thompson references Foucault's emphasis on the "transcendental-historical conditions in and through which we have come to be what we are."²⁸ Although there are many ways one might engage Foucault's contributions with respect to these conditions, Thompson singles out the historical *a priori* and defines the concept as follows: "[it is] the historical set of rules that serve as the conditions for the emergence and interrelations of the experience of discursive and nondiscursive bodies."²⁹ As Thompson explains, as principles, the historical *a priori*s are "neither physical causes nor empirical realities." Rather, they are best understood as

²⁷ Thompson, "Historicity and Transcendentalism," 18.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 2.

the set of requirements that various kinds of knowledge and ways of acting had to fulfill in order to be counted as valid instances of knowing and acting, and that the objects and events involved in these forms of knowledge and action had to meet in order to be counted as existing entities and occurrences at all. In this sense, what Foucault's historical studies tracked were the necessary structures by virtue of which thinking, doing, and being become possible. In a word, then, the rules Foucault sought were transcendental.³⁰

Here problems enter for many commentators and critics of Foucault's work, Han-Pile included. In the Western philosophical tradition, by and large, to claim that structures—the *a priori*—are “transcendental” has meant that they are atemporal, immutable, universal, and necessary. Thus, for many, it seems that Foucault's coupling of “historical” and “*a priori*” produces a confused, muddled, contradictory concept—or he has simply redefined the notion of transcendental structures to such a degree that a new concept has been introduced. There is a real sense in which Foucault has in fact developed a new concept; nonetheless, it is not without reason that he retains the term *a priori*. In light of Foucault's own placement of his work within the Kantian tradition, one can see how he is both indebted to and distinguished from Kant. That is, just as Kant emphasizes the necessity of positing *a priori* structures—the two forms of intuition and the twelve concepts of the understanding—as the *conditions* for the possibility of objects of experience appearing intelligibly to us, Foucault also stresses the need for *a priori* structures *as conditions* for the same reason; yet Foucault, in contrast to Kant, claims that these structures are not transcultural or immutable but rather are dynamic and specific to particular historical periods.³¹ As Thompson observes,

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ See also, Rosemann, “The Historicization of the Transcendental in Postmodern Philosophy.” Rosemann provides a helpful description, as well as an analogy elucidating Foucault's improvisation on the transcendental theme, see esp. 705.

"Foucault held that specific sets of transcendental rules, different conditions for thought, action, and being, can be shown to define different historical epochs."³²

If transcendental *a priori* structures change from one historical period to the next, have they not in the end been reduced, as Han-Pile might say, to historico-empirical regularities? According to Thompson, one need not understand the relationship between transcendentalism and historicity in such a rigid, dichotomous manner. Rather than set the two in opposition to one another, Foucault's project attempts "to grasp the simultaneity of historicity and transcendentalism."³³ Thompson goes so far as to say that the "philosophical soundness of Foucault's project" rests on whether or not he successfully charts a "way of passage between the Scylla of the timeless universality of the transcendental and the Charybdis of the mundane contingency of the historical, a pathway that integrates the necessity of the transcendental with the bounded specificity of the historical."³⁴ Though I will not rehearse all the details here, Thompson makes a strong case for situating Foucault within the Cavaillèsian strand of the Husserlian phenomenological tradition.

In short, Thompson argues that Foucault himself, as is evidenced in the Introduction he wrote for the English translation of Canguilhem's book, *The Normal and the Pathological*, distinguishes between a "philosophy of experience, of sense and of subject," whose representatives include Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, and a "philosophy of knowledge, of rationality and of the concept,"³⁵ whose representatives include Cavaillès, Koyré, and Canguilhem.³⁶ Having made his

³² Thompson, "Historicity and Transcendentalism," 2.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Michel Foucault, "Introduction by Michel Foucault," in *The Normal and the Pathological*, by Georges Canguilhem, trans. Carolyn R. Fawcett and Robert S. Cohen, 7–24. Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1978, repr. (New York: Zone Books, 1989), 8.

³⁶ Thompson, "Historicity and Transcendentalism," 6.

initial division between a philosophy of experience and a philosophy of the concept and marking Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* as the event and text through which "phenomenology entered France," Foucault underscores the differences between the Sartrean and the Husserlian inflections of phenomenology. "Whatever they may have been after shifts, ramifications, interactions, even rapprochements, these two forms of thought in France have constituted two philosophical directions which have remained profoundly heterogeneous."³⁷ With respect to Husserl, Foucault locates a defining moment in a question posed by the former in two of his texts, *Cartesian Meditations* and *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy*. In these texts, Husserl raises questions about "the relations between the 'Western' project of a universal development of reason, the positivity of the sciences and the radicality of philosophy."³⁸ Along the same lines, in his essay, "What is Critique?," having just discussed the Frankfurt School and the Hegelian Left's critique of positivism, rationalism, *technè*, and the ways in which these are connected to modern forms of domination, Foucault highlights the fact that "Husserl, in 1936, referred the contemporary crisis of European humanity to something that involved the relationships between knowledge and technique, from *épistèmè* to *technè*."³⁹ In other words, in Husserl we find already a calling into question of a supposed "pure reason" and "objectivity," and a recognition that knowledge, power relations, and socio-political technologies are intimately related.

Foucault, of course, situates his project within the trajectory of the philosophy of the concept. That is, he embraces Cavallès's critique of Husserl's static notion of consciousness and thus opts for a dynamic consciousness and a modified

³⁷ Foucault, "Introduction," in *The Normal and the Pathological*, 8–9.

³⁸ Ibid., 11.

³⁹ Foucault, "What is Critique?," in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, 41–81 (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), 51, 52.

methodology that is "able to get at the profoundly eruptive historicity of science [as well as other disciplines] itself."⁴⁰ In contrast to a philosophy of consciousness (Husserl), Cavaillès's approach, a philosophy of the concept, posits an isomorphic structural relation between the nature of scientific knowledge and its transcendental foundation.

[S]ince the eruptive movement of historical mutation is endemic to the very nature of scientific knowledge, it must also be inherent in the transcendental field that grounds such knowledge, for otherwise this stratum would not be the foundation for a form of knowing that develops in this way. It follows from this that the transcendental must itself be alterable, changeable, and historical for it to be the condition for the possibility of scientific inquiry.⁴¹

Thus, on Cavaillès's view the relation between the historical and the transcendental is not one of segregation but one of integration.

Granting the potential benefits of a more integrated view, does not Cavaillès's position once again bring us back to a critique à la Han-Pile, namely, that the transcendental has lost its exalted status and has been reduced to the historical? Thompson does not seem to think so and paints a more optimistic picture for the fate of the transcendental, claiming that Cavaillès's historically-friendly phenomenology of the concept does not forsake the transcendental field. Rather, instead of turning to Husserl's "concept of intentionality conceived as a tranquil stream,"⁴² it looks to a new kind of archaeology in which phenomenology unveils "the seemingly timeless domain of science to expose the movement of transcendental historicity at work within it,"⁴³ and in so doing forges a path for "a new form of eidetic description: a phenomenology of ruptural development."⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Thompson, "Historicity and Transcendentality," 10.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 11.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 12.

In no way discounting his methodological contributions and broadening of the phenomenological tradition, Cavaillès's project, as Thompson notes, remains sketchy and in need of further elaboration.

Both Canguilhem and Foucault, albeit in distinctive ways, take up Cavaillès's phenomenology of the concept, improvising upon and developing Husserlian-Cavaillèsian motifs for their respective purposes. In particular, I want to focus upon two significant motifs: the historical *a priori* and archaeology as method. In contrast with Canguilhem, who was concerned with the immanent rules of scientific discourse for determining which statements count as true, Foucault was concerned not only with whether a statement counts as true or false but also with what makes possible its showing up as a statement that can be counted as true or false. As a result, Foucault's inquiries focus upon the circumscriptive background "space" that allows various discourses and statements to emerge in the first place. This circumscriptive space—or, to use Foucault's terminology, the historical *a prioris* of various epochs—consists of sets of rules or standards which determine not which statements are veridical (*dire vrai*) but which statements (and ultimately non-discursive practices as well) are in the true (*dans le vrai*).⁴⁵ Because this distinction highlights an important difference between Foucault and Canguilhem, as well as some of Foucault's distinctive philosophical contributions, I shall devote a fair amount of textual "space" to a more sustained reflection on it.

For Foucault, to be in the true is intimately connected with what he calls the "acceptability" of truth and the "acceptability of a system" (for example, the penal system, the mental health system, etc.).⁴⁶ Acceptability conditions are those conditions that allow a statement to show up as a recognizable statement

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Foucault, "What is Critique?", 61.

while abstracting from the statement's truth value; as Han-Pile puts it, they are the "conditions of possibility of predication itself."⁴⁷ Thus, for Foucault, a proposition *dans le vrai* belonging to a particular discipline—biology, music, physics, etc.—can be either true or false. Understanding the function of acceptability conditions and what it means for a statement to be *dans le vrai* provides a hermeneutical lens for interpreting Foucault's claim, "[a] discipline is not the sum total of all the truths that may be uttered concerning something; it is not even the total of all the truths that may be accepted, by virtue of some principle of coherence and systematization."⁴⁸ For example, the claim that race is a bio-behavioral essence determinative of one's intellectual and moral value, while considered true in the past but in reality was false then (as well as now) and thus did not have the actual status of *dire vrai*, nonetheless, qualified as *dans le vrai*. Moreover, because of the claim's widespread acceptance across several disciplines, even though false, its detrimental influence upon society was significant. Lastly, a statement qualifying as *dire vrai*, the notion of which suggests Foucault's openness to the possibility of some kind of objective truth, can, paradoxically, be both true (*dire vrai*) and not in the true (*dans le vrai*).⁴⁹ For example, the widely accepted (as true, and in my opinion, actually true) contemporary claim that race is a social construction—a claim also made by minority voices a century earlier but "unheard" by the dominant discourses—in contrast with the dominant nineteenth-century belief of racialized essentialism, would have been an example of a statement qualifying (given what we know now) as both *dire vrai* yet not *dans le vrai*. That is, the claim that race is a social

⁴⁷ Han [Han-Pile], Foucault's Critical Project, 81.

⁴⁸ Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," in the Appendix to *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 223.

⁴⁹ It is also the case that a statement can be false and yet in the true (*dans le vrai*); such was the case with the aforementioned dominant view of race as a bio-behavioral racialized essence in the nineteenth century. It passed the "acceptability test," yet it was clearly false.

construction would not have “shown up” as a serious possibility given the acceptability criteria of the relevant disciplines of the past era. Today, of course, the statement holds the status of both a statement *dans le vrai* (in the truth) and an instance of *dire vrai* (saying the truth).⁵⁰ All this simply highlights the fact that, as is the case with many scientific, religious, philosophical, and artistic discoveries and innovations, genuinely true statements can be and have been rejected in their own time. That is, true propositions uttered in one historical period may be rendered unacceptable and thus are unable to be heard and given serious consideration; yet, it is possible that in a subsequent historical period, when the acceptability conditions have been reconfigured so as to allow such statements to sound, the statement can and will at that time be judged as true and may even actually be true.⁵¹

⁵⁰ As Han-Pile notes, Foucault seems to allow for the possibility of objective truth at least in the realm of scientific discourse (see, for example, *Foucault's Critical Project*, 80). In addition, she states that although Foucault does not discuss the traditional notion of truth as “*adequatio rei et intellectus*,” he in no way forecloses the possibility of an historical referent to which propositions may refer (*ibid.*, 81). Han-Pile goes on to say, “[i]t is rather surprising to find in an apparent relativist like Foucault the underlying idea that such an ‘objective’ truth exists; but in fact, this conception was already partially presupposed by the archaeological method. Indeed, Foucault never denied that the claims he examined had different truth values; his point was that these truth-values were not relevant to archaeological analysis. The bracketing of all normative judgments, which is the initiatory act of archaeology, is not in itself a *denial* of the possibility of a norm. On the contrary, it only makes sense as a *bracketing* by assuming that there is indeed a norm, but that, methodologically speaking, it should not be taken into account” (*ibid.*, 81).

⁵¹ This is how Foucault describes Mendel’s at first unacceptable, yet true statements about “hereditary traits” forming a “new biological object” (“The Discourse on Language,” in the Appendix to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 224). “Here was a new object, calling for new conceptual tools, and for fresh theoretical foundations. Mendel spoke the truth, but he was not *dans le vrai* (with the true) of contemporary biological discourse. [...] A whole change in scale, the deployment of a totally new range of objects in biology was required before Mendel could enter into the true and his propositions appear, for the most part, exact” (*ibid.*, 224).

In short, for Foucault, in contrast with Canguilhem, the criteria for acceptability differ from the criteria for determining the truth of a proposition.⁵² More importantly, with his distinction between statements *dans le vrai* and *dire vrai*, wherein the possibility of the truth or falsity of a proposition presupposes its being in the true (*dans le vrai*) and consequently its having fulfilled “some onerous and complex conditions” in order to be “admitted within a discipline,” Foucault unearths a realm undetected by Canguilhem and exceedingly important for his analytical purposes.⁵³ In other words, Foucault helps us to see that there is a rather thick socio-political layer to, as Han-Pile puts it, “the effective predication of truth.”⁵⁴ If a specific discursive community will not allow the truth to be heard, even though it may in reality be an instance of saying the true (*dire vrai*), it has fallen prey to the policing, exclusionary, controlling practices of disciplines. As Foucault puts it, though we have a proclivity to focus upon the “author’s fertility” as evidenced by the “multiplicity of commentaries” on his or her works and the seemingly “infinite resources available for the creation of discourse,”⁵⁵ the multiplicity of texts and discourses constituting a discipline nonetheless give evidence to “principles of constraint, and it is probably impossible to appreciate their positive, multiplicatory role without first taking into consideration their restrictive, constraining role.”⁵⁶

Lastly, on Thompson’s reading, Foucault builds upon Canguilhem’s insights, while also advancing his project and overcoming some of its limitations. For

⁵² For Canguilhem the idea seems to be as follows: if one *is* in the truth, then the proposition of which one speaks must be true. See Han-Pile’s extremely lucid discussion of Canguilhem and Foucault on this matter in chapter three of her book, *Foucault’s Critical Project*, 82–5.

⁵³ Foucault, “The Discourse on Language,” in the Appendix to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 224.

⁵⁴ Han [Han-Pile], *Foucault’s Critical Project*, 81.

⁵⁵ Foucault, “The Discourse on Language,” in the Appendix to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 224.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

example, Foucault's notion of historical *a priori*s and his archaeological method enable him, unlike Canguilhem, to explain the coherence and movement or dynamism within the various discursive disciplines.

V. POSITIVITIES, DISCURSIVE FORMATIONS, AND ANALOGOUS JAZZ PRACTICES

One might also reflect upon Foucault's unique analytical and methodological contributions, as well as his divergences from Canguilhem, in the following way: Foucault's archaeological method unearths lower-level strata, *savoir*, whereas Canguilhem's analyses are concerned with the upper-level strata of various *connaissances* and, as it were, fail to reach *savoir*. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault devotes several pages to his particular understanding and deployment of these two terms.⁵⁷ As he explains, archaeology sets its sights on "discursive formations" and "positivities," both of which, though differing in certain respects, fall under the larger category of historical *a priori*s and play a definitive role in the overall shape of an *episteme*.⁵⁸ By "positivity," Foucault has in view those "elements" formed by discursive practices that, given the right configuration of contingent causes, give rise to scientific (and other) discourses within a particular *episteme*.

Put somewhat simply, positivities are relational configurations forming, metaphorically speaking, grids of varying complexities and densities that allow actual concrete sciences, disciplines, and discourses (*connaissances*) to become manifest. Positivities function as conditions for what may emerge "as an item of knowledge or an illusion, an accepted truth or an exposed error, a definitive

⁵⁷ See, esp. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 178–95.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Foucault's discussion in chapter five of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* concerning positivities as historical *a priori*s, 126–31.

acquisition or an obstacle surmounted.”⁵⁹ Knowledge (*savoir*) in the Foucauldian sense is shot through with positivities, that is, various intersecting historically and contingently formed grids consisting of elements shaped and unified into regular patterns via discursive practices giving rise to specific discourses and discourse “spaces.”

Elaborating on his multivalent view of knowledge, Foucault offers four perspectives on knowledge, each of which underscores his broad, expansive understanding of the term—an understanding that includes both discursive and non-discursive practices. First, “[k]nowledge is that of which one can speak in a discursive practice, and which is specified by that fact: the domain constituted by the different objects that will or will not acquire a scientific status.”⁶⁰ Second, knowledge is “the space in which the subject may take up a position and speak of the objects with which he deals in his discourse.”⁶¹ Third, “knowledge is also the field of coordination and subordination of statements in which concepts appear, and are defined, applied and transformed.”⁶² Fourth, “knowledge is defined by the possibilities of use and appropriation offered by a discourse.”⁶³ With each of these descriptions, we are not dealing merely with those statements in a particular domain (for example, psychiatry) thought to be true; rather, knowledge encompasses the “whole set of practices” specific to a circumscribed discipline.⁶⁴ Such practices might include interrogation procedures, confessional technologies, the use of drugs on patients, soldiers, orphans, etc., with a view as to how these practices have been affected by the various domain-specific discourses (for example, science, politics, etc.).

⁵⁹ Ibid., 182.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 182.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid. See also, 183.

In his dialogue with a hypothetical critical interlocutor in the concluding chapter of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault provides additional clarifying remarks about positivities and how they relate to human subjects as agents. He begins by stating, “[t]he positivities that I have tried to establish must not be understood as a set of determinations imposed from the outside on the thought of individuals, or inhabiting it from the inside, in advance as it were.”⁶⁵ That is, on the one hand, positivities are neither external patterns nor structures to which cognitive—and I would add volitional—activities of individual humans must conform, lest they be disqualified or relegated to a pre-history status à la Hegel. On the other hand, neither are they latent possibilities that *must* unfold in a determinate way in individual or collective thought. Rather, as we have seen, they are “sets of conditions in accordance with which a practice is exercised, in accordance with which that practice gives rise to partially or totally new statements and in accordance with which it can be modified.”⁶⁶

Here it might be helpful to consider a microcosmic analogy drawn from the world of music—namely, jazz. Jazz improvisation is a practice sharing common theoretical rules (positivities) such as identifiable harmonic and melodic patterns that give rise to specific genres within the larger field. These genres are analogous to discursive formations and include cool jazz, be-bop, fusion, and so on. Within these more circumscribed genres or discursive formations there are additional rules or positivities that constitute the style of each particular genre—for instance, be-bop—and distinguish it from others—say, cool jazz. Be-bop typically consists of complex harmonies involving several key changes or temporary tonal shifts within a relatively small number of measures. Likewise, be-bop tunes tend to be played at lightning fast tempos with rapid, complex, arpeggiated, technically challenging melodic lines comparable in structure to

⁶⁵ Ibid., 208.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 208–9.

lines in a Bach solo cello suite. Cool jazz, in contrast, is characterized by its harmonic sparseness. For example, an entire cool jazz piece may contain only two chords, each of which is played for eight or more measures consecutively. The melodic lines in cool jazz are also easily distinguishable from those of bebop and tend to emphasize long legato notes as opposed to rapid staccato lines (although they may employ the latter in improvised solos). All of these rules, while allowing jazz and its varied "discursive formations" to manifest, are *both* stabilizing *and* flexible. That is, they provide the stability needed for a particular practice to gel and form an identifiable discourse or genre with its attendant stylistic characteristics; yet they are not inflexible and can be bent, re-shaped, transformed, and re-articulated, creating new "statements" and practices which can at some point be taken up and perhaps even function as positivities for future discursive formations.

Related to this idea of transforming practices, Foucault adds that the "positivities are not so much limitations imposed on the initiative of subjects as the field in which that initiative is articulated [...], rules that it puts into operation (without it having invented or formulated them), relations that provide it with a support."⁶⁷ Moreover, Foucault makes explicit that subjects are not trapped, determined, or stifled by positivities or discursive formations such that their agency is extinguished and creative innovations and renovations become impossible. Quite the contrary, because these positivities function as *historical a priori*s, they not only provide the "support" needed for distinct practices to appear and be developed, they themselves are dynamic, allowing for (1) transformations in specific practices and discourses, and (2) their own subsumption into a new field wherein they give up their *a priori* status, become part of a newly elaborated practice, and yield place to their own structuring by new, equally contingent, and thoroughly historical *a priori*s. Though this second

⁶⁷ Ibid., 209.

claim may be surprising to some, it is consonant with what Foucault himself says regarding the historical *a priori* in chapter five of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. He begins by noting that the *a prioris* are themselves caught up in the movement of history. “This *a priori* does not elude historicity.”⁶⁸ He then goes on to describe the mutability of *a prioris* given their embeddedness within and connectedness to the practices that they structure. The historical *a priori*

is defined as the group of rules that characterize a discursive practice: but these rules are not imposed from the outside on the elements that they relate together; they are caught up in the very things that they connect; and if they are not modified with the least of them, they modify them, and are transformed with them into certain decisive thresholds. The *a priori* of positivities [and discursive formations] is not only the system of a temporal dispersion; it is itself a transformable group.⁶⁹

An additional musical example may help us understand how the *a prioris* can be altered over time, rearticulated, and take on different meanings and functions as new discursive formations arise. In early expressions of jazz in the 1920s, to improvise outside the harmony of the piece would have been heard as a mistake, perhaps even the mark of an unaccomplished improviser. The rules of improvisation governing the practices of the jazz of the 1920s had no place for what is today called playing “out.” In short, one plays “out” when, during an improvised solo, one intentionally plays a melodic pattern first within the given harmony (for example, C major) and then plays the exact same pattern a minor step above (B major) or below (D^b major) the original key. Performing this “musical act” produces an extremely dissonant sound which, especially for those unaccustomed to modern jazz, has a startling and rather jarring effect. Although one may do otherwise, one can choose to resolve this tension within the solo by simply repeating the pattern again within original tonal center (C major). Once

⁶⁸ Ibid., 127.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

the genre of jazz-fusion emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, playing “out” became a standard practice. The rules that had governed the practices of improvisation of a previous era no longer apply as they did in early jazz. Rather, their *a priori* status is demoted, and a new set of rules takes their place. Yet, a basic “truth” of the original rule still holds—namely, playing outside the harmony produces great dissonance. However, the dissonance in view is no longer seen as a novice’s mistake but rather as the mark of an experienced player using dissonance in a purposed, controlled manner. With this example we can see how rules structuring certain practices can be changed by other practices via a “transgressive” act—that is, a breaking of the established rule. If the transgression, so to speak, catches on or gains a following, it then becomes a recognized practice, a “statement” both *dans le vrai* and *dire vrai*, structured by new acceptability conditions and a reconfigured set of *a priori* rules.

As he wraps up the dialogue with his hypothetical interlocutor in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault once again clarifies and specifies the subject which has been the focus of his most stringent criticism. “I have not denied—far from it—the possibility of changing discourse: I have deprived the sovereignty of the subject of the exclusive and instantaneous right to it.”⁷⁰ Although one can certainly point to statements in which Foucault appears to sign the death certificate of the subject, it is worth noting that many such statements, when analyzed more closely, can be interpreted as a condemnation not of the subject *per se* but of a particular socio-historical construction of the subject and subjectivity. Here we should recall Foucault’s comment in his 1984 interview with Alessandro Fontana: “I do indeed believe that there is no sovereign, founding subject, a universal form of subject to be found everywhere. I am very skeptical of this view of the subject and very hostile to it.”⁷¹ That is, Foucault’s

⁷⁰ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 209.

⁷¹ Foucault, “An Aesthetics of Existence,” 50.

critique is directed expressly to the modern subject as sovereign originator of meaning, as sovereign “lord” of his destiny, as subject with special immunity to cultural and socio-historical shaping.⁷² With respect to the passage above, Foucault does not deny the subject’s role, his or her agency and participation in the transformation of discourses. What he does deny is the modern construction of an autonomous subject who acts as a kind of world-historical figure to bring about seismic transformations in discursive practices, discourse formations, and even new *epistemai*.

Having discussed positivities at some length, let us return to a much briefer, though equally important, examination of discursive formations. Approaching the topic by indicating what they are not, Foucault writes, “[d]iscursive formations can be identified [...] neither as sciences, nor as scarcely scientific disciplines, nor as distant prefigurations of the sciences to come, nor as forms that exclude any scientificity from the outset.”⁷³ Unlike a traditional understanding of Platonic Forms, or static ideational structures in certain versions of phenomenology, discursive formations do in fact change over time; they are not timeless, fixed structures that give rise to specific disciplines or sciences, nor do their objects remain the same. As an example, Foucault points to the concept “madness,” which does not remain the same across distinct historical *epistemai* but is instantiated differently in a wide range of discourses. Not only was madness as it emerged in distinct *epistemai* “constituted by all that was said in all the statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it, traced its developments” and so forth, but also the “madman” constituted by

⁷² For a lucid and informative discussion on Foucault’s solution to modernity’s dichotomizing tendencies specifically with respect to the transcendental/empirical and subject/object binary oppositions, see Rosemann, “The Historicization of the Transcendental in Postmodern Philosophy,” esp. 705.

⁷³ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 181.

medical discourses of one historical period was not identical to the "madman" constituted by legal discourses of the same period.⁷⁴

In short, discursive formations are more focused or delimitative of a particular "space" than positivities; they make possible the appearance of discourses born of socio-political practices temporarily congealed in particular historical epochs, existing in varying types of relations (similar, dissimilar, analogous, etc.) and manifesting constitutive functions and discernable patterns within a specified *episteme*.⁷⁵ Foucault's archaeological method, and his elaboration of historical *a priori*s, allows him to overcome some of the drawbacks of Canguilhem's project. That is, because Canguilhem's method is confined to the level of *connaissance*, he cannot account for "the regularities and shifts—the rarity, exteriority, and accumulations of disciplines—that are governed by the principles of *savoir*."⁷⁶ Beyond an ability to chart breaks and shifts within various disciplines, Foucault discerns the need for an archaeology capable of more profound levels of excavation—one able to "unearth the fields *by which and in which* such knowledge is able to arise, the historical *a priori*s that regulate the constitution of disciplines"⁷⁷ and establish "the conditions for being in the true."⁷⁸

VI. FOUCAULT: AN ANTI-PHENOMENOLOGIST?

Colin Koopman offers a third interpretation of Foucault, one differing from Han-Pile and Thompson in its refusal to wed Foucault's appropriation of Kantian critique with transcendental critique. In short, for Koopman, Foucault is

⁷⁴ Ibid., 32.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Foucault's discussion of discursive formations in chapter two of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* where he describes them as a "system of dispersion" (see esp., 38).

⁷⁶ Thompson, "Historicity and Transcendentality," 13.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 14.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 15. See also, Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 127.

rightly situated within the Kantian critical tradition; however, he abandoned the project of transcendental critique in favor of a thoroughgoing historical project. Moreover, to approach Foucault through the problematic and even paradoxical phenomenological concepts of historico-transcendentality results in irresolvable philosophical tensions and shrouds what Koopman sees as one of Foucault's most significant contributions: "the development of a modality of inquiry that both preserves a link to the Kantian project of critique as inquiry into conditions of possibility and does not for that reason chain itself to a transcendental inflection of the critical project."⁷⁹

Koopman begins with a textual case against employing a phenomenological hermeneutical lens to interpret Foucault's project; second, he provides a theoretical elaboration of why Foucault's abandonment of the transcendental project was a good philosophical move and explains why we should embrace a reading of Foucault detached from transcendental forms of critique. First, Koopman foregrounds texts from *The Order of Knowledge* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* in which Foucault speaks explicitly and slightly mockingly against phenomenology.⁸⁰ I find this line of argument less convincing than other aspects Koopman engages. Thompson, it seems, would likely counter by appealing to other passages that speak more favorably of Foucault's relation to the phenomenological tradition, and would highlight Foucault's place in the Cavaillèsian-Canguilhemian phenomenological line which departed from, and transformed in significant ways, the Husserlian "phenomenology of experience" line.

Next, Koopman references Foucault's 1978 interview "What is Critique?" He first cites a passage in which Foucault refers to Cavaillès and Canguilhem,

⁷⁹ Koopman, "Historical Critique," 105.

⁸⁰ See, for example, Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 203.

describing them as part of the phenomenological tradition but underscoring that they “belong to another history altogether.”⁸¹ Interpreting this as an indicator that Foucault has abandoned transcendental phenomenology in favor of historical inquiries, Koopman adds that work in the history of science—having of course Canguilhem in mind—has enabled us to return to the kinds of historical questions which intrigued Foucault, questions such as who we are at this present moment and how have we become what we are. Here we arrive full circle, returning to the issue with which this essay began but from a slightly different angle: what is Foucault's relationship to the Enlightenment, and to the Kantian tradition in particular?

In the interview, Foucault devotes a great deal of space to what he calls the “critical attitude” and elaborates one possible way of tracing its history. Foucault points first to Christianity or the “Christian pastoral,” as it was here that a unique idea emerged—namely, that the individual candidate for ecclesial service, regardless of socio-political status, was called to enter into a relationship of obedience with a spiritual superior. As he explains, “each individual [...] had to be governed and had to let himself be governed.”⁸² This power relation, as is the case with all such relations, is productive of knowledge and operates in conjunction with specific truth games. In this particular case, we have a threefold relation to truth: “truth understood as dogma, truth also to the degree where this orientation implies a special individualizing knowledge of individuals; and [...] truth] in that this direction is deployed like a reflective technique comprising general rules, particular knowledge, [...] confessions,” and so forth.⁸³ However, each discourse has different truth games and power-knowledge complexes. When the Christian pastoral began to give way to modern secular visions—a

⁸¹ Foucault, “What is Critique?”, 54.

⁸² Ibid., 43.

⁸³ Ibid.

process whose beginning Foucault locates in the fifteenth century, prior to the Reformation—the art of governing is transposed into a secular key. Instead of having a somewhat restrictive and limited domain (for example, monasteries), these governing practices, now divorced from significant theological teachings, become increasingly diffused within the broader socio-political sphere via educational, legislative, penal, economic, and other institutional apparatuses.

Closely related and intimately tied to this ever-growing governmentalization, characterizing Western European societies in early modernity is the concern of “how not to be governed,” that is, “how not to be governed *like that*, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures.”⁸⁴ Foucault then situates the “critical attitude” within this understanding of governmentalization—an attitude challenging prevailing governing structures and practices, and attempting to limit and to transform them.⁸⁵ Whether we are dealing with divine revelation, law, one’s ethical relationship to others and oneself, science, governmental as well as religious authority, “the interplay of governmentalization and critique has brought out phenomena [...] of capital importance in the history of Western culture.”⁸⁶

At the center of critique as Foucault understands it is the relational complex of power, truth, and the subject. Power relations, as Foucault says explicitly in his later works, involve *free* subjects; power and resistance and power and freedom are correlative concepts.⁸⁷ Governmentalization with its attendant companion, “how not to be governed,” lands us immediately in the midst of questions about resistance possibilities, constructing and re-constructing subjectivities, agency,

⁸⁴ Ibid., 44. Foucault admits that his formulation, “the art of not being governed quite so much,” is overly broad and proceeds over the next few pages to elaborate upon it (ibid., 45). See, esp. 45–7.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 47.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Foucault, “The Subject and Power.”

and so forth. Thus, critique gives us another point of entry into major Foucauldian themes. As he explains,

[i]f governmentalization is indeed this movement through which individuals are subjugated in the reality of a social practice through mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth, well, then! I will say that critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth. Well then!: critique will be the art of voluntary insubordination, that of reflected intractability. Critique would essentially insure the desubjugation of the subject in the context of what we could call, in a word, the politics of truth.⁸⁸

Foucault recounts this brief history of critique in order to help us understand not only what he means by critique and critical attitude, but also how he views Kant as participating in and highlighting this *ethos* in the latter's discussion of the *Aufklärung* in his 1784 essay, "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment.'" Kant is of course concerned with establishing the limits of what is (humanly) knowable. Foucault readily acknowledges that fact and links Kant's understanding of critique to his interrogation of reason and its limits, that is, what it can rightfully claim to know without transgressing its own limits. However, he is also drawn to the way in which Kant, in the essay just mentioned, connects knowledge, power relations, and resistance possibilities, specifically the possibility of freeing oneself from a state of "self-incurred immaturity."⁸⁹ According to Kant, if we allow religious, state, or other expert authorities to think for us, in place of us, then we remain immature; we are like minors dependent upon guardians to make decisions on our behalf. Thus, Kant issues an exhortation to embrace the Enlightenment call to be courageous and to

⁸⁸ Foucault, "What is Critique?", 47.

⁸⁹ Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?", in *Kant's Political Philosophy*, trans. H. B. Nisbet and ed. H. Reiss, 54–60 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 54.

reason for oneself, which for him also entails recognizing reason's limits. "In his attempt to desubjugate the subject in the context of power and truth, as a prolegomena to the whole present and future *Aufklärung*, Kant set forth critique's primordial responsibility, to know knowledge."⁹⁰ For Foucault, Kant was not unaware of the intimate relation between knowledge and power.

Foucault marks this critical ethos embodied by the *Aufklärung* as a "critical attitude which appears as a specific attitude in the Western world starting with what was historically [...] the great process of society's governmentalization."⁹¹ As was the case with many Enlightenment thinkers, freedom was a major theme for Kant. If one were to remain in a state of immaturity in which one merely obeys mechanically, allowing someone else to reason for oneself, then one has in some genuine sense forfeited one's freedom; hence, the immaturity is, as Kant puts it, "self-incurred." However, if one takes up the critical attitude and comes to a clearer idea of what reason can legitimately claim to know, a principle of autonomy comes into play, mitigating a relation of excessive dependence or "sheer" heteronomy. "One will then no longer have to hear the *obey*; or rather, the *obey*, will be founded on autonomy itself."⁹² Of course, not all will agree with Foucault's interpretation of Kant; however, Kantian interpretative discrepancies with respect to the issues at hand are irrelevant. What is more important for my present purposes is to elucidate Foucault's understanding of Kant's project so that we might better grasp how and why Foucault situates himself within the Kantian critical tradition.

As Foucault explains, in the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, three features converged that set the stage for a new variation on the critique of

⁹⁰ Foucault, "What is Critique?", 50.

⁹¹ Ibid., 48.

⁹² Ibid., 49. Here we should at least point out, as Foucault does, that it is not difficult to show that "for Kant, autonomy is not at all opposed to obeying the sovereign" (49–50). See, for example, the section of Kant's essay, "What is Enlightenment?", esp. 56–8.

reason theme inaugurated by Kant: (1) "positivist science," (2) a state or "state system which justified itself as the reason and deep rationality of history and which, moreover, selected as its instruments procedures to rationalize the economy and society," and (3) the interplay of the first two, creating a situation in which science begins "to play an increasingly determinant part in the development of productive forces and, such that, in addition, state-type powers are going to be increasingly exercised."⁹³ Given the interconnections between reason, knowledge, and power that Kant *already* identified in his 1784 Enlightenment essay and the historical convergences just mentioned, the new question becomes: "for what excesses of power, for what governmentalization, all the more impossible to evade as it is reasonably justified, is reason not itself historically responsible?"⁹⁴ Stated slightly differently and in a mode reminiscent of the Frankfurt School,⁹⁵ is there something inherently flawed with the particular shape that reason or rationality has taken such that it leads to excesses of power? Does this modern inflection of reason somehow contain within itself the seeds of its own destruction? Does its attempt to fully realize itself and its political program lead to the obliteration of the other? That is, does this kind of instrumental reason involve constructing certain groups as unworthy, impure, and dangerous others who must be eradicated or at least confined to a separate socio-political, geographical, and even lawless, space?

Foucault then moves into a discussion of the growing suspicions in the twentieth century of Enlightenment rationality and its relation to power, as well

⁹³ Foucault, "What is Critique?", 50–1.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁹⁵ The connection with the Frankfurt School is not mine; Foucault himself refers to the Frankfurt School at least three times in his essay, noting that "an era has arrived where precisely this problem of the *Aufklärung* can be re-approached in significant proximity to the work of the Frankfurt [S]chool" and that his project shares "fellowship with the Frankfurt [S]chool" ("What is Critique?", 53, 55, see also, his comments on the Frankfurt School and the Hegelian Left, 51).

as the political ramifications of this conjunction. According to Foucault, French intellectuals have acquired a more critical attitude toward Enlightenment narratives of progress. That is, in addition to the questions of meaning raised by phenomenology and applicable to studies of the Enlightenment, “an era has arrived where precisely this problem of the *Aufklärung* can be re-approached in significant proximity to the work of the Frankfurt School.”⁹⁶ In other words, particularly in light of the horrific events of the twentieth century—for example, the Holocaust, which no ethically conscious contemporary thinker can ignore—questions of sociopolitical and existential import must be addressed. In light of such calculated cruelty and inhumane violence against our fellow human beings, questions such as how ought we reason about (Enlightenment) unreason, or as Foucault puts it, “how is it that the great movement of rationalization has led us to so much noise, so much furor, so much silence and so many sad mechanisms,”⁹⁷ become philosophical questions of utmost importance. In short, if the *Aufklärung* is concerned with the movement from heteronomous irrationality (“self-incurred immaturity”) to autonomous rationality, and our casting off the shackles of the former paves the way to Enlightenment and progress, how do we explain the ironic, paradoxical, even cruel surprise ending to this narrative? We have moved through the Enlightenment only to be confronted with “the reciprocal and inverse problem of that of the *Aufklärung*: how is it that rationalization leads to the furor of power?”⁹⁸

Just as Kant was concerned with unearthing how we have come to be who we are at a particular point in history, so too is Foucault; however, according to Koopman, the latter has given up on the former’s claims regarding universal and necessary structures, opting instead for *epistemai*-specific and contingent

⁹⁶ Ibid., 53.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 54.

conditioning structures or historical *a priori*s. This abandonment of the transcendental for the historical leads Foucault to investigate more “localized” connections between knowledge and power as they appear in particular historical contexts. Having set forth his textual arguments against the Foucault-via-phenomenology position, Koopman proceeds to elaborate philosophical or theoretical reasons for his own reading of Foucault.

VII. A MUSICAL CORRECTIVE TO “KOOPMAN’S FOUCAULT”

According to Koopman, because Foucault himself realized the shortcomings of his archaeological method in his earlier works and expanded his methodology to include genealogy, attempts to interpret Foucauldian archaeology as both historical and transcendental are not only misguided, but they also direct our attention away from the unique contributions Foucault brings to the current philosophical milieu. One such contribution is the notion of problematization, which Koopman sees as central to Foucault’s critical historical-philosophy. The two central components of “[c]ritique as problematization” are contingency and complexity.⁹⁹ With respect to the first component, as we examine the emergence of and the conditions making possible historical networks, apparatuses, socio-political institutions, discourses—all of which shape us and give rise to context-specific issues—“we can come to recognize our problems as contingent complexes rather than necessary givens.”¹⁰⁰ Although Koopman does not link Foucault’s emphasis on contingency with his productive notion of power, such a connection would enhance his account and would help to stave off a common criticism and misperception of Foucauldian power as merely limiting or constraining. That is, if what we have become as the result of a particular socio-

⁹⁹ Koopman, “Historical Critique,” 110.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

political configuration, imposed hegemonic discourses, and a myriad of other intersecting networks in which we find ourselves are all contingent realities producing contingent, rather than necessary, effects, then we—as free beings in power relations with ourselves and others—are not rendered completely passive. Because power relations presuppose free subjects and entail resistance possibilities¹⁰¹—that is, a field of possible options available to us that enable us to re-script and reconstitute social narratives and socio-political structures—we are not condemned to accept our present situation or social identity as fated, irrevocable, irreversible, or necessary.

With respect to the second component, complexity, Koopman turns to the relationship between problematization and the different functions of archaeology and genealogy in order to show how Foucault's expanded methodology allows him to analyze vertical and horizontal fields themselves composed of multiple complex layers and intersecting nodes. Another way to conceptualize the relation between these two modes of inquiry is to view archaeology as synchronically-oriented and focusing upon rules and conditions that make fields of possibility possible; genealogy, in contrast, is diachronically-oriented, directing its attention to the movement of the diverse, non-homogenous practices, discourses, disciplines, and subjectivities emerging from the multiple fields of possibility mapped by archaeology.¹⁰² More specifically, Koopman explains how precisely he understands the failure of Foucault's early archaeology-minus-genealogy.

The archaeologist describes conditions that constrain one period of thought; they next describe the quite different

¹⁰¹ See, for example, Foucault's discussion of power relations and freedom in his late essay, "The Subject and Power."

¹⁰² This is not to say that there is no overlap in orientation (diachronic versus synchronic) between these two methods. An important point in Koopman's account that my synchronic/diachronic analogy does not capture is his talk of vectors. See, for example, "Historical Critique," 112.

conditions constraining another period of thought; finally, they infer historical difference on the basis of an underlying incommensurability between the two sets of conditions. This procedure indeed demonstrates difference but it does not explicate difference *historically*. Archaeology only offers up incommensurable historical conditions and an inexplicable gap between them. This is history in that it concerns the past but it is not historical history in that it does not engage change, mobility, and transition.¹⁰³

That is, archaeology alone has no way to account for the movement between *epistemai*. We have one *episteme* with its own particular set of historical *a priori*s, then another *episteme* with a different set of historical *a priori*s. The conditions are, on Koopman's reading, incommensurable. If this is the case, then the diverse disciplines, institutions, and subjectivities made possible by the conditions and structures specific to an *episteme* are likewise incommensurable.

If Koopman and, for that matter, Foucault have in mind a weak rather than a strong notion of incommensurability, then I can and will happily follow them for a considerable distance along this path. Put more candidly, I find strong incommensurability—the claim that there are absolutely no common points of contact between *epistemai*, no common basis upon which to make comparisons, contrasts, analogies, etc.—to be indefensible and incoherent. After all, holding such a position, how can one even speak of different *epistemai* or historical conditions? I understand weak incommensurability, in contrast, to mean (at minimum) that no precise one-to-one equivalence obtains between the objects in view, as the meanings of objects or concepts are intimately related to their larger context. Yet, with respect to the topics at hand, to claim that historical *a priori*s are incommensurable in the weak sense is to claim more than the obvious point—namely, that no two *epistemai* are identical because no two *epistemai* share the exact same historical conditions. Though this is true, it is something that we

¹⁰³ Ibid., 114. Italics added.

observe “after the fact,” that is, after a sufficient amount of time has passed for particular historical epochs to be recognized as distinct *epistemai*. Here it is important to keep in mind that the set of historical conditions specific to an *episteme* does not function as an iron-clad mold stamping out homogenous objects, discourses, or subjectivities. Rather, Foucault’s historical *a priori*s allow for the possibility of multiple subjectivities and variations within a single *episteme* and even within the smaller context of a particular discipline or discourse.¹⁰⁴ The more significant aspect of weak incommensurability is rather its rejection of atomism and commitment to some variation of holism¹⁰⁵—that is, the claim that the parts (for example, concepts, disciplines, etc.) derive their meanings from their relation and connection to larger contexts and ultimately to the whole *episteme*.

To illustrate, the concept of “black” or “blackness” does not retain a single, unchanging meaning from nineteenth-century America to twenty-first-century America. During the period of chattel slavery, a common pro-slavery discourse influenced by religious and pseudoscientific arguments (bio-behavioral racial essentialism) constructed the term “black” to mean subhuman and naturally inferior to white people. Today, however, bio-behavioral racial essentialism is no longer credible; the mainstream religious and political discourses on slavery have changed, as have the major “race”-producing institutions. Consequently, the term “blackness” takes on new meanings. A number of race theorists and cultural critics, including sociologist Loïc Wacquant, argue that in the twenty-first

¹⁰⁴ Toward the end of this essay, I mention capitalistic and anti-capitalistic subjectivities as an example of how multiple subjectivities can exist within the same *episteme*.

¹⁰⁵ I am neither interested nor qualified to enter into the complex debates in philosophy of language and philosophy of mind regarding holism. For my purposes, I shall distinguish between moderate and extreme holism and opt for the moderate version. Moderate holism allows for the possibility of other influences (for example, metaphysical or logical principles) besides the network of relations to shape meaning, whereas extreme holism claims, for example, that the meaning of a word is derived *solely* from its relational configuration in a particular network.

century the term "black" has come to mean "dangerous," "deviant," "delinquent." Wacquant traces this new variation on the "black" theme or the contemporary American construction of "blackness" to the U.S. carceral system, which holds top rank in a long line of race-making apparatuses, that is, institutions which have "successfully operated to define, confine, and control African-Americans in the history of the United States."¹⁰⁶

Returning to the issue of incommensurability, whether we have in view a weak or a strong notion of incommensurability between *epistemai*, Koopman's question is still relevant: how does one explain the in-between space, the gaps, the transitions between historical epochs? Are these transitional spaces also governed by historical *a priori* structures? "If not, then it follows that there are historical periods which an archaeological analytic cannot engage. If so, then it follows that the historian needs another analytic in addition to [...] archaeology in order to wield a more complete historiographical toolkit."¹⁰⁷ Here genealogy enters to deal quite literally with the "gaps." The genealogist examines the myriad linear, moving, diachronic discursive and non-discursive practices and structures that intersect and morph, giving rise to *new* concepts, practices, and ultimately new *epistemai*; however, so long as one holds a weak view of incommensurability, I see no reason why one must deny that elements, vestiges, and traces of *previous* epochs are taken up and reconfigured in the new and quite distinct historical period.

Koopman uses the image of a series of circles to explicate the "gaps" between *epistemai*, with each circle representing a different historical epoch or *episteme*. The circles are horizontally arranged, but they do not touch each other; a spatial

¹⁰⁶ Loïc Wacquant, "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration: Rethinking the 'Race Question' in the US," *New Left Review* 13 (2002): 41. See also, for example, Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

¹⁰⁷ Koopman, "Historical Critique," 114.

gap from the past as well as the future separates each circle. Perhaps there is a problem with Koopman's image. Instead of gaps, what if we think in terms of musical modulations or transitions. Consider the way in which modulations function in the sonata form. Although there are numerous variants on the sonata form, the basic structure is as follows: introduction, exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda. The introduction and the coda are somewhat optional and do not constitute the core of the sonata form; however, they have become so commonplace that today they are included in nearly every current definition of the Sonata form. In the exposition section, the main musical themes are introduced in the tonic key. Then in the development section the themes are expanded melodically, harmonically, and rhythmically. Completing the cycle the recapitulation section, in which the main themes from the exposition reappear and often, but not always, resolve the tensions created in the development section.¹⁰⁸ As I mentioned earlier, there are multiple variations of the Sonata form itself, as well as variations with respect to what occurs within each major section; nonetheless, the three main movements—exposition, development, and recapitulation—are easily identifiable, as each part or movement exhibits

¹⁰⁸ Analogies, of course, have their limits. There are aspects, implications, and possible interpretations of my analogy that Foucault would reject. For example, composers often write symphonies in which a clear final resolution occurs in the recapitulation section suggesting a *telic* completion. (This, however, is not always the case; twentieth- and twenty-first-century atonal compositions are clear counterexamples). Foucault would demur any hint of an overarching teleological movement to history as Hegelian, totalizing, and in a sense the opposite of his project of a "general history." See, for example, Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 10. Also, when analyzing the completed symphony, the particular movements are understood *as* organically related; if by the term "organic," one means that the elements of a prior stage lead *necessarily* to a particular unfolding configuring in the minutest detail the stage which follows, Foucault would not claim that *epistemai* exhibit this kind of relationship. However, there is no reason to view any particular, concrete instantiation of the Sonata form in those terms. That is, although when analyzing a symphonic work in its totality, one may discern how themes in one movement are taken up and developed in the next; no predetermined pattern or design exists forcing the movement to unfold and conform to a fixed and singular mold. On the contrary, there are myriad ways in which the contents of the movement might take shape. Whatever final movement we have today is the result of creative choice or artistic freedom, not necessary imposition.

harmonic and melodic patterns and practices according to the general rules of its particular role in the sequence.

Modulations or transitions connect the movements; they are the “gaps,” so to speak, between clearly defined principal sections. Similar to the variations occurring with the main movements, modulations also vary. One finds common-tone, common-key, chromatic, sequential, and parallel-key modulations (to name a few). In common-key modulations, the composer creates harmonic sequences based on chords shared or held in common between the tonal center, for example, of the first movement and the tonal center of the second movement.¹⁰⁹ These modulations are relatively smooth, yet there comes a point in the transition itself where it is difficult to discern whether a chord is functioning as part of the tonal center of the first movement or of the second movement. In other words, a nebulous area emerges that defies clear categorization in one movement or the other. At the other end of the spectrum, we have chromatic modulations. Because these modulations consist of non-traditional harmonic patterns progressing in minor seconds (half-steps) rather than the more common tonic–subdominant–dominant (I–IV–V) harmonic progression, there is no way to connect the chromatic sequence to a specific tonal center.¹¹⁰ Between these two extremes—common-key and chromatic—exist a wide variety of modulatory

¹⁰⁹ For instance, common-key modulations often occur by moving up a perfect fifth. If one begins in the key of C major, the target key becomes G major (the interval from C to G is a perfect fifth). This particular modulatory movement is common is because any two keys separated by a perfect fifth share four common chords. Because the two keys have so many notes in common, they likewise share many common chords.

¹¹⁰ In major scales, the tonic chord is the I chord, the subdominant is the IV chord, and the dominant is the V chord. For example, in the key of C major, we have the notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. The I chord, in this case C Major, is the “home” chord functioning as the tonal center. The C major triad consists of the notes C,E,G. A perfect fourth above C is F, which is the bass note of the subdominant triad, F major formed by the notes F, A, C. A perfect fifth above C is G, which is the bass note of the dominant triad, G major formed by the notes G, B, D. Generally speaking, Western tonal music moves in ascending and descending harmonic patterns of perfect fourths and perfect fifths.

manifestations. Generally speaking, however, each modulation type has a similar function: it plays a structuring role, demarcating the boundaries between movements. The *transition itself*, in other words, foregrounds the primary movements such that they stand out as self-contained units. In fact, what marks a modulation as such is that it resists, subverts, and often transgresses the theoretical rules and thematic musical patterns of the movements that it precedes and follows. Its very transitory nature seems to result from its resistance to both the rules and the melodic and harmonic figures that structure and define the main movements of the piece. The upheaval or prolonged tension a modulation creates owing to its in-between status seeks resolution in something more stable, which is *not* to say that the stability it may find is itself rigidly fixed and incapable of change.

Bringing the musical image back into conversation with Koopman and Foucault, we have the following analogical equivalences. A movement corresponds to an *episteme*, and a modulation replaces Koopman's talk of "gaps." The general harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic rules and practices structuring the particular content of each movement are analogous to Foucault's historical *aprioris*. Because modulations, as it were, fall outside the rules of the movements they connect, a different analytic is required for their analysis that enables us to make sense of the dynamic nature of the modulations ("gaps"), the main movements (*epistemat*), and the diverse components constituting the main movements (disciplines, discourses, etc.). This new analytic corresponds to the genealogical method.

Before bringing this essay to a close, I want to present one additional matter discussed in the published exchange between Thompson and Koopman in response to Koopman's original essay.¹¹¹ Thompson takes issue with Koopman's

¹¹¹ See, for example, Kevin Thompson, "Response to Colin Koopman's 'Historical Critique or Transcendental Critique in Foucault: Two Kantian Lineages'," *Foucault Studies* 8 (2010):

account of Foucault's problematizations. According to Thompson, Foucault is concerned with the conditions or forms of problematizations—"the historically specific structures in and through which various kinds of matters have been put at issue";¹¹² however, Koopman takes these conditions to be "contingently forged antecedent states of affairs or processes," whereas Thompson views them as "historical eidetic structures."¹¹³ For Thompson, Foucault's historical *a priori*s are anterior to the empirical processes of which they are the conditions. To "treat these conditions as prior historical complexes conditioning what follows from them" creates a problem for Foucault which, for Thompson, cannot be solved; how, he asks, are we to understand the (historical) causal efficacy of these conditions?¹¹⁴ Koopman responds by denying that Foucault has in mind mere "causal conditioning";¹¹⁵ rather, the historical *a priori*s create the space, so to speak, for practices to appear (or not to appear), for events to happen (or not to happen). Such conditions do not function as efficient causes (as when, for example, one billiard ball hits a second ball, forcing it into the side pocket). As Koopman explains,

[c]onditions of possibility are more like the entire ensemble of ball, cue, stick, felt-topped table, and spirits of friendship and competition in which a certain practice is made possible. On my reading the entire ensemble itself is indeed the product of "antecedent states of affairs" but only so long as we understand "states of affairs" capaciously to involve all things at play in a practice rather than narrowly as referring to structures of causality describable in the language of a perfect physics.¹¹⁶

122–28; Colin Koopman, "Historical Conditions or Transcendental Conditions: Response to Kevin Thompson's Response," *Foucault Studies* 8 (2010): 129–35.

¹¹² Thompson, "Response to Colin Koopman," 126.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Colin Koopman, "Response to Kevin Thompson's Response," 133.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

For Koopman, the entire ensemble or “complex states of affairs” *qua* “conditioning ensembles”—including the conditioning structures themselves—is mutable, dynamic, and historically conditioned through and through;¹¹⁷ hence, when Foucault transforms Kant’s transcendental *a priori*s and renames them accordingly as historical *a priori*s, we must feel the force of the adjectival modification. The *a priori*s still function as conditions of possibility; however, their scope, contra Kant’s formulation, is neither universal (that is, transhistorical and transcultural) nor is their modality that of necessity; rather, Foucauldian *a priori*s are contingent structures congealing for a time and providing the requisite stability for practices, traditions, discourses, and the like to become recognizable as such. Yet, historical *a priori*s are also porous, not rigidly fixed, and thus able to change over time as shifts occur in the nodes constituting the multiple intersecting networks of a particular *episteme*. Lastly, the discourses, practices, and subjectivities produced by historical conditioning structures are heterogeneous, not homogenous. In other words, the porosity, contingency, and mutability of Foucauldian stabilizing structures allow for the possibility of diverse discourses and subjectivities not simply across *epistemai* but also within each of the recognized practices and disciplines in a particular *episteme*. For instance, with respect to America’s current capitalistic configuration, the structures making possible this particular socio-economic ensemble exhibit a relative stability and sameness. However, we find multiple subjectivities creating different discourses and practices and responding to life within capitalistic America in disparate rather than uniform ways: some strongly oppose it and seek various strategies to fend off its totalizing effects; others try to reform it and make it more humane, while yet others believe it is the model that should be embraced by all countries and thus are willing to implement aggressive strategies to that end.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

The crucial question brought front and center via the Thompson and Koopman exchange is how our practices can be simultaneously “*constrained*” by conditions of possibility and also *contingent* in being amenable to historical transformation?”¹¹⁸ Here again we bump up against the “double construction of the subject,” or Foucault’s answer to the incomplete, one-sided (ahistorical) subject bequeathed to us in large part via the rationalistic strand of the Enlightenment. In contrast, the Foucauldian subject is simultaneously socially constructed and self-constructed, simultaneously constrained and free.

Though I agree with many aspects of Koopman’s position, his response to Thompson’s criticism is somewhat thin. That is, it does little more than assert what historical conditioning of subsequent *epistemai* by prior ones is *not*—namely, it is not a type of efficient causality “describable in the language of a perfect physics.”¹¹⁹ Because Koopman fails to provide a positive account regarding what historical conditioning actually *is*, Thompson’s concerns have not been adequately addressed. Moreover, what precisely is the difference between Koopman’s appeal to “*conditioning ensembles*” and Thompson’s articulation of historical *a priori*s?

Here I turn to my final set of music analogies in order to assuage Thompson’s concerns by providing a more positive construal of genealogy. The world of music is replete with images, analogies, and comparisons highlighting how our both/and situation is neither incoherent nor reducible to an either/or—either we are free or we are constrained. Consider the jazz musician, who for many people is associated with the artistic free spirit par excellence. However, the jazz musician creates and improvises *within* strictures, limits, rules, and musical practices that demarcate jazz from other musical styles. These strictures and

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 134.

¹¹⁹ Koopman, “Response to Kevin Thompson’s Response,” 133.

communally accepted traditions include playing syncopated melodic lines, emphasizing the second and fourth beats in standard four-four time when performing swing, be-bop and related styles, and quoting melodic lines from well-known jazz performers. In addition, a jazz musician's improvised solos often consist of melodic lines that demonstrate—by way of arpeggiated lines, easily identifiable harmonic (for example, II-V-I) patterns, and so on—his or her grasp of the harmonic structure of the piece. These and other conditions making possible the jazz “world” arose contingently and became congealed and stable over time; yet they are flexible, porous, and dynamic, giving rise to different conditions that will come to structure a “new” jazz world. As members of a community and participants in a tradition, jazz musicians must agree to work within these limits. Contrary to popular opinion, improvisation is not a free-for-all; instead, what we find are identifiable patterns, communally-accepted practices, and theoretical rules structuring jazz improvisation, all of which provide the space for distinct musical subjectivities to emerge: John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, and Wes Montgomery, to name a few. What jazz connoisseur would deny John Coltrane's innovations and unique creative contributions to jazz? Yet, Coltrane was subject to the same conditioning factors as every other jazz musician of his day. Freedom and constraint are not mutually exclusive categories. In fact, one might even say that creative innovation and the transformation of existing practices, disciplinary standards, genres, and accepted styles require intimate knowledge of our limitations, strictures, and constraints.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ This particular jazz analogy corresponds to the inner workings and dynamism that occurs *within* an *episteme*. In order to address the movement *between epistemai*, I would need to amend the analogy. For example, the entire complex “jazz” would be analogous to an *episteme*, and other complexes—such as European classical music, blues, etc.—would be analogous to other *epistemai*. Then I would have to show how the various elements from European classical music and, for example, blues, were appropriated and transmuted into the new *episteme*, jazz.

VIII. Foucault: All of the Above (And Then Some)

As I stated at the beginning of my essay, my purpose has been to bring to the surface at least some of the significant, not to mention diverse, philosophical sources influencing Foucault's thought, highlighting along the way noteworthy Foucauldian themes and suggesting possible avenues for development via the world of music. In closing, I offer a brief recap of the key themes examined, and I conclude with a summary of my contribution to the dialogue.

As we have seen, Han-Pile pushes us to question whether Foucault's ontology is sufficient. With his late work in mind—particularly Foucault's explicit statements linking freedom and power relations, his rather traditional description of thought as “what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting,”¹²¹ and his linking of thought to freedom—I share Han-Pile's concerns regarding the adequacy of Foucault's ontology; however, the ontological corrective which I would recommend (and which I can only mention in the present essay) differs from Han-Pile's in that it points to an historically attuned yet more robust philosophical anthropology that provides a basis for strong moral critique of practices that violate human freedom and flourishing.¹²²

The next commentator, Thompson, shows us how Foucault travels through Husserlian and, more specifically, Cavaillèsian-Canguilhemian phenomenological pathways, while simultaneously carving new paths. Contra Han-Pile, Thompson challenges the traditional rigid division between transcendentality and historicity, characterizing Foucault's project as an attempt integrate the two notions. Lastly,

¹²¹ Michel Foucault, “Polemics, Politics, and Problemizations: An Interview with Michel Foucault,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, 381–90 (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 388. Foucault goes on to add, “[t]hought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem” (ibid.).

¹²² For a detailed presentation of an anthropology along these lines, see, Cynthia R. Nielsen, *Foucault, Douglass, Fanon, and Scotus in Dialogue. On Social Construction and Freedom* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Koopman brings Foucault's unique contributions front and center, particularly his notion of problematization and the ways in which his expansion of the archaeological method to include genealogy results in analytical payoffs. This methodological augmentation affords us powerful theoretical tools that enable us to see both *that* our present situation is constituted by contingent, historical, multilayered complexes and to trace *how* these formations emerge.

Then we discussed the Koopman/Thompson exchange, wherein the latter highlights a significant problem with "Koopman's Foucault": if, as Koopman argues, *epistemai* are historical "all the way down," then their movement, it seems, comes about through efficient causality describable in the language of physics. If this is the case, then Foucault's affirmations in his later works regarding human freedom and the reciprocal relations between freedom and power and freedom and resistance become incoherent. Koopman denies that the change in view involves efficient causality; however, his response does not explain how Foucault's genealogical expansion of his archaeology addresses Thompson's critique.

Here I offer a series of musical analogies as a fresh interpretive lens enabling us to highlight the analytical benefits of Foucault's genealogical addition while simultaneously deflecting charges of incoherence. That is, my musical analogies make possible a way to conceive the "gaps" between *epistemai* and *episteme* changes—both of which move us into domain of genealogy—via a path having much in common with "Koopman's Foucault," yet responding more directly to Thompson's concerns. For example, my analogies help us to see how various structures and elements of past *epistemai* or historical periods are re-harmonized in new periods, wherein what emerges within the new paradigm is neither a mere repetition of the past nor completely unconnected with it. The image of re-harmonization and thus of occupying a different function and "place" within a new whole is compatible with a weak incommensurability but in no way requires

a strong or total incommensurability across historical paradigms. In short, by employing my musical analogies and thus embracing “my Foucault,” one can go a long way with Koopman and yet answer Thompson’s critique more satisfactorily. Stated otherwise, my model places Foucault’s archaeological-genealogical methodology and his insights regarding historical *a priori*s on firmer, even if, contingent ground. Returning to our opening question, perhaps Foucault shows himself as a kind of variation on what Abdul JanMohamed calls a “specular border intellectual.”¹²³ That is, while able to operate within many (philosophical) cultures, the specular intellectual never quite finds a (philosophical) home. Perhaps this also helps one to understand why our historically-attuned, postmodern “Kantian,” at times indulges his parodic Nietzschean side.

¹²³ See Abdul JanMohamed, “Worldliness-without-World, Homelessness-as-Home: Toward a Definition of the Specular Border Intellectual,” in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michael Sprinker, 96–120 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), esp. 97.

THE 'SPIRITUAL CHRISTOLOGY' OF JOSEPH RATZINGER/POPE BENEDICT XVI: An Exposition and Analysis of its Principles

Peter John McGregor

In 1979 the International Theological Commission asserted that the 'quest for the historical Jesus' carried out by some biblical scholars, combined with a tendency to make our humanity the prime analogate of Christ's humanity, was leading towards a certain dualism in Christology. The Commission encouraged Catholic theologians to overcome this dualistic separation between the 'Jesus of history' and the 'glorified Christ' by turning towards the dyotheletism of the Third Council of Constantinople in order to reassert the intrinsic unity of divinity and humanity in Christ.¹

In 1984 Joseph Ratzinger published a collection of Christological meditations and reflections with the title *Behold the Pierced One*.² In its preface, he recounts how the composition of one of these 'meditations' in 1981 had led him to

¹ See "Selected Questions on Christology," in Michael Sharkey (ed.), *International Theological Commission: Texts and Documents 1969-1985* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 185-206. Joseph Ratzinger was a member of the Commission which drafted the document. The Third Council of Constantinople taught that Christ had two wills, one human and the other divine (dyotheletism), not just one, the divine.

² Joseph Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986).

"consider Christology more from the aspect of its spiritual appropriation" than he had done previously.³ Upon realising that this same year was the 1300th anniversary of the Third Council of Constantinople, he decided to study the pronouncements of this Council, and came to believe "much to [his] astonishment, that the achievement of a spiritual Christology had also been the Council's ultimate goal, and that it was only from this point of view that the classical formulas of Chalcedon appear in the proper perspective."⁴ Ratzinger's conclusion in attempting to define a 'spiritual Christology' is that "the whole of Christology—our speaking of Christ—is nothing other than the interpretation of his prayer: the entire person of Jesus is contained in his prayer."⁵

Most recent analyses of Ratzinger's Christology have focused upon *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*.⁶ One difficulty with trying to analyse Ratzinger's Christology through *Jesus of Nazareth* alone is that this three volume work is not a systematic presentation of his Christology. In the forward to the second volume, Ratzinger states that he has not attempted to write a Christology. Rather, he says that his intention has been closer to that of writing a theological treatise on the mysteries of the life of Jesus. He compares it with the treatise of Saint Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica* III, qq. 27-59), with the caveats that his *Jesus of Nazareth* is situated in a different historical and spiritual context from that of Aquinas, and that it also has "a different inner

³ Ibid., 9.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

objective that determines the structure of the text in essential ways.”⁷ It is a book more like Romano Guardini’s *The Lord* than Walter Kasper’s *Jesus the Christ*.⁸

The objective of this essay is to facilitate a more accurate understanding of Ratzinger’s Christology by analysing his attempt to develop a ‘spiritual Christology.’ Doing so should provide a firmer foundation for grasping the Christology of *Jesus of Nazareth*. However, it will not provide a complete foundation. This essay addresses only one of three tasks which must be undertaken if that goal is to be reached. The others are an analysis and critique of: (1) Ratzinger’s earlier but more systematic expression of his Christology, to be found primarily in *Introduction to Christianity*, and (2) his attempt to integrate the historical-critical method with a ‘theological’ interpretation of Sacred Scripture.

COMMENTARY ON RATZINGER’S ‘SPIRITUAL CHRISTOLOGY’

Oblique References

As has been said, most analyses of Ratzinger’s Christology have focused upon the first volume of *Jesus of Nazareth*. For example, after the publication of this work in 2007, a colloquium was held at Nottingham University entitled ‘The Pope and Jesus of Nazareth.’⁹ A number of the presenters addressed specifically Christological questions. Fergus Kerr compared Ratzinger’s treatment of the self-knowledge of Christ with that of Aquinas, Rahner, von Balthasar and Thomas Weinandy. Kerr concluded that Ratzinger thinks that Jesus knew he was God,

⁷ Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), xvi.

⁸ See Romano Guardini, *The Lord* (Washington, DC.: Regnery, 1996), originally published in 1954; and Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (London: Burns & Oates, 1976).

⁹ For an account of the proceedings of this conference, see Adrian Pabst and Angus Paddison (eds.), *The Pope and Jesus of Nazareth* (London: SCM Press, 2009).

that his approach to this question is closest to that of Weinandy, and that it was "above all through his intimate communion with his Father in prayer [that] Jesus came to understand who he was."¹⁰ Peter Casarella asserted that the literary, hermeneutical and theological key to *Jesus of Nazareth* is the "search for a discrete face of an otherwise invisible God," that is, "a personal encounter. . .the existential and ontological reality of a personal revelation."¹¹ In other forums, Eero Huovinen claims that Jesus' relationship with the Father is the underlying theme of *Jesus of Nazareth*.¹² Richard Hays asserts that the "single most dominant theme throughout *Jesus of Nazareth* is Jesus' 'intimate unity with the Father.' The key to interpreting Jesus' identity lies in his relation to God, which is ontologically grounded in his pre-existent unity with the Father and expressed in his communion with the Father in prayer."¹³ Thomas Weinandy believes the major theme of the *Jesus of Nazareth* to be that "Jesus is the incarnate Son of God who bestows upon all believers what he himself shares—a filial intimacy and knowledge of the Father," and that this revelation "results from his human prayer, which is 'a participation in this filial communion with the Father' ."¹⁴

¹⁰ Fergus Kerr, "If Jesus knew he was God, how did it work?" in Pabst and Paddison (eds.), *The Pope and Jesus of Nazareth*, 50-67, at 53 and 66. Cf. Thomas G. Weinandy, *Jesus the Christ* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor), 30-39.

¹¹ Peter J. Casarella, "Searching for the Face of the Lord in Ratzinger's *Jesus of Nazareth*," in Pabst, *The Pope and Jesus of Nazareth*, 83-93, at 84.

¹² Eero Huovinen, "The Pope and Jesus," *Pro Ecclesia* 17 (2) (2008): 139-151, at 146. Cf. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, 44, 66, 95, 265-266, 291, 304, 310 & 316.

¹³ Richard B. Hays, "Benedict and the Biblical Jesus," *First Things* 175 (Aug/Sept, 2007): 49-53, at 50.

¹⁴ Thomas G. Weinandy, O.F.M., Cap., "Pope Benedict XVI: A Biblical Portrait of Jesus," *Nova et Vetera* 7 (1) (2009): 19-34, at 23 and 24. The internal quotation is from Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism*, 7.

Explicit References

In his recent work on the Christocentric shift in Ratzinger's theology, Emery de Gaál touches only lightly upon Ratzinger's 'spiritual Christology,' yet he gives some important insights.¹⁵ He asserts that, for Ratzinger, the prayer of Jesus is the basic affirmation of his person, that it is Jesus' filial relationship with his Father which is at the root of the question of human freedom and liberation, that we must participate in the prayer of Jesus if we are to know and understand him, that both the Church and the Eucharist have their origin in the prayer of Jesus, that only in a spiritual Christology will a spirituality of the Eucharist reveal itself, and that theology is ultimately grounded in prayer.¹⁶ Apart from these points, the most important comment that de Gaál makes is upon the dyolethetic roots of Ratzinger's 'spiritual Christology' and its implication for human volition. He thinks that, for Ratzinger, the teaching of the Third Council of Constantinople "implies that there exists a proper dignity of Christ's human nature, which is being absorbed into the divine will; both blend into one will. The human and divine identities move into one subject as a pure affirmation of the Father's will. In Jesus, human volition acquires a divine form, and an 'alchemy of being' occurs."¹⁷ De Gaál's use of terms such as 'absorbed' and 'blend' is somewhat alarming. If he is correct, Ratzinger could be accused of positing a union of the human and divine wills in Jesus that seems to tend towards a monothelitite position. But de Gaál may be using his terms ambiguously.

Joseph Murphy, in his brief exposition of Ratzinger's Christology, is aware of the importance of the prayer of Jesus in that Christology and, indeed, makes the

¹⁵ Emory Emery de Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). See 61-161 for de Gaál's exposition of Ratzinger's Christology.

¹⁶ De Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, 4-5 and 86-88.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 219.

assertion that the Church's Christological dogmas owe much to "her reflection on [Jesus'] relationship with God, particularly as expressed in his prayer."¹⁸ Murphy looks at the dyotheletic teaching of St. Maximus the Confessor and the Third Council of Constantinople and how, in *Behold the Pierced One*, "Ratzinger develops the theme [of the Council as to] how our freedom is realized through its insertion into Christ's prayer."¹⁹ Murphy also points out that the Council sought to oppose not only monothelitism, but also its precursor, the heresy of monoenergism, which held that Christ had only one energy or active force, and hence could not engage in genuinely human activity (*energeia*).²⁰

Scott Hahn, in his study of Ratzinger's biblical theology, also focuses briefly on Ratzinger's 'spiritual Christology.' However, although brief, Hahn's conviction is that Ratzinger's emphasis on the relationship between the person and the prayer of Jesus is one of his "most unique and important contributions to Christology."²¹

Two other works which deal specifically with Ratzinger's 'spiritual Christology' are an essay by Aaron Riches on the human and divine wills of Christ, which draws, in part, upon Ratzinger's work on the dyothelite Christology of Maximus and Constantinople III, and another by Helmut Hoping on the relationship between Ratzinger's 'spiritual Christology' and his understanding of the liturgy.²² Riches refers to Ratzinger's endorsement in *Behold*

¹⁸ Murphy, *Christ Our Joy*, 120-121.

¹⁹ Ibid., 124.

²⁰ Ibid., 125.

²¹ Scott W. Hahn, *Covenant and Communion: The Biblical Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 143. Hahn regards this emphasis as so important that he has reprinted Ratzinger's seven theological theses from *Behold the Pierced One* in the Journal of which he is the editor. See "Seven Theses on Christology and the Hermeneutic of Faith," *Letter & Spirit* 3 (2007): 189-209.

²² Aaron Riches, "After Chalcedon: The Oneness of Christ and the Dyothelite Mediation of his Theandric Unity," *Modern Theology* 24 (2008): 199-224; and Helmut Hoping,

the Pierced One of the Maximian Christology of Constantinople III; he claims it overcomes “a residual binary logic in Chalcedonian Christology” by clarifying the mode of unity of the humanity and divinity of Christ.²³ According to Riches, Ratzinger holds that

a theology of the filial prayer of Jesus specifies the mode of mutual indwelling of divinity and humanity in the Son’s singular synthetic Person. Therefore, speculative reflection on the prayer of the Son concretely abolishes whatever latent binary logic is unwittingly preserved at Chalcedon. . .[for Ratzinger] the Maximian achievement lies pre-eminently in the abolition of every dualism of the two natures in Christ.²⁴

Riches believes that Ratzinger is attracted to the Maximian Christology because he thinks it will help overcome a certain dualism in the contemporary liturgy, which

suffers on account of a dualism in Christology, a discretely dissociated anthropology that presumes it is possible to imitate the ‘human’ Jesus apart from the ‘divinity’ of the Son of God. Under this condition, the liturgy becomes increasingly focused on ‘our’ humanity (the self-evident ‘given’ of our nature). The liturgy is thus inclined to become a ‘self-enclosed’ parody of *latría*, a parody that fails to doxologically open in *metanoía* to the divine horizon of the filial-union Jesus gifts to the world in gifting himself (i.e., his own personhood). In this way, the contemporary form of the liturgy is posited as betraying a Nestorian dissociation of humanity and divinity in Christ. Attempting to discretely follow the ‘pure’ humanity of Jesus, the liturgy loses the Person of the Son and in so doing loses the personal pattern of humanity’s divine *sequela*.²⁵

“Gemeinschaft mit Christus: Christologie und Liturgie bei Joseph Ratzinger,” *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift Communio* 35 (2006): 558-572.

²³ Riches, “After Chalcedon,” 207.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 208.

Riches claims that "the quasi-Nestorianism that expressed itself in neoscholasticism before Vatican II (paralleling 'grace' and 'nature') is reincarnated after the Council among those theologians who would dispense with the impassable Logos and attempt to find comfort in the dissociated 'humanity' of a Jesus who merely 'suffers with us.'"²⁶

Hoping's essay seeks to establish the relationship between Ratzinger's Christology and his understanding of the liturgy. He does so under three aspects, the first of which looks at Ratzinger's understanding of *der spirituelle und doxologische Kern der Christologie* (the spiritual and doxological core of Christology).²⁷ Thus Hoping sees Ratzinger's 'spiritual Christology' as the basis for Ratzinger's understanding of the liturgy.

THE ORIGIN OF RATZINGER'S SPIRITUAL CHRISTOLOGY

Ratzinger's spiritual Christology grew from two roots. The first was a talk on the Sacred Heart.²⁸ The second was the 1300th anniversary of the Third Council of Constantinople (681 AD).²⁹ On the development of this spiritual Christology, Ratzinger remarked that he "had no time to make a study of this particular theme, but the thought of a spiritual Christology remained with me and found its way into other works."³⁰ The first occasion on which this thought were developed was in an address given in 1982 to a CELAM congress on Christology. In this address, Ratzinger saw his task as presenting "in some way

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Hoping, "Gemeinschaft mit Christus," 558.

²⁸ Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, 9. The talk referred to was given in 1981 at a Congress on the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

the inner totality and unity...of christology...[since] the loss of a total view is the real central problem of the contemporary christological debate.”³¹

Ratzinger maintains that, since Vatican II, the axis of theological debate has shifted from particular *quaestiones disputatae* to the nature of theology itself. In the case of Christology, this has been made manifest by questions on the relation between Christological dogma and the testimony of Sacred Scripture, between biblical Christology and the real historical Jesus, and between Jesus and the Church.³² The penchant for speaking of ‘Jesus’ rather than ‘Christ’ “reveals a spiritual process with wide implications, namely, the attempt to get behind the Church’s confession of faith and reach the purely historical figure of Jesus.”³³ A faithfulness to Jesus which has no place for the Church is the result of this division between the ‘Jesus of [the theologian’s] history’ and the ‘Christ of [the Church’s] faith.’ According to Ratzinger, “This in turn goes beyond Christology and affects soteriology, which must necessarily undergo a similar transformation. Instead of ‘salvation’ we find ‘liberation’ taking pride of place...[which] automatically adopts a critical stance over against the classical doctrine of how man becomes a partaker of grace.”³⁴

For Ratzinger, authentic theology “understands itself as interpreting the common faith of the Church, not as reconstructing a vanished Jesus, at long last piercing together his real history.”³⁵ In order to arrive at an authentic

³¹ Ibid., 13.

³² Ibid., 13-14.

³³ Ibid., 14.

³⁴ Ibid., 14.

³⁵ Ibid., 15.

Christology, he proposes seven theses which outline "certain fundamental characteristics of the indivisible unity of Jesus and Christ, Church and history."³⁶

PROLEGOMENA TO A SPIRITUAL CHRISTOLOGY

The fact that Ratzinger had this insight in 1981 does not mean that he had not previously given *any* thought to this aspect of Christology. Rather, in his *Introduction to Christianity*, and more so in *The God of Jesus Christ*, we can find the beginnings of what he later came to call a spiritual Christology.

The Prayer of the Son in the Gospel according to John

For Ratzinger, the self-identification of Jesus as 'Son' is the 'guiding thread' in John's Christology. He believes that it reveals the total relativity of Jesus' existence as the one sent 'from' the Father 'for' us. It reveals "the starting point of all Christology: in the identity of work and being, of deed and person, of the total merging of the person in his work and in the total coincidence of the doing with the person himself."³⁷ For Ratzinger, the description of Jesus as 'Son' comes from the prayer of Jesus, in that it is the natural corollary to 'Abba.' If Jesus addressed God thusly, then he is the 'Son' in a unique way. Ratzinger holds that

³⁶ Ibid. These Christological theses are not the first proposed by Ratzinger. In "Thesen zur Christologie," *Dogma und Verkündigung* (München/Freiburg: Erich Wewel, 1973), 133-136, he gives ten Christological theses. However, the only bibliographical details given for this article is 'Unveröffentlicht' (Unpublished). No date is given. Reading these theses, one gets the impression that they were composed prior to *Introduction to Christianity*. In them, the starting point for Christology in the New Testament is the Resurrection. The Crucifixion, the Lordship of Jesus and his claim to divinity are grounded in the Resurrection. The formula of the Father's identification of Jesus as his Son is presented as an interpretation of the Resurrection and what it reveals about Jesus. John's Gospel is presented as giving the clearest view of the identity of Jesus as the Word and Son of God. The Church's professions of faith and Christological creeds reach a certain completion in the Council of Chalcedon.

³⁷ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 225-226.

John 'ontologises' the 'phenomenal' character of what Jesus says and does. These phenomena reveal the truth about his being; that he is Son, Word and mission. Foundational amongst these phenomema is how Jesus prays. Thus Ratzinger traced the foundation of John's Christology back to the prayer of Jesus.

Furthermore, Ratzinger saw the dogmas of Nicea and Chalcedon as developing out of John's Christology, which presents Jesus' self-sacrifice for human beings as a prolongation of his converse with the Father. He thinks that these dogmas put into ontological terms that which is revealed by the prayer relationship '*Abba-Son*,' and the actions of Jesus which arise from this relationship.³⁸ These 'acts' reveal the 'being' of Jesus, and an identity of these acts and that being.³⁹

The Prayer of Jesus and the Theology of the Incarnation

One would expect that a concentration upon the prayer of Jesus would contribute to a theology of the Cross, especially as most examples of Jesus' prayers found in the Gospels are in the context of his Passion (cf. Mt: 26:39-44, 27:46; Mk: 14:35-40, 15:34; Lk: 22:31-32, 40-44, 23:34, 46; Jn: 17:1-26). Yet, in *The God of Jesus Christ*, in looking at the Incarnation, Ratzinger characterises it as an act of prayer. He bases this on his reading of Hebrews 10:5-7. He sees this passage as presenting the Incarnation as a dialogue between the Father and the Son, as an event within the Trinity. He interprets the 'body' which is given to Jesus as human existence itself. In Jesus, obedience has become incarnate. The dialogue between the Father and the Son in the Godhead becomes the Son's obedient acceptance of a 'body.' The humanity of Jesus is "prayer that has taken on a concrete form. In this sense, Jesus' humanity is something wholly spiritual,

³⁸ Ibid., 227.

³⁹ Ibid., 227-228.

something that is 'divine' because of its origin."⁴⁰ While one may ask how the Father-Son dialogue within the Trinity can also be prayer, and how human existence itself can be prayer, there can be no denying that this passage from Hebrews seems to present the *kenosis* of the Son as prayer. Consequently, if one wishes to dispute Ratzinger's interpretation, one must propose a better interpretation. What we have here is a desire to connect a theology of Incarnation with a theology of the Cross. For Ratzinger, the *kenosis* of the Son reveals a profound link between the Incarnation and the Cross. Divine 'sonship' is "the release and handing back of himself" to the Father. Within creation, it becomes 'obedience unto death' (Phil 2:8).

The Prayer of Jesus in the Gospel according to Luke

The most explicit precursor of a 'spiritual Christology' is to be found in Ratzinger's exposition of the public ministry of Jesus as portrayed by Luke. Indeed, he goes so far to say that "Luke has raised the prayer of Jesus to the central christological category from which he describes the mystery of the Son."⁴¹ Ratzinger holds that, "What Chalcedon expressed by means of a formula drawn from the sphere of Greek ontology is affirmed by Luke in an utterly personal category based on the historical experience of the earthly Jesus; in substantial terms, this corresponds completely to the formula of Chalcedon."⁴² Ratzinger sees the prayer of Jesus as a "dialogue between the Son's will and the Father's will."⁴³ It reveals the "innermost essence of the mystery of Jesus."⁴⁴ It reveals that "the inner foundation of the Resurrection is already present in the

⁴⁰ Ratzinger, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 67.

⁴¹ Ibid., 82.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 81.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

earthly Jesus,” that the core of his existence is revealed in his dialogue with the Father.⁴⁵ Only those “who share in the solitude of Jesus in this dialogue with the Father can profess who Jesus really is.”⁴⁶

The Absence of the Holy Spirit

However, when looking at the beginnings of a ‘spiritual Christology’ in Ratzinger’s earlier Christology, it becomes apparent that there is a substantial *lacuna*: the almost complete absence of the Holy Spirit. Except for the briefest of references to the role of the Holy Spirit in the Incarnation and Resurrection, the Spirit plays no part in Ratzinger’s understanding of *the Christ*.⁴⁷ That is to say, Ratzinger speaks of the Anointed One, and of the Father who anoints him, but of the One with whom he is anointed there is hardly a sign. In both *Introduction to Christianity* and *The God of Jesus Christ*, the respective sections on the Holy Spirit are little more than appendices; even then, in these sections Ratzinger focuses exclusively on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Church.⁴⁸

Even where we would most reasonably expect to find some reference to the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit, none is to be found. When Ratzinger turns to Luke and looks at three of his accounts of Jesus praying, one would expect that some attention would be paid to the Holy Spirit, given the prominence of the role of the Spirit in the person and mission of Jesus as portrayed in that Gospel. Yet, such is not the case.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 81-82.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 272; and *The God of Jesus Christ*, 99.

⁴⁸ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 331-359; and *The God of Jesus Christ*, 103-113.

For example, in Ratzinger's analysis of the Transfiguration, as found in Luke, there is no mention of the prominent place of the Holy Spirit, manifested in the form of the cloud which overshadows Jesus and the three disciples, and from which the Father's voice is heard, testifying to the Son (Lk: 9:34-35). Even though Ratzinger speaks of the dialogue between the Son and his Father as being a "total dialogue of love, [transformed by] the fire of love," the person who is the love of the Father for the Son and the love of the Son for the Father is not mentioned.⁴⁹ Again, when Ratzinger analyses Matthew 11:27 in terms of the light it sheds upon how the Son is able to reveal the Father to us, although he places a great emphasis upon the self-giving of the Father and Son to each other in an "exchange of eternal love, both the eternal gift and the eternal return of this gift," there is no allusion to the One who is 'gift' personified.⁵⁰ Finally, in looking at the Son's dialogue with the Father as the reason for the Resurrection of Jesus, Ratzinger states that the Resurrection brings the human existence in Jesus "into the trinitarian dialogue of eternal love itself."⁵¹ Once again, even though a specific reference is made to the Trinity, the personal nature of this eternal love, and his role in bringing the humanity of Jesus into the divine *perichoresis*, is not addressed. The question of whether or not Ratzinger, in developing a 'spiritual Christology,' fills in this *lacuna* is of crucial importance for assessing the validity of that Christology. For how can one have a 'spiritual Christology' without the Holy Spirit?

⁴⁹ Ratzinger, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 82.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 91.

⁵¹ Ibid., 84.

**THEORY - THE PRINCIPLES OF RATZINGER'S SPIRITUAL CHRISTOLOGY IN
*BEHOLD THE PIERCED ONE***

Ratzinger first outlined his seven theses in his talk to CELAM. His spiritual Christology is not an addition to his normal Christology. Rather, he sees it as a more effective way to arrive at an authentic Christology which overcomes the many divisions currently present in that portion of theology. Although Ratzinger simply numbers these theses, they can be denominated as follows—filial, soteriological, personal, ecclesial, dogmatic, volitional and hermeneutical.

The filial thesis: "According to the testimony of Holy Scripture, the center of the life and person of Jesus is his constant communication with the Father."⁵²

In this first thesis Ratzinger reiterates, in a condensed form, his thinking on the development of the title 'Son' as the Church's ultimate confession of who Jesus truly is.⁵³ Contrary to the view that can be found in modern exegesis and history of doctrine that "this kind of concentration of the historical inheritance may be a falsification of the original phenomenon simply because the historical distance is too great," Ratzinger puts forward the view that, in the use of this term, "the Church was responding precisely to the basic historical experience of those who had been eyewitnesses of Jesus' life."⁵⁴ He is convinced of this because he maintains that "the entire Gospel testimony is unanimous that Jesus' words and deeds flowed from this most intimate communion with the Father."⁵⁵

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 15-17. Cf. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 213-228.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Once again, Ratzinger goes back to Luke's stress on this point.⁵⁶ He recalls the three examples which he gave in *The God of Jesus Christ*—the calling of the Twelve (Lk: 6:12-17), Peter's profession of faith (Lk: 9:18-20), and the Transfiguration (Lk: 9:28-36). In the first of these, Ratzinger sees not just the calling of the Twelve as proceeding from the Son's converse with the Father, but the Church as being "born in that prayer in which Jesus gives himself back into the Father's hands and the Father commits everything to the Son."⁵⁷ The communication of the Son and Father constitutes the "true and ever-new" origin and foundation of the Church.⁵⁸

In Peter's confession of faith, Ratzinger sees the second stage of the Church's development. It is when the disciples begin "to share in the hiddenness of [Jesus'] prayer...[that they grasp and express] the fundamental reality of the person of Jesus as a result of having seen him praying, in fellowship with the Father."⁵⁹ Ratzinger holds that, according to Luke,

The Christian confession of faith comes from participating in the prayer of Jesus, from being drawn into his prayer and being privileged to behold it; it interprets the experience of Jesus' prayer, and its interpretation of Jesus is correct because it springs from a sharing in what is most personal and intimate to him.⁶⁰

In essence, Ratzinger identifies the Christian profession of faith in Jesus not as a proposition, but as prayer. It is from participation in the prayer of Jesus that the Church arises.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Ibid., Cf. Ratzinger, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 66-68.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

In the third example, the Transfiguration makes visible what actually takes place in Jesus' prayer–revelation. As Ratzinger says, "Jesus' proclamation proceeds from this participation in God's radiance, God's glory, which also involves a seeing with the eyes of God—and therefore the unfolding of what was hidden."⁶² Revelation and prayer are united in the person of Jesus, in the mystery of his Sonship. Moreover, Jesus' communication with the Father is the true reason for his Resurrection. The Son, who shares in the glory of the Father, cannot remain in death. Taking these three examples together, Ratzinger concludes that, for Luke, "the whole of Christology—our speaking of Christ—is nothing other than the interpretation of his prayer: the entire person of Jesus is contained in this prayer."⁶³

Ratzinger gives three more examples from the other Evangelists to illustrate that his view is not unique to Luke. He calls attention to Mark's preservation of Jesus addressing the Father as *Abba*, a familiarity which demonstrates the absolute uniqueness of Jesus' relationship with the Father, and makes the term 'Son' the only possible one for fully expressing the relationship from Jesus' side (Mk: 14:36).⁶⁴ Further illustrating the uniqueness of this relationship is the account of Jesus teaching his disciples to pray (Mt: 6:9-13). The fact that the disciples are told to address God as 'Our Father' shows that although the disciples pray as a community, and through their common prayer participate in Jesus' relationship with God, the mode of their relationship with God is nevertheless not absolutely identical with that of Jesus, who is able to prayer 'my Father' in a unique way.⁶⁵ Finally, having seen that this relationship is not only expressed in the word 'Son,' but also in a series of formulas found throughout

⁶² Ibid., 20.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 20-21.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 21.

Jesus' preaching in the synoptic Gospels that express his awareness that he speaks and acts not from himself, but from another, we can see that the emphasis in John's Gospel on 'Word,' 'Son,' and 'send' is not alien to the synoptic tradition. For Ratzinger, the fourth Gospel shows who Jesus is from the experience of intimate friendship.⁶⁶

The soteriological thesis: "Jesus died praying. At the Last Supper he had anticipated his death by giving himself, thus transforming his death, from within, into an act of love, into a glorification of God."⁶⁷

Ratzinger believes that in the prayer of Jesus we have the clue which links together Christology and soteriology, "the person of Jesus and his deeds and sufferings," and that Jesus fashioned his death into an act of prayer, of worship.⁶⁸ The fact that the 'death cry' of Jesus was misunderstood by the bystanders serves to demonstrate that only faith can recognise the messianic fulfilment of Psalm 21. Ratzinger holds that all the Evangelists agree on this Psalm being uniquely and complete fulfilled in the Passion of Jesus; it was the key Christological text of the early Christians.⁶⁹ The last words of Jesus were an expression of his innermost essence, which was to be in dialogue with the Father. His death was his handing over of himself to the Father completely. He fulfils Scripture in that Scripture becomes flesh in him.⁷⁰

According to Ratzinger, once we see this, we can understand the indissoluble bond between the Last Supper and the death of Jesus. When Jesus anticipates his

⁶⁶ Ibid., 21-22.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 22.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 22.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 22-24.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 24.

death by sharing his body and blood, he transforms his death into an act of love. This is why John sees the death of Jesus as a glorification of God and of the Son (Jn 12:28; 17:21). What by nature is the destruction of communication is transformed into the supreme act of communication, having the power to redeem because it “signifies the triumph of love over death.”⁷¹

*The personal thesis: “Since the center of the person of Jesus is prayer, it is essential to participate in his prayer if we are to know and understand him.”*⁷²

Following the axiom of the co-naturality of the knower and the known, and what follows from it regarding the knowing of a person, (that there needs to be an entering into, a becoming one with, the one who is known in order to reach an understanding of that one), Ratzinger applies this axiom to religion. According to Ratzinger, the fundamental act of religion is prayer, and in Christianity prayer is “the act of self-surrender by which we enter the Body of Christ,” and is thus an act of love.⁷³

Since the prayer of Jesus, his communication with the Father, is the central act of his person, “it is only possible really to understand this person by entering into this act of prayer, by participating in it.”⁷⁴ Ratzinger sees Jesus’ comment that no one can come to him unless drawn by the Father (Jn 6:44) as confirmation of this. Unless one has a relationship with God “there can be no understanding of him who, in his innermost self, is nothing but relationship with

⁷¹ Ibid., 25.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 26.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

God, the Father."⁷⁵ One may know things *about* him, but intimate knowledge of the person himself will elude us. Thus Ratzinger states that,

Therefore, a participation in the mind of Jesus, i.e., in his prayer, which...is an act of love, of self-giving and self-expropriation to men, is not some kind of pious supplement to reading the Gospels, adding nothing to knowledge of him or even being an obstacle to the rigorous purity of critical knowing. On the contrary, it is the basic precondition if real understanding, in the sense of modern hermeneutics—i.e., the entering-in to the same time and meaning—is to take place.⁷⁶

What Ratzinger is proposing he calls a 'theological epistemology.' As he claims to find in the conversion of Paul (Acts 9:11), "The person who prays begins to see...as Richard of St. Victor says—'Love is the faculty of seeing.'"⁷⁷ While critical exegesis, the history of doctrine, and the anthropology of the human sciences are necessary, they are also insufficient. They "must be complemented by the theology of the saints, which is theology from experience. All real progress in theological understanding has its origin in the eye of love and in its faculty of beholding."⁷⁸

The ecclesial thesis: "Sharing in Jesus' praying involves communion with all his brethren. Fellowship with the person of Jesus, which proceeds from participation in his prayer, thus constitutes the all-embracing fellowship that Paul calls the 'Body of Christ.' So the Church—the 'Body of Christ'—is the true

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 27. Cf. PL 196:1203.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

subject of our knowledge of Jesus. In the Church's memory the past is present because Christ is present and lives in her."⁷⁹

As we have seen, according to Ratzinger, for us, God is not 'my Father' as he is for Jesus, but 'our Father.' We have the right to call God 'Father' because we have been created by him and for each other. However, "To recognize and accept God's Fatherhood always means accepting that we are set in relation to one another: man is entitled to call God 'Father' to the extent that he participates in the 'we'—which is the form under which God's love seeks him."⁸⁰

Besides a biblical foundation for this experience, Ratzinger posits a supporting existential one—human reason and historical experience. For him, the "history of religion and of the mind...[reveals] a peculiar dichotomy in the question of God."⁸¹ On the one hand, there has been an acceptance of rational evidence for the existence of God (cf. Wis 13:4; Rom 1:19f), and on the other, "a tremendous obscuring and twisting of the image of God," a point which St. Paul also takes up in the passage from Romans.⁸² When people try to name and describe the God whom we know to exist, "the image of God falls apart in contradictory aspects. They do not simply eliminate the primary evidence, but they so obscure it as to make it unrecognizable; indeed, in the extreme cases, they can actually destroy it entirely."⁸³

In addition, Ratzinger posits a recurring theme of revelation in the history of religions, showing that although man cannot himself create a relationship with God,

⁷⁹ Ibid., 27.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 27-28. Cf. Cyprian, *De dominica oratione* 10-11, CSEL III 1:273f.

⁸¹ Ibid., 28.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

the existing means of relating to God go back to an initiative on the latter's part, the tradition of which is passed on within a community as the wisdom of the ancients. To that extent, even the awareness that religion must rest on a higher authority than one's own reason, and that it needs a community as a 'carrier,' is part of mankind's basic knowledge, through found in manifold forms and even distortions.⁸⁴

Ratzinger then applies these biblical and existential insights to Jesus, maintaining that, although Jesus's personal relationship to God was unique, it did not depart from the pattern just described. For Ratzinger, Jesus' dialogue with the Father was also a dialogue with Moses and Elijah, the Law, and the Prophets (cf. Mk: 9:4). Jesus revealed the 'spirit' of the Old Testament and, in doing so, revealed the Father 'in the Spirit.' In doing so he fulfilled, rather than destroyed, the 'letter' of the Old Testament. He did not destroy the People of God, but renewed them, and gave 'the nations' access to the 'Spirit of revelation,' and hence to God the Father. Jesus did not found a new 'People of God,' a new Church. Rather, "Jesus made the old People of God into a new People by adopting those who believe in him into the community of his own self (of his 'Body')." ⁸⁵ According to Ratzinger, this adoption was made possible by the death of Jesus, which he transformed "into an act of prayer, an act of love, and thus by making himself communicable."⁸⁶ Putting it another way, Ratzinger states that

Jesus has entered into the already existing subject of tradition, God's people of Israel, with his proclamation and his whole person, and by doing so he has made it possible for people to participate in his most intimate and personal act of being, i.e., his dialogue with the Father.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Ibid., 29.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

For Christians, this means “that we are in communication with the living subject of tradition,” the Church.⁸⁸ According to Ratzinger, the New Testament bears witness to this reality in presupposing that the Church is its subject, in the sense of the one who ‘speaks’ it. The Johannine corpus expresses this in what Ratzinger calls the ‘ecclesial we’ (cf. 1 Jn 5:1-20; Jn 3:11), a ‘we’ that “points to the Church as the subject of knowledge in faith.”⁸⁹

Ratzinger also points to the concept of ‘remembrance’ in John’s Gospel, as demonstrating how “the Church’s tradition is the transcendental subject in whose memory the past is present.”⁹⁰ Over time, the Holy Spirit leads the Church to a deeper and clearer understanding of what she remembers; not an absolutely new knowledge, but “the process whereby the memory becomes aware of itself (cf. Jn: 14:26; 16:13).”⁹¹

According to Ratzinger, this ‘memory’ of the Church provides the hermeneutical context for the individual’s exercise of reason in understanding the faith of the Church. In understanding, as well as in love, there needs to be a ‘fusing’ of the ‘I’ with the ‘other.’ The ‘memory’ of the Church is enriched and deepened in two ways: “by the experience of love which worships...[and by being] continually refined by critical reason.”⁹² In other words, theology has an ecclesial quality which is “not an epistemological collectivism, not an ideology which violates reason, but a hermeneutical context which is essential to reason if it is to operate at all.”⁹³

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 31.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 32.

⁹³ Ibid.

*The dogmatic thesis: "The core of the dogma defined in the councils of the early Church consists in the statement that Jesus is the true Son of God, of the same essence as the Father and, through the Incarnation, equally of the same essence as us. Ultimately this definition is nothing other than an interpretation of the life and death of Jesus, which was preordained from the Son's primal conversation with the Father. That is why dogmatic and biblical Christology cannot be divorced from one another or opposed to one another, no more than Christology and sociology can be separated. In the same way, Christology 'from above' and 'from below,' the theology of the Incarnation and the theology of the Cross, form an indivisible unity."*⁹⁴

According to Ratzinger, this thesis follows from theses one and two, the testimony of Sacred Scripture regarding the prayer of Jesus, in particular his prayer on the Cross. Ratzinger holds that the dogma that Jesus is the true Son of God, of the same essence of the Father and of us, is simply puts the meaning of Jesus' prayer into the language of philosophical theology.⁹⁵

Ratzinger is aware of the charge that dogma has distorted the original 'Hebraic' faith in Jesus by replacing trust in saving grace with a 'Greek' doctrine about ontology. His response is to address the nature of salvation. His argument runs thusly: If Christ saves man, 'liberates' him, what is the nature of this liberation? What is 'human freedom?' Freedom without truth is not true freedom. Moreover, human freedom means being 'like God,' 'becoming like God,' even 'being God.' All human programs of liberation have this as their goal, since "the yearning for freedom is rooted in man's being."⁹⁶ Therefore, when we ask questions about truth and freedom we are asking ontological questions.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 32-33.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 33.

Ratzinger maintains that, because the question of being arises from the desire for freedom and the need for truth, it does not belong to any particular stage of man's intellectual development, but is perennial.⁹⁷

According to Ratzinger, the contemporary rejection of ontological questions does not spring from a desire for a return to a simple 'Hebraic' faith, but from a 'positivist' position that only looks at the phenomenal level and rejects the possibility of knowing the truth of being. However, "The question of truth and the question of freedom are involved in the question of being and therefore also in the question of God."⁹⁸ Ultimately, these questions *are* the question of God. Particular times may develop particular methods of addressing these questions, but they can never be put aside, and any interpretation of the New Testament which does so is theologically irrelevant.

Concretely, when we address the question of Jesus' prayer we are asking about the nature of his person, that which is central to his humanity. For Ratzinger,

the New Testament designates [the prayer of Jesus] as the place where man may actually become God, where his liberation may take place; it is the place where he touches his own truth and becomes true himself. The question of Jesus' filial relationship to the Father gets to the very root of the question of man's freedom and liberation, and unless this is done, everything else is futile. Any liberation of man which does not enable him to become divine betrays man, betrays his boundless yearning.⁹⁹

To the charge that 'of one substance with the Father' departs from the biblical understanding of who Jesus is, Ratzinger replies that it simply translates the word 'Son' into philosophical language. According to him, such a translation

⁹⁷ Ibid., 34.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 35.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

became necessary when faith began to reflect upon and ask questions about what exactly the word 'Son' meant when applied to Jesus. Was it being used metaphorically, or did it have a more concrete meaning? According to Ratzinger, 'of one substance' means that the term 'Son' is to be understood literally, not metaphorically. Thus, the phrase does not add to the testimony of the New Testament; it defends it from being allegorised. "Jesus is not only *described* as the Son of God, he *is* the Son of God."¹⁰⁰

*The volitional thesis: "The so-called Neo-Chalcedon theology which is summed up in the Third Council of Constantinople (680-681) makes an important contribution to a proper grasp of the inner unity of biblical and dogmatic theology, of theology and religious life. Only from this standpoint does the dogma of Chalcedon (451) yield its full meaning."*¹⁰¹

According to Ratzinger, the Council of Chalcedon left a residual parallelism of the two natures in Christ. It was this parallelism which enabled the genesis of certain post-conciliar divisions. What needed to be clarified was the mode of unity of the true humanity and divinity of Jesus. This meant a clarification of the nature of the one Person in Christ, so that there could be seen a unity of mutual indwelling and not just a juxtaposition. According to Ratzinger, "Only in this way can there be that genuine 'becoming like God,' without which there is no liberation and no freedom."¹⁰²

In Ratzinger's view, the achievement of the Third Council of Constantinople was twofold. First, it preserved the human nature of Christ from any amputation or reduction. Secondly, it abolished any dualism or parallelism of the two

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 36.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰² Ibid., 38.

natures, which had been adopted in order to protect the human freedom of Jesus. Ratzinger maintains that this attempt to safeguard Jesus' human freedom forgot that "when the human will is taken up into the will of God, freedom is not destroyed; indeed, only then does genuine freedom come into its own."¹⁰³

Ratzinger's reading of Constantinople III is that when the human will of Jesus follows the divine will it is not absorbed into the divine will, but becomes one—not in a 'natural' manner, but in freedom. The metaphysical twoness of the wills remain, but unity is achieved in the realm of the person. The two wills become one personally, not naturally. This free unity, a form of unity created by love, is "higher and more interior than a mere natural unity," corresponding to the highest form of unity, the trinitarian.¹⁰⁴

The text which the Council cites in order to illustrate this unity is John 6:38: "I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who send me." Ratzinger understands the passage thusly:

Here it is the divine Logos who is speaking, and he speaks of the human will of the man Jesus as his will, the will of the Logos. With this exegesis of John 6:38 the Council indicates the unity of the subject in Christ. There are not two 'I's in him, but only one. The Logos speaks in the I-form of the human will and mind of Jesus; it has become his I, has become adopted into his I, because the human will is completely one with the will of the Logos. United with the latter, it has become a pure Yes to the Father's will.¹⁰⁵

Ratzinger maintains that this distinction, which he thinks has received little attention until now, was worked out by St. Maximus the Confessor in his distinction between "the *θέλημα φυσικόν*, which belongs to the nature and thus exists separately in Christ's godhead and manhood, from the 'gnomic' *θέλημα*,

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 39.

'which is identical with the *liberum arbitrium* and pertains to the person; in Christ it can only be a single *θέλημα* since he subsists in the divine person,' (citing J. Beck in H. Jedin (ed.), *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte II*, 2 (Freiburg: 1975): 39-43, at 41.)"¹⁰⁶ According to Ratzinger, Maximus illuminates the context of the Council's teaching by way of reference to the prayer of Jesus on the Mount of Olives, a prayer in which the inner life of the Word-made-man is revealed. In the prayer, "Not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mk: 14:36), we see the human will of Jesus assimilating itself to the will of the Son. Ratzinger states that,

In doing this, [Jesus] receives the Son's identity, i.e., the complete subordination of the I to the Thou, the self-giving and self-expropriation of the I to the Thou. This is the very essence of him who is pure relation and pure act. Wherever the I gives itself to the Thou, there is freedom because this involves the reception of the 'form of God.'¹⁰⁷

Ratzinger thinks that this is even clearer if we approach it from the side of the Logos, who

so humbles himself that he adopts a man's will as his own and addresses the Father with the I of this human being; he transfers his own I to this man and thus transforms human speech into the eternal Word, into his blessed 'Yes, Father.' By imparting his own I, his own identity, to this human being, he liberates him, redeems him, makes him God. Now we can take the real meaning of 'God has become man' in both hands, as it were: the Son transforms the anguish of a man into his own filial obedience, the speech of the servant into the Word which is the Son.¹⁰⁸

Ratzinger is convinced that it is only our participation in this freedom of Jesus, the Son, this unity of our will with that of God, which meets our desire to become divine. The prayer "which enters into the praying of Jesus and becomes

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 39-40. Here Ratzinger is citing Hans-Georg Beck in Hubert Jedin (ed.), *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte II* (Freiburg: Herder, 1975): 39-43, at 41.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 40.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 41.

the prayer of Jesus in the Body of Christ [is] freedom's laboratory."¹⁰⁹ The only way to the right ordering of the world is through a conscience that has been radically recreated through this participation.

*The hermeneutical thesis: "The historical-critical method and other modern scientific methods are important for an understanding of Holy Scripture and tradition. Their value, however, depends on the hermeneutical (philosophical) context in which they are applied."*¹¹⁰

Ratzinger thinks that an incorrect use of the historical-critical method can lead to a divorce between scholarship and tradition, reason, and faith. Critical exegesis does not *ipso facto* poison faith, but neither is it the real magisterium. Faith and reason are not contradictory if exercised properly. Rather, an irrational faith is inhuman, and a faithless reason is blind.¹¹¹

Ratzinger holds that, like any tool, the effectiveness of the historical-critical method depends on how it is used—that is, on the hermeneutical and philosophical presuppositions one brings to its application. Such a context always exists, whether the historical critic is aware of it or not. There is no difficulty with a critical investigation of history, only with unexamined presuppositions.¹¹² The initial presupposition was that of the Enlightenment, which thought that history could correct dogma, could uncover a genuine historical Jesus who would correct the Christ of faith. Despite continual attempts to purge the method of rationalistic presuppositions, attempts which have yielded many important insights into the biblical testimony, the rationalistic

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 42.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 42.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 42-43.

¹¹² Ibid., 43.

approach which sidelines faith has led to multiple divorces, not just of Jesus and Christ, but the inner unity of the New Testament books, of the New and the Old Testaments, and of the historical Jesus himself. Rather than establishing who the 'real' Jesus is, this approach has produced multiple and conflicting portraits of Jesus, "the Jesus of the logia, the Jesus of this or that community, Jesus the philanthropist, Jesus the Jewish rabbi, the apocalyptic Jesus, Jesus the Zealot, Jesus the revolutionary, the political Jesus, etc."¹¹³ According to Ratzinger, these divisions reflect the divisions in human thinking and action, divisions which the real Jesus came to overcome.

Ratzinger then raises the question of how one can discern if a hermeneutic is valid or not. He takes a 'scientific' view, that "the legitimacy of an interpretation depends upon its power to explain things."¹¹⁴ Hence, the less an interpretation "needs to interfere with the sources, the more it respects the corpus as given and is able to show it to be intelligible from within, by its own logic, the more apposite such an interpretation is."¹¹⁵ The more an interpretation can truly unify, can truly achieve a synthesis, the more it is to be trusted.

Ratzinger holds that only the hermeneutic of faith can do this, and that this hermeneutic has a twofold unifying power. First, it alone has the unity of vision that can accept the whole testimony of the sources, with all their nuances, pluriformity, and apparent contradictions. For example, "Only the doctrine of the two natures joined together in one Person is able to open up a vista in which the apparent contradictions found in the tradition each have enough scope and can be moulded together into a totality."¹¹⁶ All rationalistic pictures of Jesus are partial, surviving only by absolutising a portion of the sources or postulating

¹¹³ Ibid., 44.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 45.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

theoretical sources behind the sources. Paradoxically, this involves “throwing doubt on some part of the historical corpus.”¹¹⁷ All histories are equal, but some histories are more equal than others.

The second unifying power of faith is its unique ability to transcend the differences between cultures, times, and peoples. Their particular values find a higher unity in the incarnate Word. Only the hermeneutic of faith can “initiate a spiritual fellowship in which everything belongs to everyone and there is a mutual relationship of giving and receiving, because of him who has given us himself and, in and with himself, the whole fullness of God.”¹¹⁸

Ratzinger concludes his elucidation of this thesis by stating that the unity of the person of Jesus, who embraces the human and divine, “prefigures that synthesis of man and world to which theology is meant to minister.”¹¹⁹ The theologian’s task is to “bring to light the foundations for a possible unity in a world marked by divisions...[and] to answer the question of how this unity can be brought about today.”¹²⁰ However, this can only be done if the theologian

enters that ‘laboratory’ of unity and freedom of which we have spoken, i.e., where his own will is refashioned, where he allows himself to be expropriated and inserted into the divine will, where he advances toward that God-likeness through which the kingdom of God can come. Thus we have arrived back at our starting point: Christology is born of prayer or not at all.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 46.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE THESES

An examination of Ratzinger's earlier Christology will show how he sought to reconcile some fundamental divisions in Christology: between faith and history, being and act, theology and anthropology, Christology and Soteriology, theology of the Incarnation and theology of the Cross.¹²² An investigation of the above seven theses present us with three immediate questions. First, how are these theses intended to help overcome the divisions just mentioned? Second, to what extent are these theses applied in Ratzinger's earlier Christology? And third, can one of the seven theses be regarded as a 'first principle'?

The Reconciling Intention of the Theses

All of the theses are intended to help overcome fundamental divisions in Christology and can indeed be applied to theology as a whole. The first thesis seeks to overcome the division between faith and history; the second seeks to overcome that between Christology and soteriology. The third thesis introduces the reconciliation of a division which Ratzinger sees as the ultimate division, that between theology and spirituality. This division has led to a rationalistic theology. It also has the potential, although this is not mentioned, of leading to an irrational piety. Another way of putting this is that this thesis intends to reconcile faith and reason.

This reconciliation between theology and spirituality could be likened to the replanting of a rootless theology—rootless, and hence lifeless and unable to give life. In this, Ratzinger is putting in contemporary terms a common patristic insight into the nature of theology: the theologian is one who prays. This insight

¹²² See Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 193-198 (for faith and history), 225-228 (for being and act), 211-212 (for theology and anthropology), 230-234 (for Christology and Soteriology), and 228-230 (for theology of the Incarnation and theology of the Cross).

was succinctly expressed by Evagrius Ponticus: “If you are a theologian, you will pray truly. And if you pray truly, you are a theologian.”¹²³ Before one can have an insightful conversation *about* God, one must have a conversation *with* God. This is the most fundamental reconciliation that needs to take place in contemporary practice of theology. This estrangement is the ultimate reason behind the other estrangements—the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, theology and anthropology, and even the theology of Incarnation versus the theology of the Cross. Ultimately, one should be able to see how all of the seven theses are related to the reconciliation of theology and spirituality—we can only come to the real Jesus through faithful prayer, through praying truly.

The fourth thesis aims at the reconciliation of faith and history, and also of the faith of the individual and that of the *ecclesia*. The fifth thesis continues the work of the second in seeking to reconcile Christology and soteriology, the theology of the Incarnation with the theology of the Cross. It also aims to address a divorce between dogmatic and biblical Christology. The sixth thesis contributes to the reconciliation of biblical and dogmatic Christology, theology and spirituality, and faith and reason. The final thesis also seeks to reconcile reason and faith, in the forms of scholarship (reason) and tradition (ecclesial faith).

The Earlier Applications of the Theses

We can see that the filial thesis is not new. In *Introduction to Christianity*, Ratzinger had identified the prayer of Jesus as the probable source of his self-description as ‘Son,’ since it is the corollary to ‘*Abba*,’ revealing the uniqueness of this communion with God. In *The God of Jesus Christ*, Ratzinger had already come to the conclusion that Luke in particular revealed that the centre of Jesus’

¹²³ Evagrius Ponticus, *Treatise on Prayer*, 61.

life and person was his prayer. When we come to the soteriological thesis, we find that Ratzinger has simply applied the filial thesis to the defining act of Jesus' life—his death. When we come to the personal thesis we find that it is an application of Ratzinger's position, that the foundation of Christology is faith, to his position that the defining act of faith is participation in the prayer of Jesus. The ecclesial thesis originates from Ratzinger's understanding that as Christians we are incorporated into the 'exemplary man' being united to the personal thesis. The dogmatic thesis, as Ratzinger tells us, flows from the filial and ecclesial theses, united with his prior position that the Christological dogma in the Creed reveals to us that the real Jesus of history is the Christ of faith. The volitional thesis is the one which appears to be genuinely new. It is a realisation that Ratzinger claims he did not come to until he began to study the teaching of the Third Council of Constantinople and the relevant writings of St. Maximus the Confessor. The hermeneutical thesis regarding the historical-critical method pre-existed Ratzinger's 'spiritual' Christology, but Ratzinger's understanding of personal and ecclesial faith, and consequently of hermeneutics, has been given a new depth owing to his perception of the fact that, as a believer, the theologian's task is rooted in participation in the prayer of Jesus.

The First Principle of Ratzinger's Spiritual Christology

A 'first principle' is a principle that cannot be deduced from another principle, but is the basis for the deduction of all other principles. However, a first principle is not simply plucked out of thin air. Before deduction comes induction. Induction is demonstration by experience, while deduction is demonstration by argument. For example, the first principle of epistemology is that we know that things exist. We know the reality of being. We know that things, including ourselves, exist because we experience their existence. To give a more mundane example, a man does not arrive at the knowledge of his wife's love for him

through a syllogism, but through the experience of being loved by her. From that, he can deduce certain things about the nature of spousal love.

One would expect that the ‘first principle’ of Ratzinger’s spiritual Christology would be the first that he gives. But this is not so. In his first thesis Ratzinger proposes that, despite the claims of ‘modern exegesis and the history of doctrine’ to the contrary, we know that in the testimony of Sacred Scripture the Church was responding precisely to the basic historical eyewitnesses of Jesus’ life. But how can we claim this knowledge? It has not been arrived at by inductive reasoning, since we have no direct experience of how the Church responded to the eyewitnesses of Jesus’ life. Nor is this conclusion deduced from prior propositions. Must it be placed in the category of knowledge accepted on trust from eyewitnesses, not on the basis of personal verification, a category into which much of human knowledge falls? The second thesis is a development the first. It, too, is based on the ‘testimony of Holy Scripture.’

It would seem that the actual ‘first principle’ of Ratzinger’s spiritual Christology is, in fact, a combination of the third and fourth theses—that we can only know and understand who Jesus truly is if we participate in his prayer, and that we do not participate in this prayer as isolated individuals, but as members of his Body, the Church. This is where Ratzinger claims to ground knowledge of Christ—in a personal experience which is also a corporate experience. This is knowledge that is ‘personally verified’ and not simply accepted on the word of another. The difficulty that another person has in accepting this kind of knowledge is that the other person can only be certain that it is true through their own personal verification. They too must discover the real Jesus in prayer.

Human beings have a tremendous capacity for misunderstanding and self-deception. If this is true of things to which we are ontologically equal or superior, how much more so when it comes to our knowledge of the mystery of God. However, we do not come to know God as isolated individuals. One’s

experience of Christ is not just the experience of the encounter with Christ in personal prayer, but the experience of encountering him when praying as a member of the Body of Christ. It is the experience of being drawn by Christ to himself in communion with other believers. Ultimately, the believer only comes to know Christ without misconception or self-deception through his Body. Faith comes through hearing the witness of other believers, and having that witness verified in one's own personal experience. Faith comes through the witness of the Holy Spirit *and* the teaching of the Apostles (Acts 2:37; 15:28), or rather, through the witness of the Holy Spirit through the teaching of the Apostles being personally verified by the Holy Spirit in one's own heart and mind. As St. Paul says, "For we know brethren, beloved of God, that he has chosen you; for our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 Thess: 1:4-5).

Thesis five, that the dogma defined in the councils of the early Church consists in the statement that Jesus is the true Son of God, of the same essence as the Father, is a consequence of theses one and two. Thesis six, on the neo-Chalcedon theology of the Third Council of Constantinople, builds on thesis five. Finally, the last thesis on the correct use of the historical-critical method follows from accepting theses three and four. The 'memory' of the Church provides the hermeneutical context for the individual's exercise of reason in understanding the faith of the Church. So, as to the correct order of the theses, if one begins with the 'testimony of Holy Scripture,' then the *logical* order is the one that is given. But if one begins with the 'testimony of the Holy Spirit,' then the *epistemological* order is three, four, seven, one, two, five, and six—personal, ecclesial, hermeneutical, filial, soteriological, dogmatic, and volitional.

THEORIA - BEHOLDING THE PIERCED ONE IN *JESUS OF NAZARETH*

In the forward to the second volume of *Jesus of Nazareth*, Ratzinger states that he has not attempted to write a Christology. If one compares *Introduction to Christology* with *Jesus of Nazareth*, one cannot dispute the assertion that the latter work is more in the *genre* of a meditation on the mysteries of Christ's life, or perhaps more in the form of a biblical Christology, than the earlier work. However, whilst it is not a fully worked out Christology as such, it cannot help *reveal* a Christology. It will not be possible within the constraints of this essay to give an exhaustive analysis the application of the seven theses in *Jesus of Nazareth*. However, a few brief pointers will be given as an aid to taking up that task.

It is no accident or poetic flight of fancy which causes Ratzinger to call *Jesus of Nazareth* his personal search for the face of Jesus. Right from the beginning, he introduces two fundamental themes of his spiritual Christology, the prayer of Jesus and the heart of God. His reflection on the mystery of Jesus focuses on him as the one who sees God 'face to face' in prayer, and thus is the one who can truly reveal him: "No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is nearest the Father's heart, who has made him known." (Jn: 1:18).¹²⁴ Ratzinger sees Jesus as the one who is the ultimate prophet, the one who goes beyond Moses, the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. Moses *spoke* to God 'face to face,' as to a friend. Yet he did not *see* God 'face to face.' He entered into the cloud of God's presence, but he could not see God's face. He had to be hidden in the cleft of a rock and only see God's back.¹²⁵ Because Jesus *sees* the Father 'face to face,' because he is the one 'closest to the Father's heart,' he can make the Father known in a definitive way. Jesus' teaching originates in this 'face-to-face' dialogue

¹²⁴ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, 6.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-6.

with the Father, "from the vision of the one who rests close to the Father's heart."¹²⁶ According to Ratzinger, "We have to start here if we are truly to understand the figure of Jesus as it is presented to us in the New Testament; all that we are told about his word, deeds, sufferings, and glory is anchored here."¹²⁷

Ratzinger goes on to state that the prayer of Jesus is fundamental for our understanding of who he is. The descriptions in the Gospels of Jesus praying 'alone' with his Father

lift the veil of mystery just a little; they give us a glimpse into Jesus' filial existence, into the source from which his action and teaching and suffering sprang. This 'praying' of Jesus is the Son conversing with the Father; Jesus' human consciousness and will, his human soul, is taken up into that exchange, and in this way human 'praying' is able to become a participation in this filial communion with the Father.¹²⁸

Jesus' message is not just about the Father. Rather,

Jesus is only able to speak about the Father in the way he does because he is the Son, because of his filial communion with the Father. The Christological dimension—in other words, the mystery of the Son as revealer of the Father—is present in everything Jesus says and does. Another important point appears here: We have said that in Jesus' filial communion with the Father, his human soul is also taken up into the act of praying. He who sees Jesus sees the Father (cf. Jn: 14:9). The disciple who walks with Jesus is this caught up with him into communion with God. And that is what redemption means: this stepping beyond the limits of human nature, which had been there as a possibility and an expectation in man, God's image and likeness, since the moment of creation.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Ibid., 6-7.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 7-8.

Here, at the very beginning of *Jesus of Nazareth*, Ratzinger delves into the divinisation of Jesus' humanity as effected by and revealed in his dialogue with the Father, and the divinisation of our humanity through participation in his prayer. One can also see three of Ratzinger's theses being given flesh—the filial, volitional and personal. Jesus' communication with the Father is the centre of his life and person; his human consciousness and will are taken up into that communication, and one who is in communication with Jesus is caught up into communion with God.

There has been much confusion as to the nature of *Jesus of Nazareth*. Is it exegesis or biblical theology? Is it scholarship or devotion? Our conclusion is that it is, in fact, an exercise in *theoria*, in beholding. However, Ratzinger's *theoria* is more than Aristotle's.¹³⁰ It is not just an activity of the mind, but of the heart as well. It is a 'heart to heart' beholding—the believer's heart beholding the pierced heart of Jesus, who, since he is the one nearest to the Father's heart, reveals that heart in his own.¹³¹ Nor is it an isolated beholding. It is a personal beholding in a corporate personality, the Body of Christ. 'It is no longer I that lives, but Christ that lives in me' (Gal: 2:20). Christ lives in the believer, and the believer lives in Christ. Christ prays in the believer, and the believer prays in Christ.¹³² Nor is it a passive beholding. It is a 'lived Christology,' not just a 'contemplated Christology.' Christ lives in the believer, and in his Body, and continues to love through them.

¹³⁰ See Chapter 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle presents *theoria* as an entirely self-contained activity of the mind.

¹³¹ Cf. Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, nos. 7, 12 and 19.

¹³² Cf. Augustine, *En. In Ps.* 60:1-2; 61:4; 85:1, 5.

DIVINE ECONOMY, DIVINE LITURGY: Liturgical Theology as a Retrieval of Figural Interpretation

Nathan Jennings

Now turn from the ancient to the recent, from the figure [*typon*] to the reality [*aletheian*]. There we have Moses sent from God to Egypt; here, Christ, sent by His Father into the world; there, that Moses might lead forth an oppressed people out of Egypt; here, that Christ might rescue a world buried under sins: there, the blood of a lamb was the spell against the destroyer; here, the blood of the unblemished Lamb Jesus Christ is made the charm to scare evil spirits: there the tyrant pursued even to the sea that ancient people; and in like manner this daring and shameless spirit, the author of evil, followed you, even to the very streams of salvation. The tyrant of old was drowned in the sea; and this present one disappears in the salutary water.

Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catecheses* I.3.

What is going on in the above passage? Is Cyril interpreting scripture, or is Cyril interpreting a Christian rite? Is Cyril interpreting scripture liturgically, or liturgy scripturally? I propose that the answer is yes; such an answer speaks to the nature and task of

“liturgical theology.” When “theology” means “exegesis,” then liturgical theology names a kind of contemplative engagement with scripture that assumes the divine service as its entry point, and here divine service means the divine economy construed as the “cosmic” liturgy. When we contemplate the divine economy, and the divine life itself, as the most proper meaning of the word “liturgy,” then what the tradition calls figuration and mystagogy represent two modes of discourse about the same theological reality. Liturgical theology engages discourse about that shared economic reality, retrieving *both* mystagogy and figuration; in so doing, it provides boundaries to both. This research envisions liturgical theology as part of the post-critical retrieval of ancient Christian approaches to scriptural interpretation.

I must make a few preliminary qualifications. My points are not likely to convince those who worry about figural reading in Christian theology.¹ De Lubac used the term “spiritual sense.” Frei and, more recently, Scott Hahn² say typology. I use the term “figuration,” following Augustine. It avoids the word “spirit,” which often turns off academics with its connotations in English. It simultaneously gathers up broader meaning than “typology” alone, but includes it. Many scholars who worry “typology” would not worry other traditional figurative senses, e.g., the tropological sense used by every preacher to our own day. I understand my proposal to follow Henri de Lubac’s retrieval of the pre-modern theological unity of exegesis, contemplation and Trinity (or the

¹ There is a vast body of literature available for those who are open to being so convinced. E.g., Henri de Lubac: *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), and Hans Frei: *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980) and the many works they inspired.

² Scott Hahn, *Letter and Spirit*, (New York: Doubleday, 2005).

“doctrine” thereof, or, better the “rule of faith”).³ The complete argument after future projects will conclude that, as liturgical theology finds one of its foundations in the work of de Lubac, current liturgical theological conundrums find resolution when re-contextualized within de Lubac’s total retrieval. All that the limitations of this article allow me to address is the link of liturgical theology with de Lubac’s retrieval of exegesis. This essay is a proposal, and therefore preparatory in nature, and I know that it will bring up unanswered questions. I beg the indulgence of the reader: these questions are best addressed in the process of putting this approach into action, concretely, upon biblical texts. The conclusion presents plans for future projects that engage biblical texts in the manner sketched here and provide, thereby, an opportunity to address the issues this article brings up.

In what follows, I start with a sketch of some key problems brought against liturgical theology in recent scholarship: what grants the discipline proper boundaries? what keeps it *liturgical*? what keeps it *theological*? The sections that follow deal with these issues respectively. First, I work out the meaning of the word “theology,” arguing that if theology is the interpretation of scripture, then any definition of theology needs to be, if not primarily, at least substantially hermeneutical in nature. Then, I work out the meaning of the word “liturgy,” arguing that the divine economy, and even the divine life itself, is the most proper meaning of the word “liturgy.” At that point I take a brief detour into what the ancients called “mystagogy,” arguing that mystagogy is the wider discourse that encompasses the figurative reading of scripture. This allows me to assert that “liturgical theology” contemplates scripture, whereas the rule of faith’s narrative summarizes a cosmic liturgy. I will conclude with what I hope this

³ Again, see the multi-volume work of de Lubac: *Medieval Exegesis*. For an excellent summary review on the most recent English edition, see Aaron Canty “Balancing Letter and Spirit,” *The Living Church*, February 27, 2011.

might entail for liturgical theology in particular, and post-critical retrieval of figuration in general.

THE “PROBLEM” WITH LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

Schmemmann⁴ inaugurated liturgical theology with the work of liturgical renewal in general and the respective work of Dom Gregory Dix and Henri de Lubac in particular. Dix’s and de Lubac’s retrievals overlap and implicate one another. Indeed, Dix’s “shape,” combined with de Lubac’s *corpus verum*, provided the womb from which Schmemmann would midwife “liturgical theology.” If liturgy makes the church (de Lubac) and the liturgy has its own internal dialogic (Dix), then that internal dialogue is the church’s fundamental theology (Schmemmann). Recent criticism has called into question both the roots of liturgical theology and synthesis that it is.

I find three major concerns in the literature critical of liturgical theology.⁵ One concern is that liturgical theologians reflect upon liturgy in a way that abstracts the ritual mysteries from their concretion in history and as human expressions (ritual theory). In other words, the worry is that liturgical theology is too abstract, too generalizing and not *liturgical* enough. This line of criticism throws into doubt what seems to be too romantic a view of liturgy found in the “shape” approach inherited from Dix. A related criticism, one which comes from the point of view that historiography provides a superior approach to liturgics, questions the chronological validity of the notion that liturgy represents *theologia*

⁴ Recent scholars have named a “Schmemmann-line” of liturgical theology. Different scholars include different theologians in this family lineage. M. B. Aune’s is the longest. “The Current State of Liturgical Theology: A Plurality of Particularities,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 53 (2009), 48.

⁵ Aune summarizes these amazingly well in the article mentioned above and also in a series of two articles: “Liturgy and Theology: Rethinking the Relationship,” *Worship* 81 (2007): 61-5.

prima (issues concerning the catchphrase *lex orandi lex credendi* fall under this category as well).

Another concern is that liturgical theologians have reduced the liturgy too much to an expression of a given community rather than as an act of God on behalf of God's people. In other words, the worry is that liturgical theology is too immanentizing and not *theological* enough.⁶ Such questioning calls into doubt how helpful a return of the church to *corpus verum* is for theology. If we make the church the true body, do we not reduce God to an expression of local community? A related question deriving from the concrete study of history concerns whether or not we should translate "liturgy" as "the work of the people." The worry is that such a translation furthers what is already an over-emphasis on human community. Recent etymological developments are seen as a boon in helping to mitigate against this.

The chief concern is the way in which both these "mistakes," that is to say, abstract and arbitrary "shape" together with a reduction of God to the community, combine and generate a "liturgical theology" that is boundless. What could delineate or define such a discourse? How would one know when one was successful or when one failed? And how would or could such discourse be held accountable? Wouldn't it be meaningful only to the local community that generated the given reflection? If so, as interesting as it might be for that community, how could it contribute to a scholarship that would be shareable? What could define the rules of such a discourse, so as to generate something rigorous enough to call "academic?" Such questioning forces us to ask whether Schmemmann's project is an historical dead end.

The "solution" usually granted to the first and final set of concerns is to turn to the concrete, the particular, and study it historically and perhaps

⁶ Again, Aune is the key and best expresser of this concern.

sociologically or anthropologically. If there is any theology left over, then focus on the transcendent and avoid reduction to community, thus solving the second concern. If there is no theology left over, well, more is the pity for so-called “liturgical theology,” but all the better for the advancement of sound liturgical scholarship.

Although I see each one of these critiques as legitimate in its own way, I do not agree with the solutions most recently proffered.⁷ The rest of this paper develops a different response to these legitimate doubts. Let us begin by looking at what theology is in the first place.

WHAT IS THE “THEOLOGY” OF “LITURGICAL THEOLOGY”?

“Theology”⁸ means “exegesis”; it names contemplative engagement with scripture. If theology is the interpretation of scripture, then any definition of theology needs to be, if not primarily, at least substantially hermeneutical in nature. Hermeneutics and its “circle” maps human understanding to the relationship between parts and wholes. Parts make sense within a whole. The whole is understood by comprehending the parts. Entry into the circle is made possible only with at least an initial grasp of the whole. Liturgical theology names the “whole” which grants comprehension: *liturgy*.⁹ And the parts

⁷ I mean here, again, Aune’s excellent articles.

⁸ “Theology,” of course, means lots of things, and lots of different things throughout history. See the now famous article by Frank Whaling, “The Development of the Word ‘Theology,’” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34 (1981). The classical meaning of “theology” is itself cultic. Theology is finding the words appropriate to hymning the deities. In this sense there is no distinction between *theologia prima* and *secunda*. I am indebted to a conversation with Walter Knowles for this point.

⁹ See Joyce Ann Zimmerman’s excellent work with this regard in her book on Ricoeur: *Liturgy as Language of Faith* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988), and in her summary of this topic, *Liturgy and Hermeneutics* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999).

discerned are themselves often concrete liturgies, but also the Christian life, call, and gospel. Which is to say that liturgical theology interprets scripture. But before I make my case I need to explain this approach to theology as hermeneutics.

Recall the foundational hermeneutics of Augustine's *de doctrina Christiana*.¹⁰ Augustine identifies a fundamental difference between signs and things. All signs are things but not all things are signs. Within this sign-to-thing relationship, Augustine relates the parts of scripture to the whole of scripture. The initial grasp of scripture comes through the rule of faith, and that as summarized by Christ in his person, and verbally in the summation of the law. But the scriptures themselves are a part of God's created reality as a whole. Entry into reality as a whole comes only through the imitation of the saints. Under this hermeneutic, figuration occurs when the context of the canonical scriptures as a whole is construed to be the divine economy—accessible, through contemplation, to saints, and, by imitation, to Christians, in any point of earthly history.

Now, not all rectangles are squares, but all squares are rectangles. These squares and rectangles provide an excellent analogy for hermeneutics. Modern hermeneutics rediscovered that human being recognizes patterns in behavior and that such recognition is itself behavior.¹¹ Understanding itself is an action. Squares are rectangles, but not all rectangles are squares. I take the rectangle-to-square distinction to be a contemporary restatement of Augustine's point about things and signs. All signs are things but not all things are signs. All discourse is behavior but not all behavior is discursive. Not all action is understanding but

¹⁰ Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, trans. D. W. Robertson (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1958).

¹¹ So, for example, Ricoeur's event and understanding, Gadamer's play and being "called up short."

understanding is an action. Not all patterns are recognition but all recognition is a pattern.

Are actions meaningless until understood? Not necessarily. Is understanding impotent until enacted? By definition.¹² Meaning proceeds from act, and speech and ritual are both actions. Action is primary. It is the outward correlate of the will. This is why Christianity ultimately did not become a Gnostic cult. It is love (which, of course, requires and generates knowledge), and not knowledge (alone) that saves.

Which is foundational, act or understanding? One of the real gifts of liturgical theology has been the reassertion of this hermeneutical claim of the foundational ontology of action over understanding, event over meaning. This is the real importance behind the claim that liturgy is *theologia prima*.¹³ It is not an historical or procedural claim, and neither is it in competition with such claims. It is a categorical claim about human nature made from a Christian theological and modern cultural anthropological point of view.¹⁴

But our picture of theology would not be complete without also emphasizing that, unlike almost every other kind of human discourse or science, theology is

¹² This understanding of the need for enactment to render understanding is still compatible with a strictly Thomistic (and Aristotelian) account of the centrality of contemplation when we construe contemplation as the chief human goal or act. Even if contemplation has no immediate this-worldly concretion, it is nevertheless only achieved through an *act of the will*.

¹³ Introduced by Aidan Kavanagh, see *On Liturgical Theology*. *Theologia prima* has been under a lot of attack in the recent criticism. See the excellent defense of this term, when properly moderated, by Robert F. Taft in the following article: "Mrs. Murphy goes to Moscow: Kavanagh, Schmemmann, and 'The Byzantine Synthesis.'" *Worship* (November 2011).

¹⁴ Aune (53) quotes Paul Bradshaw "when believers come to worship on a Sunday morning, they do not come with their minds a *tabula rasa*": "Difficulties in Doing Liturgical Theology," *Pacifica II* (1998): 191. This shows a semantic gap between historical and theological study of liturgy, or, perhaps simply a category error. *Theologia prima* is not about whether any one individual or even group of individuals in a local church is *aware* that liturgy precedes theology. It is about squares and rectangles. Behavior is primary, discourse, is a behavior, and, although necessary, still a lesser part of behavior as a whole. It is a logical, not a chronological claim.

about allowing for, even expecting, transcendent causality and transcendent accounts of reality. Now we can combine the squares and rectangles insight about human science, even human nature, with the point that theology looks for transcendent patterns. The result delivers a pretty good tentative definition of what Christians understand theology to be. Christian theology searches for the highest humanly possible level of pattern recognition: transcendent, even divine, pattern recognition.

When we combine the hermeneutical insight of squares and rectangles with the theological goal of discerning transcendent patterns, we discover the chief logic of theology: analogy. Transcendent patterns are recognizable through immanent manifestations. Taking on non-competition, theology regains the paradox wherein divine initiative does not destroy but entails, enables, empowers, renders possible and real, human participation in transcendence, even divinity, without a reduction of such transcendence to mere human immanence. Such non-competitive participation includes not only human rites become mysteries, human persons become saints, but human language itself when become the gift of theology (as contemplation). Non-competition retains the discrete otherness of creatures within the Creator. Analogy, with respect to human language, only follows a radical apophatic imperative.¹⁵ Analogical contemplation is not glib, for it entails ontological depth.

The rule of faith names theology's chief guiding analogy. And the chief analogy for "liturgical theology" is that the whole is analogous to a ritual mystery. "Theology" means "exegesis." Theology names contemplative engagement with scripture. So what liturgical theology applies its analogy to is

¹⁵ Such an approach to theology is possible following de Lubac's retrieval of a non-competitive relationship between nature and grace, creation and divinity. That work continues with David Burrell, especially his work *Creation and the God of Abraham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) and Kathryn Tanner: *God and Creation in Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 2004).

scripture, primarily, and then and only then to concrete human enactments of the ritual mysteries. The rule of faith summarizes the divine economy, providing an initial grasp of the whole of scripture. Liturgical theology takes the rule of faith as the summary of (a) liturgy.

Strengthening our sense and use of the word theology in an exegetical manner addresses the concern for keeping liturgical theology well-grounded and bounded. The word liturgy is the adjective in the phrase, and not the most important word. Because liturgical theology is a *theological* discipline, it is important that the noun define its adjective, “liturgy,” in a theological way, keeping it more about transcendent realities that earthly realities participate in and manifest, rather than about immanent and particularistic concretion. What I mean by strengthening the use of the word theology is, of course, this retrieval of a focus on biblical interpretation, construed as the retrieval of figuration. Part of the “solution,” then, to recent worries about what gives liturgical theology stability is to allow theology its own integrity as a discipline. Theology has its own discrete traditional practices and modes of reasoning.

Thus the recent scholarship that worries about an overemphasis on “community” in liturgical theology are spot on. The recovery of the *corpus verum* formed a significant source behind the populist “power to the people” (here construed as the laity) and “grass roots” edginess of some liturgical theology.¹⁶ Perhaps it has led more immanentizing theologians, concerned with pacifying Christianity’s cultured despisers, to focus on “community” and some kind of immediate, this-worldly social-justice pay-off “relevant” to ever increasingly local

¹⁶ Kavanagh especially represents this approach and all following Schmemmann have a kind of critique of modern dogmatic and systematic theology. Joris Geldhof points out this particular edge to liturgical theology in his article “Liturgy as Theological Norm: Getting Acquainted with ‘Liturgical Theology.’” *On Liturgical Theology*: 93-4. Kavanagh says that liturgy is “*proletarian* rather than elitist, *communitarian* rather than individualistic or idiosyncratic, *quotidian* rather than random or infrequent.”

and specific bodies of Christians. Perhaps. Perhaps much recent liturgical theology may thus be judged not theological enough.

But the solution is not to reject the insight of the return to the *corpus verum*, because what such immanentizing liturgical theologies are doing is not true to the initial insight of the retrieval of the *corpus verum*. The gathered body is the body of Christ, but the work is Christ's and not the community's.¹⁷ It belongs to the community only insofar as they are *in Christ* (in the Pauline sense). The retrieval of the *corpus verum* makes liturgical theology more theological, not less.

The answer to the possible problem of spelling out the insight of *corpus verum* in a libation to immanent relevance and particularity is not to ignore it, but to return with de Lubac also to scripture. The content of the *corpus* is only revealed apocalyptically. A given Christian community or rite is incapable of exhausting or encompassing its own reality. The point of retrieving the *corpus verum* was not to reduce God to the local, the communal. The point was to open the local community to the transcendent patterns all local and historic Christian communities are capable of sharing through the divine patterns of the ritual mysteries. Liturgical theology can reclaim de Lubac's insight with its original apocalyptic force. What is that apocalyptic force? Let's now look at what liturgy is within a Christian theological context.

¹⁷ There has been some recent criticism of the old etymology of "liturgy" as "work of the people" (Aune, 61-5). Such critique does not significantly alter, but only helps the task of liturgical theology. Rather than "work of the people," Christians adopted the word liturgy because it represented an *economic gift* on the part of a wealthy patron giving money, goods, or beasts for a notable act of public service. This often (but not always) involved sacrifice and festival. Such a redefinition is a boon to a liturgical analogy for the economy: God the Father offers the sacrifice of his Son on the altar of the earth as the "public service" that benefits the city of God.

WHAT IS THE “LITURGY” OF “LITURGICAL THEOLOGY”?

Sometimes an adjective in front of the word “theology” focuses on a particular aspect of divinity, a particular person of the Godhead, God as triune, or a divine act. In this case it designates a particular appropriate sub-topic of the theological enterprise. But often the adjective does not name a person or event. In this case I propose that an adjective in front of the word “theology,” names the operating analogy that generates theological contemplation.

Now let’s turn to our adjective. What does a theologian mean by the word “liturgy” when it is turned into an adjective and placed in front of the name of his or her subject matter? There are various historical and sociological definitions of “liturgy.” Liturgical theologians, as *theologians*, need not be confined to the definitions provided by historians or sociologists. Theologians ought to mean at least what they mean but can and should mean a lot more. The divine economy, and even, by further analogy removed, the divine life itself, is the most proper meaning of the word “liturgy” within a liturgical *theological* context. The economy is not foreign to liturgy. Ritual manifests the economy. Liturgical theology bares the insight that an appropriate, significant, perhaps even (the) central analogy for the divine life and economy is that it is *like* human liturgy.

The “liturgy” of “liturgical theology” is not so much an assembly of concrete human ritual acts on earth as it is a construal of the divine economy as an act of worship in the heavenly places. Liturgical theology nevertheless reflects on earthly human worship. But when it does so, it reflects on human worship as participating in and manifesting the divine economy, and that construed under the analogy of a cosmic formal act of worship, liturgy. Theologically speaking, then, human rites are “liturgy” only insofar as they manifest this fundamental reality, this fundamental divine service, this fundamental “liturgy.”

De Lubac's retrieval of the centrality of scripture to the nature of Christian theology haunts me. If theology is the interpretation of scripture, what should it mean, then, to place the adjective "liturgical" in front of such an understanding of the theological task? A related sub-concern to this one is the way in which de Lubac and de Lubac-inspired scholarship urges the centrality of the interpretation of Old Testament scriptures to Christian theology—and especially the traditional figural interpretation thereof.¹⁸ Why do I see so little incorporation of the Old Covenant scriptures into the liturgical theologies I read and love?

Recent scholarship on the Old Testament and ancient Israelite worship has discerned a kind of warp holding together the various threads of woof that make up the elaborate tapestry of the Old Covenant canon.¹⁹ I will call it the "temple-mythos." By temple-mythos I intend that shared transcendent cosmology assumed across the Old (and New) Covenant scriptures. I do not use the word "myth" pejoratively. I mean by the word "myth" here human narrative about transcendent reality or realities. I do not mean "pagan" or "heathen" "lies," nor do I mean to compare or reduce Judaism or our own Judaic inheritance as Christians to such (in the main unhelpful) construals of non-Biblical religion.

¹⁸ See, for example, John Behr's magisterial retelling of the development of theology and doctrine in the early church as primarily the development of, and attempt to remain faithful to, an inherited approach to the interpretation of scripture (and that chiefly as the LXX) in his works, *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001) and *The Nicene Faith*, 2 vols. (Crestwood, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004).

¹⁹ The two scholars that have informed me the most with this regard are Margaret Barker and Jon D. Levenson. See especially Barker's *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London: T & T Clark, 2008), *The Lost Prophet* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1998), *The Great Angel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992); and Levenson's *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale, 1993).

I need this term, “temple-mythos,” in order to avoid other terms. For example, the term “biblical world-view,” conjures up representational reductionism, privileging cognition over practice. “Apocalyptic,” or “apocalypticism” connotes both more and less than I intend. More, because of contemporary connotations, less because “apocalyptic” represents only one kind of literature that shares a *modus operandi* with other types of literature within the Old Covenant canon (indeed, within ancient Mediterranean culture in general). The old contrast between “apocalyptic” and “oracular” prophecy breaks down when it becomes clear that these are different literary types demanded by historical exigencies, rather than products of different ritual-mythological practices. Apocalyptic itself is a kind of disenfranchised wisdom literature: what those who possess “wisdom” see when they are in exile, rather than in the court of the king.²⁰ The ritual actions described in the Old Covenant form the ritual counterparts to this shared cosmology. The foundational narratives of Genesis may be read as the discursive counterparts to these very rituals. The phrase “temple-mythos” expresses the ritual-narrative patterns that these various forms of literature share.

The temple-mythos operates in a cosmos that is (a service of) worship. What cosmos *is*, that is to say “beautiful order,” is a divine service before its creator. The service *is the cosmos*: its liturgy renders cosmos out of chaos. This cosmic liturgy has a cosmic *ordo*: and that *ordo* is what the Christian tradition calls the *economy*. Ritual mysteries do not accidentally manifest a reality altogether foreign to them. It is fitting that a (human) ritual act of worship should manifest the economy because the economy itself is an act of organized (if celestial) worship.

Much of the recent temple-mythos literature available seemed at first to me, as a Christian theologian, to assume a far too *in illo tempore* feel. I struggled with

²⁰ Levenson. *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*. p. 32.

what this might mean. If the LORD separates the waters in the heavenly places to render cosmos out of chaos, does that turn Jesus into just another, albeit important, among many historical manifestations of an eternal truth? In other words, I felt the weight of the historical uniqueness of Jesus. I had not yet “reversed” the analogy.²¹

In a Christian theological context, Jesus (his incarnation, life, teaching, and paschal mystery) *is the cosmic liturgy*, the physical touch-down, the entry or manifestation, the *parousia*, of the LORD, the Son of the Most High God in his work as high priest over the cosmic liturgy. For the priest must come to the altar (earth) in order to offer the appointed sacrifice (himself). This Christian theological reading of the temple-mythos leads, therefore, to a theological and, in this case, economic, definition of liturgy. A theological take on the temple-mythos connects the rites of the Old and New Testaments, opening new ground for liturgical theological contemplation.

Some might worry that this temple-mythos (and the figurative reading it empowers) is perhaps “Platonic,” or “Platonizing.”²² I could agree with this at a general level but not in its specificity. The temple-mythos entails the ancient *modus operandi*, shared by many differing philosophies and local cults, that earthly realities participate in and (sometimes willy-nilly, especially, e.g., apocalyptic literature) manifest heavenly realities that transcendently exceed

²¹ I mean here the way in which, for example, Denys the Pseudo-Areopagite first builds up radical apophatic denial of any finite analogies from creation for attribution of God before “reversing” the analogy: that which is denied about God becomes affirmed when God is suddenly understood to be the actual and only proper referent of the given “name,” creation itself forming, now, the analogue to God. Here, instead of “names” or attributes, I use liturgy, the cosmic liturgy as a whole, as an analogue for the divine economy, and eventually even the divine life itself. (See the “Divine Names” in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, Classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press. See also the present author’s work: *Theology as Ascetic Act*, Peter Lang, 2010. pp.121ff.)

²² For example, in *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), Enrico Mazza calls the shared background of ancient mystagogy, “Platonism” (168ff.).

them. Plato's philosophy expresses such a mode of being in the world, but is not its only or even ultimate (ancient) expression. I would accept that such a move is Platonizing only if apocalyptic itself, for example, were considered "Platonic." In fact I would go so far as to say that Plato's dialogues and ancient apocalypses shared a similar background in this regard. They are parallel literary structures within the ancient Mediterranean basin that cut across cultural-linguistic differences. It is not about the philosophical system *per se*, but a cosmos in which there are chains of reality that permeate, participate in, and manifest one another.

The historical doubts that recent liturgical scholars have cast on the "shape" of the liturgy are spot on. The "shape" cannot be grounded historically. Treating the "shape" as though it were an historically provable or discernable reality was never really the point of the discovery of the internal dialogic of Christian ritual mysteries. The point is that concrete Christian ritual mysteries are enacted with the expectation that their shape corresponds to and manifests thereby the worship of God in the heavenly places and on the last day. We should not be surprised when realities that transcend the concrete, the historical, the merely human, wind up erupting into human reality, history, and concrete ritual performance in pluriform and performatively incompatible ways. Acknowledgement of such does not end liturgical theology. It only makes more plain, in a Christian (post-critical) context, its very need. Theology looks for transcendent patterns, not immanent chains of causation.

For example, Dix's insight into the shape of liturgy is sound scripturally and theologically. Many scholars tear down the work begun by Dix with the claim that his description of the shape of liturgy cannot be grounded *historically*. Dix complicated things for his own future interpreters by not delineating the differences between his historical and more theological claims. But, to be charitable, such distinctions were not being made in liturgical scholarship at that

time. His fundamental insight into the shape of the anaphora, for example, regardless of whether or not it can be grounded historically, is substantially grounded in the way in which the so-called “words of institution” of Christ recorded in the *canonical scriptures* show us a *shape* that some of the most important concrete and textually attested Christian liturgies conform to. As an argument correlating *scripture* to *rite*, this is a *theological* and not historical claim (and, in my opinion, a still valid and helpful one). Dix’s gift of the shape of the liturgy or the *ordo* to Schmemmann, and therefore to liturgical *theology*, remains valid and valuable to this today. This correlation of scripture to rite is important in liturgical traditions that need liturgical theology not only to affirm concrete (earthly) liturgical traditions, but also provide criteria for their reform.

Liturgical theology need not abandon the shape of the liturgy and reflection upon it. But it may need to ground the shape in something other than historicity. That shape finds its ground in that which grounds all theology worthy of the name: *scripture*. The narrative shape of the cosmic liturgy of Christ’s incarnation and paschal mystery grounds the shape of the liturgy. *Ordo* is not Dix’s reconstruction of a shape of an historically consistent liturgical line that goes back to Jesus in some kind of historically obvious or at least (historically) reconstructable way. Rather, the *ordo* is the cosmic liturgy discerned by triangulation from scripture (as the chief narrative compliment to Christian rites) and the rites of the Old and New Covenants as manifestations thereof.

Abandoning talk of “shape,” or *ordo*, and focusing on ever increasing levels of concretion is not the way to make liturgical theology more liturgical. The answer, again, is to turn to scripture and here in terms of its liturgical content as found in the shared world of the temple-mythos. I am not saying that this was Dix’s discovery. I am saying that a focus on the temple-mythos is an example of how liturgical theology can continue to look for ways in which Christian rites enact on earth patterns in the (heavenly) liturgy found in scripture.

Liturgical theology not only makes an analogy from what (anthropologists and historians agree that) we call “liturgy” for the life and economy of God; it also *reverses* the analogy. The *theological* meaning is the *primary Christian meaning* of “liturgy.”²³ What we call liturgy on earth is (a) ritual participation in this cosmic hymn of praise. The economy is the liturgy: the work of the Son of God, our great high priest, on behalf of the people of God. Liturgical theology needs such a theological definition of liturgy, that is, a definition that makes God the actor and God’s mighty deeds the main action, in order to approach the task *theologically* rather than as thoughtful religious gloss on history or historical (or sociological) study. The rule of faith summarizes a liturgy. Such an exegetical and scriptural approach was assumed rather than stated by the ancient producers of the earliest commentaries on the Christian mysteries: mystagogy.

BRIEF EXCURSES ON MYSTAGOGY

The ancients named divine pattern recognition with respect to the Christian ritual mysteries *mystagogy*. Mystagogy names that discourse that identifies the ritual mysteries as manifestations of and initiations into the mystery of the divine economy itself. Scholarship on the nature of patristic mystagogy²⁴ has in general drawn the following analogy: mystagogy is to the sacraments as figuration is to scripture.

²³ With that as the case, then liturgical theology can make the following kinds of claims: The life of God is a kind of liturgy unto itself. The divine economy is (a) liturgy. The incarnation is *the* liturgy of atonement. Theosis is human participation in Christ’s cosmic liturgy, our participation in divine *service*, etc.

²⁴ Again, see Mazza’s work. Hahn has shown the formal and material unity of mystagogy, figuration and a patristic approach to the divine economy. My point compliments his but my point is more directly theological: the divine economy *is the liturgy*, at least; it is the liturgy that forms the adjective in the phrase “liturgical theology,” and that just exactly because it is theological.

If, however, we remember our squares and rectangles, then mystagogy must name the ground of the figurative reading of scripture itself. If liturgy is the behavior (rectangle) and scripture is its native discourse (square), then discourse *about* the liturgy, namely, mystagogy, grounds the discourse that engages those scriptures read *within* liturgy. Which is just to say the reading of scripture, figuratively. In other words *figuration* names the *mystagogical reading of scripture*. When we read the scriptures figuratively, we read them with the assumption that they, like Christian rites, manifest realities that infinitely exceed them yet nevertheless behave in discernable and imitable patterns. Mystagogy and figuration are one, because *the scriptures are a part of the divine service*, just as *discourse is a part of human behavior*.

At this point I would like to take up a possible objection or worry to the line of reasoning represented by this project. And that would be the worry that this project either ignores, downplays, or does not give due reverence to the particular and the concrete with respect to liturgy, whether diachronically through historical study or synchronically through anthropology or sociology (ritual theory). Such a line of objection corresponds to the general worry that liturgical theology floats too free of the historical and the concrete.²⁵ How could this approach to mystagogy and liturgical theology honor modern historical consciousness? How could it honor the fact that God honors history through an historical incarnation? Let us first look to mystagogy and then deal with the issue as a whole.

There are differing and even seemingly incompatible mystagogical treatises that survive. We cannot give a unified *historical* account of what mystagogy was,

²⁵ Such criticism is reflected in Bradshaw's accusation that liturgical theology is based upon "bad history, or no history at all" (Aune, 193).

is or should be.²⁶ This is because of the nature of mystagogy. Its goal is the contemplation of things that, from beyond human historical experience (much less human historiography), give human life and “history” meaning and transcend it (and in the case of the triune God, infinitely transcendent it). We can, however, give a unified, or, at least, general or unifying, account of what mystagogy is *theologically*. Theologically, mystagogy names that discourse that identifies the ritual mysteries as manifestations of and initiations into the mystery of the divine economy itself.

Given such a theological definition, it makes sense that there could never be a single unifying historical definition. The historical diversity we find should be expected from its shared theological reality. Allowing for mutual and even incompatible contemplations is a sign that what we are engaging in is catholic. You cannot simultaneously perform the anaphora of St. John Chrysostom and the Roman Canon of the Mass. That does not make them “incompatible.” It makes them catholic.

This account of mystagogy provides an exact analogue that responds to these same worries with regard to the post-critical project of liturgical theology as a whole. The questions asked assume that the particular and the concrete are in conflict with that which theology studies—that they are in competition with one another. Studies of immanent realities and their origins in terms of concrete chains of immanent, earthly causality in no way conflict with theology’s task of discerning the manifestation of transcendent, heavenly, patterns therein. It is a category error to think so.

But, moreover, in a theological context, without such “myth,” history itself has no (transcendent) reality—it becomes one damn thing after another. History, and

²⁶ Mazza makes it clear that “it proves difficult to formulate a general [historical] theory that would account for all the aspects that have emerged from analysis of” ancient mystagogical texts (165).

concrete rites for that matter, become real “by dint”²⁷ of their relationship to something that is not historical or particular. If the cosmos is a liturgy, then, like liturgy there is both a logic and a “chronologic” to that rite. There is myth, and there are histories. The relationship of the performance of a rite to its ritual logic forms an analogue to the relationship of “myth” to history. This does not mean that theological reasoning can contradict or ignore historical and other concrete studies. It does mean that its goals and methods differ. From the point of view of Christian faith, the concrete ritual mysteries have no *historical* or concrete reality. They only have historical and concrete *enactment*. Their reality is *transcendent*. The job of the theologian is to study that reality, discern those patterns, and reveal where they are breaking through in Christian life.

That said, discernment of transcendence within immanence is not contrary to the study of the particular; on the contrary, it gives it life. Liturgical theology studies the particular, the concrete, and the local. It does not start and end there.²⁸ It moves from the transcendent, through the immanent, and back again. The ground of such seemingly speculative work is found in the examination of the Christian revelation, the Holy Scriptures. And those same scriptures are interpreted within each concrete, historical act of Christian ritual mystery.

The Christian tradition affirms that God and the realms of reality that transcend the earthly and visible, which is to say, the heavens, the invisible, and their occupants, are more real than the flux and change of history this side of the *eschaton*. Jesus is the radical eruption of that plane of reality into our own. Through Jesus, God and the heavens give human life and history reality. God has become incarnate in Jesus the Messiah, but that does not *reduce* God to

²⁷ Here I must make it clear that I am only standing on the shoulders of that giant of post-critical Hebrew biblical studies, Jon Levenson (*Sinai and Zion*, 103-110).

²⁸ That would represent Fagerberg's theology “from or about” liturgy. “Theologia Prima: What is Liturgical Theology?” *Liturgy Training Publications* (2004): 54ff.

history, nor trap the LORD within it, any more than it reduces God to the flesh. History is honored because Jesus is the one new thing, the one thing that is not one damn thing after another. Jesus is the blessed one: "Behold, the new creation" (2 Cor. 5.17).

Mystagogy and figuration are one, then, because the scriptures are a part of the "divine service." For when we contemplate the divine life and economy as the most proper meaning of the word "liturgy," then what the tradition calls figuration and mystagogy represent two modes of discourse about the same theological reality. Mystagogy is the wider discourse encompassing the figurative reading of scripture. Figuration performs mystagogy on scripture. Thus liturgical theology forms an essential part of a post-critical retrieval of both mystagogy and figuration.

WHAT, THEN, IS "LITURGICAL THEOLOGY"?

Perhaps "liturgical theology" names a kind of post-critical retrieval of ancient mystagogy.²⁹ It is true, of course, that the two are close and even inherently related. Liturgical theology is not, however, mystagogy *redux*. Liturgical theology, rather, names a retrieval of the ancient theological, economic, and cosmological background, what I have been calling the temple-mythos, that manifested the twin ancient discourses of mystagogy and figuration in the first place. Liturgical theology is the contemplation of the divine life and economy, and even the cosmos itself as (a) liturgy. Therefore, liturgical theology retrieves *both* mystagogy and figuration.

Theology names faithful Christian exegesis of *scripture*, not interpretation of ritual *per se*. An adjective in front of the word "theology" gives an analogical

²⁹ Mazza calls mystagogy an ancient "liturgical theology" (xii.).

construal of the *rule of faith*, which serves as the entry point of a given Christian contemplation of sacred text. In our case, then, “liturgical theology “must necessarily be a biblical theology.”³⁰ The “liturgy” of liturgical theology is the divine life and economy presented, biblically, as a “temple-mythos.” That temple-mythos is, then, the “whole” of our liturgical theological hermeneutical circle.

Figuration occurs when Christians construe the context of the canonical scriptures as a whole to be the divine economy—accessible through contemplation to saints in any point of earthly history. Mystagogy occurs when Christians understand the ritual mysteries to manifest and initiate the Christian into the mystery of this divine economy. In both cases, the realization that the divine economy (the temple is God’s house) *is* the Divine Liturgy retrieves figuration and mystagogy, for God’s temple (house) is the cosmos as a whole.³¹

So liturgical theology names and contemplates the whole *as liturgy* in order to expound both rite on the one hand (mystagogy) and scripture on the other (figuration) as parts of the one reality they manifest: the divine service of Jesus Christ. Mystagogy expounds the ritual pattern, figuration the ritual discourse of the service of the Word, the Holy Scriptures. Liturgical theology, as the grounding analogy for both mystagogy and figuration, becomes contemplative, imaginative, never-definitive meditation upon the scriptural cosmology of the temple-mythos enacted in Christian rites and read in Christian scripture. The goal is contemplation, not system, meditation, not totalizing discourse. Such reductionism could not be its goal, for in taking “liturgy” as its analogy liturgical

³⁰ Mazza, (135).

³¹ Even if this is not the only or exclusive way to construe the divine economy (and, of course, it is not) it is still at least sound and, I would argue, central way of doing so, due to the centrality of the love of God in worship, corporate worship, and liturgical worship in scripture and the tradition.

theology remains ever open to other contemplative analogies³² that, through challenge, intersection, or enrichment together move theology towards its endless goal: the contemplation of a triune God.

Reading the rule of faith as a narrative summary of a cosmic liturgy brings together traditional readings of the mysteries, the canon as scripture, and critical scholarship on the ancient temple-mythos. Post-criticism assumes the importance of historical readings without criticism's reductionism. In this case, a post-critical approach reintegrates the kind of historical construction that uncovers a temple-mythos in the ancient Levant with traditional readings of the canon because it allows for the possibility that the transcendent realities discerned within the mythos, and the scriptures and rites believed to place us in contact with them, may be real, and not (human) projections.

Dix's "shape," combined with Lubac's *corpus verum*, provided the womb from which Schmemmann would midwife "liturgical theology." I have summarized the history of liturgical theology in this way in order to make the retrieval of figuration as central as the retrieval of *corpus verum* on the one hand, and a (re-) discovery of the temple-mythos as central as the (re-) discovery of the *ordo* on the other. I do not suggest these things as a new direction.³³ Liturgical theology's retrieval of figural interpretation of the Christian canon (of both scripture and rite) characterizes its (so far) brief but pyrotechnic history. Liturgical theology explosively infuses figuration and mystagogy back into the arid nominalism of modern Christian thought. Such interpretation of liturgical theology brings forward its historical origins in a manner consistent with its own past and in

³² E.g., pastoral, political, moral, ascetical, "missional," etc.

³³ I am tempted to generate a neologism, "mystagogical theology," but I see this project as both theologically and historically continuous with that of liturgical theology in general. If it is necessary in order to distinguish from what liturgical theology has, in some cases, become, then perhaps I will have to employ a new phrase. I hope not.

correspondence with more recent scholarship. I hope only to make the implicit explicit, to discover the tacit to be the *telos*.

Recall the key concern that there are no bounds to liturgical theology. What grants the discipline proper boundaries? What keeps it *liturgical*? What keeps it *theological*? Theology reflects upon the highest level of pattern recognition that human beings are capable of achieving. Theology has the capacity, therefore, to discern layers of web-like causality that include but transcend the immanent. What keeps such wild speculation on target? Revelation. What revealed discourse can we trust? The scriptures. And this is true for theologies that have an adjective in front of their names. It is therefore true of "liturgical theology." Liturgical theology, as theology, finds its ground in the scriptures.

The answer to the worry that liturgical theology has no bounds is not more theory or more history but more *theology*: and that means more exegesis, more scripture.³⁴ Scripture is that which theology contemplates. Liturgical theology, therefore, is a liturgical reading, approach, meditation, upon scripture. As with any figuration, then, it is bound on the one side by the limits of the canon and its *sensus literalis* and the rule of faith on the other. Liturgical theology places the adjective "liturgy" in front of this: a liturgical analogy for the rule of faith and an assumption that the scriptures formally (canon as liturgical performance) and substantially (*sensus literalis*) are liturgical in nature.

The hermeneutical circle of liturgical theology is that of concrete sacred texts and ritual behavior to cosmic divine service, and back-linked by discerning webs of overlapping transcendent, participatory causality. The way we enter this hermeneutical circle is through participation in the mysteries themselves, with the faith that they manifest the divine economy. It is fitting that a ritual act of

³⁴ The same work de Lubac did to allay the fears of critical scholars with regards to a retrieval of figuration directly applies today to the fears some historical liturgical scholars have expressed about the nature and boundaries of "liturgical theology."

worship would manifest the economy if the economy itself is an act of organized (if celestial) worship.

The hermeneutical circle of liturgical theology is not, therefore, that of historical or sociological particular to historical or sociological context, and back-linked by discerning chains of immanent, be it either chronological or social, causality. Liturgical theology contemplates scripture under the assumption that, because both the scriptures and the mysteries participate in the realities of heaven, and because the native context of scriptural contemplation is that of the ritual mysteries, being open to the realities that the mysteries place us in contact with will help us to elucidate the meaning of the scriptures, and vice versa.

Now, we may be “caught up short”³⁵ by many things: a passage of scripture about rites,³⁶ or a passage of scripture not seemingly to be about ritual,³⁷ or even one with an anti-ritual tone.³⁸ We are caught up short by concrete acts of Christian liturgy here on earth, or discovered or rediscovered historical texts describing such acts.³⁹ Even so, we return to scripture for insight.⁴⁰ Either way, what completes the circle is the divine liturgy of the heavenly places, the cosmic liturgy of the paschal mystery, and the liturgy that is the life of God: the Holy Trinity. Liturgical theology does not, therefore, meditate upon concrete Christian ritual *per se*, any more than theology is a meditation on concrete

³⁵ This is Gadamer’s phrase for what initiates the need for interpretation in his *Truth and Method*.

³⁶ Say, the Atonement, or the sacrifice of the first-born to Molech.

³⁷ Say, the way in which the Eden story is actually about a primordial temple.

³⁸ Say, the way in which passages in the oracular prophets seem to denigrate sacrifice and ritual worship all together. If liturgy is so central, how do we make sense of these?

³⁹ For example, both concrete and living liturgical traditions and “found” liturgies from ancient texts. Theologically speaking, however, living liturgies must take precedence over “discoveries.”

⁴⁰ For example, the “problem” of how the *Didache’s* thanksgiving constituted a Eucharistic prayer was discovered in Dix’s shape of the anaphora found in scripture.

Christian individuals. It is an exercise in noticing transcendent patterns that these concrete individual realities (are able to) share in and manifest.

CONCLUSIONS

My goal in this essay has been to recognize how liturgical theology takes part in the retrieval of ancient Christian approaches to scriptural interpretation. If figuration and mystagogy are one, then to retrieve one is to retrieve the other. Knowledge of liturgy, that is, the cosmic and economic liturgy, its shape and various manifestations, grants a liturgical approach to the rule of faith for the imaginative process of mystagogy and figuration. Liturgical theology brings them forward as boundaries to one another.

One modern (and perhaps Protestant) worry about figuration has been that it somehow allows us to “say anything” about scripture. Liturgical theology brings forward the shared background of both figuration and mystagogy that enables but also binds both modes of discourse. Mystagogy guides the retrieval of figuration by providing a safe analogical sandbox for its exploration. The exegete cannot “say anything” about scripture. The boundaries are that of the cosmic *ordo*; the work is its discernment.

There is, nevertheless, much more scholarship *about* figuration than actual figural interpretation. The retrieval, at times, seems stalled. My hope is that discerning the identity of figuration and mystagogy *as* liturgical theology will manifest the boundaries of such interpretation so that there may be less need for *justifying* figural interpretation and more actual figuration. In my next project I hope to argue that there is no fundamental difference between the way in which the rites of the Old and the New Covenant participate in the heavenly liturgy, except this: the earthly rites must change with respect to their place along the earthly unfolding of time before and after the incarnation and Paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. I will approach this through an exegesis of the binding of Isaac,

among other key texts. Working through this and other such projects will afford me the opportunity to address, among other things: the theological unity of contemplation and (the teaching of the) Trinity, the relationship of criticism to Christian (figural) reading of scripture, a Christian theology of the nature of history, “Platonism” and analogical discourse, the intersection of liturgical and political theology, worries concerning supersessionism and Jewish-Christian dialogue after the Holocaust, worries about “sacrifice,” etc.

Grounding liturgical theology in figural exegesis encourages the instinctual *sensus fidelium* that criticism *alone* “steals Jesus.” It is all too easy for an intellectual critical elite to pour scorn on “fundamentalism.” But the church has the ancient wisdom not to hand theology over to “experts.” One of the gifts of liturgical renewal is the breakdown of a professional-client relationship of clergy to laity. Liturgical theology continues this renewal by breaking down the professional-client relationship implicit in much critical scholarship. Liturgical theology extends the grass-roots edginess of liturgical renewal into biblical interpretation, empowering the laity with scripture as well. The way to get scripture back without fundamentalism is through a transcendent cosmology. Liturgical theology as a post-critical retrieval of figural exegesis unifies and shows respect to both Testaments, and may provide a key to unlock, as if in apocalypse, radical discipleship, ethics, and politics.

The blessed David also advises the meaning of this [eucharistic bread and wine], saying, *you have prepared a table before me in the presence of my enemies* . . . Before your coming, [Christ], evil spirits prepared a table for human beings, foul and polluted and full of demonic influence; but since your coming, O Lord, *you have prepared a table before me* . . . that mystical and spiritual table, which God has prepared over against, contrary, and in opposition to the evil spirit . . . And very truly; for that table had fellowship with demons, but this one with God.

Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catecheses* IV.7.

CAN MODERN SCIENCE BE THEOLOGICALLY SALVAGED? Reflections on Conor Cunningham's theological and metaphysical evaluation of modern evolutionary biology

Paul Tyson

In *Postmodern Metaphysics* the Athenian philosopher Christos Yannaras points out that scientific knowledge is modernity's functional metaphysics and that modernity's metaphysical integrity—and this is not science itself—is intellectually moribund.¹ For within a frame of belief premised on the acceptance of an entirely immanent nature and on the nominalist subject's internally situated epistemological capacities, the modern knower can have no certain knowledge of objective reality. So the modern approach to truth—having turned its back on faith, participation, revelation, and certainty—redefines truth to mean, not a genuine knowledge of reality, but rather a probable and ever-revisable psycho-social construct which is only 'true' because it is instrumentally useful to us. We

¹ See Christos Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, translated by Norman Russell, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Massachusetts, 2004, pp. 1 – 66.

have replaced reality with the legal fiction of empirical objectivity, and we have replaced truth with the instrumental criteria of pragmatic utility. Further, modernity has replaced meaning—a notion not amenable to the terms of empirical objectivity—with the syntax of language and with the epiphenomenal subjective belief-secretions of culture.

Thus modernity's theoretical premises hold that truth and meaning are functions of power, use, and fiction. What truth *really* is, is instrumental power. What meanings *really* are, are imagined fictions that have some psycho-bio-social use when overlaid upon the meaningless objectivity of the world, understood in probabilistic, empirical terms. Being more medieval than we like to admit,² we still live by notions of truth that assume some real knowledge of reality and utilize notions of meaning and value that we hold to be 'more' than simply psycho-cultural, instrumental constructs. But such ways of speaking and living are out of step with what we modern people believe to be *really*—that is, scientifically—the case. But if modern scientific realism is *really* true then there can be no philosophical integrity in our generally accepted belief that science gives us a true and meaningful understanding of reality.

Leaving obvious self-defeating contradictions to one side, in broad sociological terms, meaning and truth have recognizable signatures for us modernists. 'Meaning' is merely subjective; it is culturally relative and it is *really* only political and psychological. Likewise, 'truth' is concerned only with the type of reductively instrumental and purely material keyhole view of 'reality' deemed to be 'objectively' scientific. So the fact that science 'works' and is broadly believed in is the only basis we have for saying anything is true. Thus pragmatic

² See Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, Harvard University Press, 1993, p 47: "...we have never really left the old ... matrix behind, and ... it could not have been otherwise." Latour is not advocating any anti-modern frame of belief here, but clearly the manner in which we actually live is necessarily in tensions with what Latour calls the critical constitution of modernity.

'realism,' combined with shameless sophistic appeals to constructed values as situated within the naturalistic givenness of our psycho-biological desires, has now largely replaced any public discourse of real meaning and substantive goodness. This explains the apparently contradictory situation in which the irrealist marketing mantra of our scientific age, 'perception is reality,' has a largely unquestioned currency in our popular, political, and commercial environments.

Manipulative political agendas aside, to the broadly accepted belief norms of modernity all interpretations of meaning are judged in relation to an ostensibly neutral objectivity so that their truth validity (if they have any at all) is decided simply on the basis of how well they pass muster under a 'scientific' standard of 'truth.' However, the conceptual benchmark of this standard is far from philosophically objective. In fact, it is enormously philosophically loaded: all the terms of its materialistically reductionist methodology betray prior existential commitments and a set of assumed metaphysical, methodological, and epistemological assumptions. So whilst modernity as a philosophical and socio-cultural enterprise has given up on knowing truth, it is science that is taken as our only really true vision of reality, as metaphysics—what Yannaras calls pseudoscience³—which stands in judgement over what modernity treats as true and false.

This generates an interesting dynamic. Within modernity's self-defeating assumptions about truth and meaning, pseudo-scientists can proclaim whatever negative assertions they like about non-scientifically framed understandings of truth and meaning, and the sociological life-form in which we live will largely uphold their pronouncements as valid. Modernity is fully committed, functionally and sociologically, to its distinctive categories of meaning and truth,

³ Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, p7.

even though philosophically it dispenses with meaning and truth. For it is simply the case that truth and meaning cannot be functionally dispensed with if we are to remain, in normal, daily life, recognizably human. So idols must be fashioned out of tangible and controllable materials to stand in for truth and meaning so that we have something graspable to orientate value, choice, identity, and meaning in our lives. This collective worship—as with all public cultus—legitimizes its way of life and upholds the continuity of its life-form over time. And it is the pseudo-scientists—those who speak in the name of science to tell us what the truth about reality is, what the real meaning of our lives is, and what our human values and cultural narratives really amount to—who are the priests of our secular, materialist public cultus.

Daniel Dennett's *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*⁴ provides us with a wonderful example of what Yannaras calls pseudoscience. For Dennett takes what modernity cannot say about truth and meaning and uses these negatives to make assertions that he claims debunk any claims to truth and meaning other than those our pragmatic and materialistically eudemonistic cultural norms simply assume to be valid. And indeed, it is Dennett's harmony with our culture's dominant sociological 'reality' norms which gives his reasoning and knowledge its credibility. For it is a simple task to point out where Dennett philosophically cuts off the branch he is sitting on. By his own commitment to a reductively material universe, Logos is not 'out there,' and thus all meanings are radical constructs, so why should a reductively scientific meaning be truer than any other meaning? There is nothing terribly hard about pointing out where his interpretation of the meaning of science is way outside the pale of what science actually shows us. If science only shows us the current state of scientific theory, provisionally interpreting the epistemologically problematic notion of objective facts, then that is no grounds to make any simply true assertion. And it is easy to

⁴ Daniel Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous idea*, Penguin, London, 1996.

point out the delusional silliness of his claims that science casts the mountains of religion, transcendence, intrinsic meaning, genuine value etc., into the sea of oblivion just because 'the existence of God' cannot be meaningfully contemplated within the reductive parameters of scientism. Say it however you like, but the assertion that there is no God is a first-order metaphysical assertion, not a second-order scientific assertion. Reducing reality to only having meaning within a reductively materialist metaphysical frame is a move that rests on an existential preference that entails the self-defeating implication that all existential preferences and metaphysical convictions must be equally meaningless. No, Dennett is not a serious philosopher. But what is difficult about trying to argue against a rhetorically able pseudo-scientist such as Dennett is that the habits and assumptions of our way of life agree with him; even though his stance is philosophically unjustified, it is existentially incoherent, philosophically self-defeating, and beyond the warrant of what can be reasonably claimed by the current state of modern scientific knowledge.

It is a genuinely courageous theologian who will take on pseudoscience, given its status as both the creedal and the praxiological orthodoxy of modernity. Conor Cunningham has scientifically, philosophically, and theologically taken on pseudoscience, and he has done this by bringing Nietzsche's little hammer to materialist modernity's most holy golden calf, its worship of *natura pura* via the cultus of an anti-metaphysical and basely instrumental reading of Darwin's theory of evolution.⁵ Cunningham's claim is that, contra Dennett, Darwin's idea is not dangerous to Christian faith, but is actually fully compatible with Christian piety, the coming of God into real flesh and blood, and the dignity and God-breathed nature of all life.

⁵ Conor Cunningham, *Darwin's Pious Idea*, Eerdmans, MI, 2010

Cunningham, having done a lot of homework in biochemistry and genetics, seems to me to do an able job of taking the rod of Darwinian theory out of the hands of pseudoscience, and then hitting pseudoscience over the head with the science it simply asserts as its exclusive weapon in the war of reason against religion. But as I do not have a scientific background, I will not focus on the scientific aspects of Cunningham's work. Of particular interest to this paper is the manner in which Cunningham points out science's inability to bear the metaphysical weight thrust upon it by pseudo-scientists like Dennett. For whilst pseudoscience certainly is powerfully corrosive of meaning and truth, what Dennett does not seem to realize is the extent to which pseudoscience corrodes the meaning and truth of modern science, and eats itself and all knowledge and meaning as well.

Indeed, as Dennett partially recognizes, a frightening philosophical disappearance is indeed happening to modernity.⁶ We are being eaten, from the inside out, by the irrealist relativism and political pragmatism of the pseudoscientific truth assumptions of the late-modern way of life. On this point David C. Schindler's extraordinary attack on contemporary misology shows us that the challenges for reason and meaning that Plato sought to overcome in a rhetorically instrumental and morally relativistic context are just as alive for us today as they were in Athens over 2000 years ago.⁷

What is so chilling about films like *The Social Network* is that they probably are a reasonably fair reflection of the social logic of popular culture which is built on pseudoscience. This film—dramatically chronicling the birth of Facebook—depicts a meaning and truth corroded life-form that simply assumes the validity of modern 'realism.' This life-form is in natural alliance with the merely

⁶ Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, p 63.

⁷ See David C. Schindler, *Plato's critique of Impure Reason*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C., 2008, pp 1–84.

instrumental logic of big money and a so called 'realist' outlook on political and legal power. What we get is a relentlessly driven and amoral lifestyle of frenetic and sordid activity obsessed with the manipulation of images and illusions in order to feed merely animal ambitions and satiations. This is despair. This is indeed a deep corrosion of the very notion of humanity as a form of life which allows for any 'high' expression of what it means to be human.

Acid is really there in our life-form. This is why Cunningham goes to one of the key sources of this corrosiveness and seeks to give us the neutralizing universal alkaline of deeply thought through, philosophically powerful theology. His strategy is to extricate Darwinian evolution from pseudoscience and to rehabilitate Darwin within a Christian theological framework that is orthodox, rather than liberal or fundamentalist. He returns to orthodox Christian theology as a living and viable first philosophy and finds that science, viewed from this vantage, need suffer no longer under the metaphysical burden modernity placed upon it. Theology frees science to be to be itself again—and to be so simply and joyfully.

Cunningham is very good on the relationship between science and metaphysics. For meaning and truth cannot be other than conceptually prior to perception, syntax and use.⁸ As prior, one must have faith in them rather than seek to prove them in derivative terms. This modern urge for the proof of what Aristotle calls "the primitives" is at the core of modernity's deep irrationality and

⁸ Syntax cannot account for meaning, though meaning requires syntax as its medium. Use cannot account for value, though values express themselves in goals that need practical means in order to achieve the good ends that values inspire. Truth and understanding cannot be derived from perception, though understanding is functionally dependent on perception. Thus whilst there is a two way process between the first order higher realities and their second order modes, mediums and functional pre-requisites, such that the lower does shape the higher and the higher is functionally dependent on the lower, there remains an irreducible distinction between the first order and the second order, as the first order cannot be derived from the second order.

intellectual futility.⁹ This modern refusal to ground reason in a living and grateful faith in meaning and truth is at the core of its hubristic folly and its hopelessly disintegrative approach to knowledge. The modern attempt to establish meaning and truth by philosophically secondary proofs was never going to work, and we must face up to this and look at our options. Yet one option that is not worth taking seriously is the rejection of meaning and truth themselves. This fundamentally irrational move is not an alternative to modernity but is simply the logical continuation of the modern project.

But what would really happen if we were to try to return to grounding science in first philosophy, return to the priority of ethics grounded in transcendence over instrumental power, return to theology as the highest and unifying queen of the sciences? Would this be a regressive negation of modern science and culture? Would this impose doctrinaire limits on the pursuit of objective truth? Would this send us into an intellectual dark age? Or, to phrase this question from the opposite pole, can we keep modern science if we are to recover orthodox Christian theology as the first philosophy framework for Western culture?

Cunningham's rhetoric insists that we can have the knowledge of modern science largely as it is. That is, Cunningham's stance seems to uphold the idea that we can separate out the pseudoscience—as a false metaphysics—from the simply factual knowledge of modern science, and re-insert that knowledge into a theologically framed metaphysical vision, which will then give that knowledge its proper meaning. For if we accept that knowledge is always secondary to meaning and truth, this does not make knowledge the blind slave of unreasoned faith, but rather it frees us to understand that the interpretation of science and

⁹ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, book 1, part 3, lines 5-7: "Now some think that because one must understand the primitives there is no understanding at all; others that there are demonstrations of everything. Neither of these views is either true or necessary."

the use of technology must always be grounded in frames of belief that are not themselves scientific. Along these lines Cunningham refuses to marry Christian theology to any scientific theory—Darwinian evolution included—but equally he wants science to be free to go where its warrant leads it in relation to carefully tested, perception-dependent knowledge and mathematically defensible rational theory. Cunningham believes that there will always be fruitful ground for engagement between good theology and good science, but science is by its nature provisional, whilst theology—though its doctrines are always unfolding—is grounded in truths that transcend the notion of perpetual revision and continuous progress. So the stability of theology and the freedom of science live together in a happy synthesis in Cunningham's vision. Thinking from within this frame, Cunningham does some powerful—yet always provisional—synthetic reasoning on Darwinian evolution and orthodox Christian doctrine.

Cunningham's patristic, Christological framing of the Genesis cosmogony is full of deep and rich theological insights, and does allow for the intersection of orthodox Christian belief with an account of natural history that does *not* entail an archaic fall from an Edenic state of sinless, non-predatory, and deathless originary harmony. Thus nature, as modern science sees her, can now be harmonized with sophisticated orthodox theology. Augustine and Maximus the Confessor bear witness to this long and sophisticated trajectory within patristic Christian theology, and Aquinas takes up the trajectory of the unity of the two books of revelation—nature and Scripture—re-framed in a more scripturally dogmatic age than was the case in the late classical world. So Cunningham's claim to continuity with the rich intellectual traditions of the church and of Western culture is unquestionably valid.¹⁰ Even so, this Christian history also

¹⁰ Stephen Ames' beautifully argued chapter "Why would God use Evolution?" (in Jacques Arnould (ed.), *Darwin and Evolution: Interfaith Perspectives*, ATF Press, Adelaide, 2010, pp 105 – 128) is another example of how a scientific appreciation of evolution (Rev Canon Dr Ames

contains a metaphysical and existential prioritization of theology over science that modern science does not accept. And as powerfully as Cunningham argues that such an arrangement is still necessary and possible, modern science is now so disengaged from that tradition, and so culturally and sociologically powerful compared with the Christian intellectual tradition, that I fear any Christian advocacy of a cosmological and epistemic harmony between science and theology can only end with theology's subjugation to terms its claims for metaphysical and existential priority over *scientia* cannot accept.

As impressed with Cunningham's work as I am, there are two very difficult problems I see for the synoptic overlaying of the visions of modern Darwinian science and orthodox Christian theology which Cunningham has fashioned. Firstly, there is the problem that modernity will in no manner accept the prioritization of theology over science. Secondly, I am concerned that by de-temporalizing the biblical narrative structure and situating orthodox Christian belief within the framework of modern 'natural history,' Cunningham appears to be attempting to fuse cosmological horizons that entail enormous imaginative dissonance.

We could well read Cunningham's text as signalling a new type of harmony between carefully de-metaphysicalized natural science and sophisticated Christological theology in a way that bears some resemblance to Stephen Jay Gould's notions of non-overlapping magisteria, but with a crucial inversion.¹¹

To Gould, science and religion are two completely different orders of human endeavour. Science is about facts and truth, and it has a method premised on empirical testing and continuous theoretical revision in the light of empirical

has PhDs in both Physics and Theology) can find deep synergies with the high traditions of Western theology.

¹¹ Stephen Jay Gould, "Nonoverlapping Magisteria", *Natural History* 106 (March 1997): 16–22.

knowledge. Values and meanings derived from religious belief, however, are—like all values and meanings—cultural constructs; whilst they are very important for what it means to be human, they are not matters of verifiable truth (i.e., they are not, in scientific terms, true). For Gould, what is true *is* scientific, so what is religious and moral can only be true to the extent that it does not conflict with what is scientifically true. In practise, this means that any non-naturalistically framed belief, practise, or experience is not true, and not, in its own terms, real—even if it is meaningful and important to those who choose to believe in notions like intrinsic value, cosmic meaning, revelation, and miracles, and even if such human beliefs and cultural practises of life are somehow of deep significance for our humanity. In relation to truth, and thus to reality and metaphysical belief, there is a clear priority of science over all other conceptions of truth. Gould is a sophisticated and apparently conciliatory advocate of the metaphysical self-sufficiency and primacy of science over religion in all matters of truth, just as much as Dennett is a crude and pugilistic advocate of the metaphysical self-sufficiency and primacy of scientific truth over the delusions of religious belief.

If we are to talk of non-overlapping magisteria in the terms that Cunningham might offer, then the metaphysical priority of truth must shift from science to theology. Here, only those things that are of primary meaning and which concern realities that transcend the 'merely' immanent can be true (which is not to say that any belief concerning religion and transcendence cannot be false) and all things that concern the natural sciences are provisional and useful bodies of knowledge, constructed in their own epistemic terms, but always of relative value to those things which alone could contact genuine reality—the categories of analogically understood transcendence and real value. For where first philosophy comes before science, then the important questions of truth and value must not be determined by science, but rather the use and meaning of science must be

determined by theology—that is, by a divinely revealed, analogically framed apprehension of real reality.

Put like this, it becomes inescapably clear that we would not be talking about ‘science’ as understood within modernity if we were to reframe Gould’s conception of the relationship between science and theology in the terms that Cunningham implies. For what modernity finds so useful about prioritizing science over theology in matters of truth is that this supposedly belief-neutral criteria grants a more or less universal, testable, rational, and objective acceptance of what counts as public truth. Formed by this approach to truth, modernity is now unable to use theology as a culturally unifying frame of acceptable public belief. It is entirely conceptually valid to claim that theology, or some genuinely metaphysical frame of belief, needs to be our first philosophy (rather than science), but our culture’s commitment to liberalism in relation to religious beliefs—the privatisation of religious belief itself—means that practically, it is only meaningless and merely instrumental ‘facts’ that we now *can* collectively believe in as publically true.

The end result of this is that if we were to seriously attempt to recover orthodox Christian theology as first philosophy, the deeply culturally ingrained ideology of modern liberalism—in our attitudes to religious beliefs, practises, ‘personal’ moral values, and ‘private’ metaphysical, existential, and cosmological commitments—would simply reject this stance. Science is never just science to us moderns, but it is the integral public discourse of modern liberalism. Modern liberalism says that science is one thing—just about value neutral facts—and each person, be they religious or not, interprets the meaning of their own subjective experiences and decides what values they will embrace entirely on the grounds of their own freedom of conscience. But Cunningham’s commitment to the prioritization of first philosophy over science—the stance that knowledge must always be made meaningful by its relation to prior metaphysical commitments—

cannot accept modern liberalism and can only be fundamentally rejected by modern liberalism.¹² Hence—socio-culturally—Cunningham's stance can only be rejected by modern science, for it is the assumed value neutral truth foundation of modern liberalism.

And there is another problem for any attempted synthetic reading of Darwinian evolution and Christian doctrine, even if one accepts the prioritization of first philosophy over science. Entirely de-temporalizing the cosmological and teleological horizons of the biblical narrative does profound damage to the biblical narrative, for that narrative is inescapably temporally constructed. History is the texture of Judeo-Christian revelation, even if history is certainly not understood in modern historiographical terms.¹³ That is, whilst the Christocentric nature of a Christian understanding of the Hebrew scriptures (and, of course, the New Testament) is basic to the Christian faith—and Augustine and Maximus are entirely orthodox in bringing out the trans-temporal and ontologically pre-temporal significance of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ—trans-/pre-temporal Christocentrism is one thing, but Cunningham overstates his case by entirely de-temporalizing biblical cosmogony and eschatology in order to make orthodox faith compatible with Darwinian natural history.¹⁴

¹² See William T. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, Eerdmans, 2008; see Daniel M. Bell Jr., *Liberation Theology after the End of History*, Routledge, London, 2001. These texts provide us with a deep analysis of modern political and economic liberalism showing clearly the deep structural commitment our liberalism has against any public vision of transcendence, real value and qualitative reality, including an ostensible rejection of metaphysics itself. These texts also argue that modern liberalism is not freedom but rather a profound and all-encompassing bondage to the instrumental and pragmatic nihilism which governs the modern Western life-form with an iron fist, and which disciplines and forms our desires at every turn.

¹³ For a very sensitive appreciation of the place of the distinctively Christian understanding of history within the very texture of biblical revelation see Nathan Kerr, *Christ, History and Apocalyptic*, Wipf and Stock, OR, 2009.

¹⁴ Conor Cunningham, *Darwin's Pious Idea*, Eerdmans, MI, 2010, p 379. "... for theology, protology leads to eschatology. So, for example, according to the Church Fathers, Adam was

The assumption of a real fall of nature, a fundamental alteration its very structure, from an Edenic state of paradise which is in some manner temporally prior to the human history of civilisations, is very strong in the church fathers. After all, the church fathers had no pressing modern naturalistic need to think that sin, death, and disease were simply and always natural.¹⁵ On the patristic

Christ and Eve was Mary, while paradise is the church and the Fall signals humankind's redemption in Christ." What Cunningham is describing here is protology replacing eschatology and cosmogony, not leading to it. This stance does not fairly reflect the manner in which multiple interpretive layers co-exist in the patristic reading of scripture. Whilst scepticism about even trying to know 'what really happened' in primeval times is often put forward by patristic theologians, typically the fathers of the church *do* believe in a real fall prior to civilizational history, and this belief does situate their cosmological and soteriological outlooks (see St Basil The Great, *On The Human Condition*, SVS Press, NY, 2005, pp. 74–80). Christocentric protology undergirds and overshadows everything for the early church fathers, but it does not obliterate that which stands within it. That is, the early church fathers, as Christocentric as their interpretive lens really is, typically maintain a profound respect for what we would now call a decidedly pre-modern, pre-scientific belief in some actual historical reality underlying the cosmogenic myths in Genesis. This at the same time that they maintain profound Christocentric meaning is at the core of cosmology, and at the same time as they understand how to read myth as truer than that which can be located in terms of the merely 'factual'. On patristic hermeneutics see Henri De Lubac's magisterial work on the scriptural hermeneutics of Origen in De Lubac's *History and Spirit*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2007. On patristic readings of Genesis, see Andrew Louth (ed.) *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis I – II*, IVP, Ill, 2001. See also Augustine, *On Genesis*, New City Press, NY, 2002. And it is also the case that there is no one patristic outlook regarding the relationship between the biblical revelation (primarily concerning the Hebrew Scriptures) and Greek philosophy and science. Christopher Kaiser brings this out well in his *Creation and the History of Science*, Marshall Pickering, London, 1991, pp 1- 52. That is, whilst some of the Fathers were very keen to situate an understanding of cosmogony in ways that aligned with Greek science, Tertullian's complex rejection of the compatibility of Christian belief and Greek knowledge is no mere absurdist fundamentalism and is well represented amongst the church fathers. Negotiating a relationship between Athens and Jerusalem involves upholding the "absurdity" and "foolishness" of Christian doctrines in the light of sophisticated Greek knowledge and philosophy, as per Tertullian, as much as it involves Origen's "plundering the treasures of Egypt". See Eric Osborn's very helpful text *Tertullian*, Cambridge University Press, 1997. Tertullian had more to do with reason than a few contextless quotes about his opposition to Athens would have us believe. Likewise, Origen had more to do with faith than his just reputation as an outstanding Greek intellect might have us assume. On Origen's opposition to Greek philosophy, see Mark Edwards, *Origen Against Plato*, Ashgate, England, 2002.

¹⁵ Father Thomas Hopko from St Vladimir's Seminary in New York, in full harmony with patristic teaching, puts it succinctly like this: "Death is not natural." (October 1999, St George's Orthodox Church, Brisbane, Australia. Transcript here: <http://www.orthodoxchristian.info/pages/afterdeath.htm> .) This is a statement that can

outlook, the tragic features of fallen reality are inherently abnormal, even though the fallen order of nature is now characterised by them, and even though death is the means to life in the Christian faith. Classic Christological patristic readings of Genesis typically do *not* assert disbelief in a real, pre-fallen state of innocence. Further, I do not know that the historically situated salvation narrative of a Christian reading of the Hebrew scriptures can really do without a primordial entrance of sin, death, and the devil into the originally good order of nature, which the cosmic Christ comes into time to deliver us from. Certainly Christ's particular temporal coming is also a trans-temporal reality, for the Lamb of God was slain from before the foundation of the world, but the texture of history cannot be extracted from the Christian revelation, and that history has an Edenic age just as it has an eschatological age, and those alpha and omega ages are ages located within Christ, yes, but they are ages of a *different* yet real nature to the present and somehow less than fully real nature.

I rejoice in Cunningham's Christological reading of creation, fall, and redemption, yet I do not see that this should entail dispensing with the idea that there is something now radically wrong with nature which is contrary to an original harmony of creation deemed very good by God. I cannot see that Christianity can do without the belief that the whole of nature still needs radical redemption. I find I cannot dispense with the Pauline notion that the whole of creation was subjected to futility by sin and is in travail waiting for its full redemption, and the church is the sacrament and foretaste of this radical eschaton in which all of material reality is to be caught up. Yet the idea central

make no sense to modern scientific naturalism. Note also Gustav Aulen's classic text *Christus Victor*, Macmillan, NY, 1958. In the primary atonement vision of early church the triumph of Christ over the very real but not divinely ordained fundamental enemies of humanity – sin, death and the devil – very much in harmony with Dante's understanding of the great intervention of Christ to liberate us (and ultimately all nature) from the segue of demonic power, and equally Milton's penetrating vision of the drama of salvation history, is not some aberrant unsophisticated neo-atheistic sub-theological outlook as Cunningham seems to imply, but is simply orthodox.

to modern scientific natural history is that things have always been the way they now are, from the lifeless and meaningless beginning of time so many billions of years ago, and will always be this way until the equally lifeless and meaningless end of time, so many billions of years hence. Modern naturalism recognizes only one age, only one nature. Life is a strange and transitory visitor in such a picture of reality. Without some sort of true meaning to Eden, the radicality of goodness in creation, which persists but is marred by sin, death, scarcity, and disease, is lost, and the radical eschatological horizon of total redemptive hope for nature is also lost.

If we are to hold onto any real notion of Eden we cannot simply accept the one age, one nature view basic to modern naturalism. But any real notion of Eden cannot be understood in scientific terms; there can be no recourse to Creation Science here. For the logic of fundamentally different orders of nature which are at the alpha and the omega of the biblical narrative makes any prelapsarian order of nature as inaccessible to the knowledge categories of the present natural order as is the post-eschaton natural order. This logic of different natural orders is, for all intents and purposes, the same as the logic of alternative universes.¹⁶ Hence myth and irreducibly symbolic imagery are the only revealed

¹⁶ Perhaps there is an entirely magical solution to the dissonance between what modern natural science reveals to us and what the Edenic mythos reveals to us. Perhaps there really are multiple universes, as speculative physics is prepared to contemplate. Imaginatively, this is a very satisfying speculation. C.S. Lewis plays with this idea of multiple universes, and of the transposition not simply out of one age into another, but out of one entire nature into another. And this imaginative stance seems to be consistent with the non-returnable expulsion from Eden and with the notion of a new heaven and a new earth in the apocalypse. In the *Last Battle*, Lewis locates entirely separate natures within the one primary order of true reality – Aslan’s country – and relativises vast tracts of time in giving them over to the awakened powers of natural gods in the times outside of the central creative purposes of God. It is clear that the Inklings take these sort of imaginative speculations very seriously, and whilst they cannot possibly be scientific in nature, they may well be truer than what science within our nature could tell us, if the intuition behind this speculation is well placed. All Charles William’s novels, take *Many Dimensions* and *Place of the Lion* for example, play with the notion that different orders of reality, entirely different natures which are ‘normally’

access we have to both of those ages (or different universes). So it cannot be avoided that any commitment to Eden and to different natural orders is going to be a stumbling block to the one age/nature assumption of natural history, which is simply presupposed by modern science. Equally, any reduction of Christian doctrine in order to fit a one age/nature understanding of natural history is going to render the cosmogenic, cosmological, and teleological tropes of Christian belief's sacred narrative as having no actually true redemptive meaning for us who seek to inhabit this poignantly beautiful veil of tears in hope.

Johann Hamann makes a powerful case for the wisdom of God's folly and the indispensable nature of the prescientific, pre-Enlightenment tissue of biblical revelation, which will certainly not fit the prejudices and respectable wisdom of our times.¹⁷ Against Kant, and against all attempts to redefine revelation so as to make it amenable to what our learned sages call valid phenomenological knowledge, I am inclined to go with Hamann and stick with what Paul calls the folly of God, as given to us in the very non-modern terms of the scriptures.

For in the final analysis, there is a profound imaginative dissonance between a reality outlook embedded in a three age canonical narrative of salvation history and modern naturalism, particularly in relation to cosmogony. And whilst Cunningham's amazing and very important text has many wonderful assets, I do not think it does justice to this profound imaginative dissonance.

The prehistoric, imaginative landscape depicted in Walt Disney's *Fantasia*, as set to Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, is profoundly dissonant in relation to, say, the

discontinuous with one another, actually overlay one another and are in fact interactive at a level beyond the functional warrants of each order taken on its own terms.

¹⁷ See John Betz, *After Enlightenment*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009, for a very fine book on Hamann and his approach to scripture and Enlightenment conceptions of reason. Ronald Smith's beautiful introduction and anthology of Hamann extracts, particularly his section on biblical reflections which spends considerable time in Genesis 1 – 4, is a good door into Hamann's work in this area too. See Ronald G Smith, *J.G. Hamann 1730 – 1788*, Harper, NY, 1960, pp 117 – 138.

creation of Narnia as depicted in C. S. Lewis' *The Magician's Nephew*. This imaginative dissonance is situated within competing primary mytho-poetic visions of reality.

The *Origin of Species* is clearly the raw material out of which the imaginative primal, mytho-poetic narrative of *Fantasia* is fashioned. But the *Origin of Species* does not arise from nowhere. The cultural landscape in which Darwin's 19th century agnostic naturalism is embedded is the amoral political realism, competitive free market thinking, and imperial notions of power and progress of his era. This contextual texture is by no means absent from Darwin's work. Indeed, the assumed brutal 'realism' of Darwin's milieu throws any Christian piety that his idea might entail into serious jeopardy.¹⁸ There is a competitive and survivalistic outlook on the structure of natural reality in the *Origin of Species* which is profoundly non-Christian. I find Marduk's ancient cosmogony of primal violence to be very at home in *The Origin of Species*, whereas Augustine's mythos of originary harmony is, at best, a kind of invisible hand guiding the processes of violence and survival towards the apparently valuable ascent of man. In contrast, the original harmony of the Garden of Eden is clearly the primary myth behind the imaginative depictions of *The Magician's Nephew*, the *Voyage to Venus*, and the medieval outlook on reality which C.S. Lewis so loved and respected.

Now I take it as given that there is no meaning and no thinking without primary myths. As such, I would place them amongst what Aristotle calls "the primitives," so there is no point in trying to derive or refute them from secondary things, such as science. But any science—any knowledge of nature—will view and

¹⁸ And, of course, Darwin's theory is not unconnected with Social Darwinism, eugenics and some horrifying racial extermination programs in the 20th century. Moltmann, with his profound sensitivity to the legacy of Hitler is not afraid to remind us that the underlying political and bio-medical logic of Social Darwinism is still deeply a part of the modern outlook on reality. See Jürgen Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness Arise!*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2010, pp. 209 – 223.

understand reality through the lens of one primary myth or another, or it may view reality incoherently through a range of incompatible primary myth lenses.

Secular modernity after Darwin feels a deep mythic empathy with one age 'primitivism,' a cosmology of naturalistic, violent contest and the primary governing principles of Death, Sex and Power. Look at Picasso, Freud, Stravinsky, look at Facebook. Darwin plays no small role in the broad intellectual acceptance of this mythology. On that front, Dennett is right. Although Cunningham has fashioned a sophisticated means whereby orthodox Christology can be understood as compatible with the contemporary life sciences and their evolutionary underpinnings, my question is whether, in mytho-poetic and cosmogenic terms, it is really possible to forge an alliance between such totally incompatible views of reality.

In the 1880s John Henry Newman noted that it was becoming increasingly hard to communicate with people whose cultural imaginations were then largely unschooled by Christian faith, and whose way of life was increasingly opposed to the imaginative landscape in which the Christian faith is set.¹⁹ Newman was no opponent of Darwin, so this comment is best understood as a reflection on the late 19th century in general. But his comment was undoubtedly correct. The imaginative landscapes of cosmogonies are very culturally powerful, and we

¹⁹ John Henry Newman: "It is not reason that is against us, but imagination... The ways in which we 'see' the world, its story and its destiny; the ways in which we 'see' what human beings are, and what they're for, and how they are related to each other and the world around them; these things are shaped and structured by the stories that we tell, the cities we inhabit, the buildings in which we live, and work, and play; by how we handle – through drama, art and song – the things that give us pain and bring us joy. What does the world look like? What do we look like? What does God look like? It is not easy to think Christian thoughts in a culture whose imagination, whose ways of 'seeing' the world and everything there is to see, are increasingly unschooled by Christianity and, to a considerable and deepening extent, quite hostile to it." From *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*. Vol. XXX: A Cardinal's Apostolate, Oct., 1881 to Dec., 1884, p. 159. As quoted and cited on Peter Orchard's blog at this address: <http://www.besideourselves.com/2011/04/after-discussing-mythological-method-i.html>

should think very carefully before we concede truth to the assumptions of a modern, naturalistic cosmogeny.

Rowan Williams, in a recent series of lectures on Narnia, understands Lewis' enterprise as the attempt to recover the freshness and vitality of Christian doctrine in a post-Christian culture via the use of imagination.²⁰ Reopening the richness of the underlying mythos of Christian doctrine via the tools appropriate to that task—imagination and narrative—can awaken us to the truth about what it means to be human, where life comes from, and what life is all about, in a manner more primary than science. If we can but grasp the deep truth in Aslan singing the magical world of Narnia into being in a wonder of love, if we can but grasp the harmonic plurality, the joyous anarchic freedom, the endless variation in creativity of the originary splendour undergirding creation, then we will understand reality in a way compatible with the underlying mythos of the Christian faith. Whatever Eden was, it cannot be *less* than the myth we have. Jacques Ellul, too—no fundamentalist by any measure—sees that in all our modern scientific sophistication, we cannot better the Genesis myth, and we do it a terrible injustice if we seek to interpret it in a manner compatible with modern science.²¹

Cunningham's text does indeed expose pseudoscience as facile and its interpretation of the meaning of modern science as highly problematic. Cunningham does indeed offer a very sophisticated way of making orthodox Christology prior to science and finding bridges between the knowledge of the

²⁰ Podcasts of these lectures can be accessed at Ben Myer's blog, at this address: <http://faith-theology.blogspot.com/2011/04/rowan-williams-three-lectures-on-narnia.html>

²¹ See the chapters 8 ("Technique and the opening chapters of Genesis") and 9 ("The relationship between Man and Creation in the Bible") by Jacques Ellul in C. Mitcham & J. Grote (eds.) *Theology and Technology*, University of America Press, 1984. These remarkable treatments of paradise and fall fully recognize the difficulty faced by the modern scientific consciousness in relation to the biblical texts, and yet Ellul draws deep truths from the text by taking it seriously without resolving the problem of the modern scientific gaze.

modern life sciences and orthodox Christology. Cunningham's theology acts as a much needed universal alkaline to the universal acid of Dennett's pseudoscience. In the end, however, I am not persuaded that modern science—as beholden to the cosmological and teleological assumptions of Darwinian naturalism—*can* be incorporated into a Christian metaphysical framework. I suspect that modern science is too deeply embedded in a 'one age' imaginative mythos of originary contest and nihilistic materialism to contain insights compatible with the truths of Christianity. Sociologically, modern science's cosmogenic speculations, cosmological assumptions, and teleological nihilism, are foundational to modern liberalism and modern secular reason. For these reasons I do not think modern science, as inextricably enmeshed with modernity as it is, can be accepted if one believes that Christ is the alpha and the omega of all that is, and if one is to think about nature and reality in the light of divine knowledge which is given (and hence nothing we own, possess, or stand over) to us by the grace of God.

Faith has a different stance than does anthropocentric, autonomous knowledge, a different relation to what is unknown, what will always remain beyond the mastery of human knowledge, than does 'science.'²² And the knowledge of love and trust in the service of faith is of a fundamentally different ken than knowledge as an objective power over nature and as an assertion of independence from God. A Christian understanding of knowledge and nature is thus going to be different to a modern naturalistic secular understanding of knowledge and nature. Thus, in relation to science and theology, I think we would be wise, after John Milbank's fashion, not to surrender anything in our faith—certainly not our cosmogony and eschatology—to the gaze of methodological atheism.²³ If that means standing at a distance from the

²² See Wendell Berry's very important text *Life is a Miracle*, Counterpoint, CA, 2001 on science's inability to deal with what we do not know and never will know.

²³ See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 2nd ed., Blackwell, Oxford, 2006.

cosmology and teleology implicit in a Darwinian understanding of natural history, and even from the scientific truths which the epistemic framework of naturalistic modern science itself presents, then I think we must be prepared to look foolish in the eyes of the wisdom of our time. I think we have a problem with the operational scope and methodological assumptions of modern science itself, and with the implicit *natura pura* frame of interpretation which cannot be simply extracted from modern science²⁴—and in the final analysis, I do not think *modern* science can be theologically salvaged.

²⁴ See Louise Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, Yale University Press, 1993 and Goetz & Taliaferro, *Naturalism*, Eerdmans, MI, 2008. The notion that there is a discrete nature and a discrete super-nature, and functionally only a 'pure' nature without any participation in a transcendent dimension prior to and beyond the directly tangible, is the functional foundation of modern science. Modern science works within this anti-metaphysical cosmology. This cannot be squared with any orthodox doctrine of creation. The science that is produced from within the operational framework of *natura pura*, then, should not be expected to align with Christian faith regarding the nature of nature, the meaning of human life, and the alpha of primeval goodness and the omega of redemptive glory which is the origin and teleology of creation as understood by the Christian faith.

ADORNO'S CULTURE INDUSTRY: An Anthropological Critique

David Wilmington

This paper is an attempt to examine and to assess Adorno's theory of the "culture industry" as it pertains to his underlying anthropology or account of human life. Ultimately, I believe this is of critical importance to any evaluation of Adorno's relevance and helpfulness for contemporary Christian theological ethics. The expository concern of this essay, contained in Part I, is to summarize Adorno's claims about the culture industry and to show its role within his project. Part II contains the twofold critical concern of this essay: 1) to describe the anthropological assumptions necessary for Adorno to assert that the culture industry can accomplish its vicious task, and 2) to survey Adorno's analysis of jazz as a representative example of how his anthropology distorts his ability to hear one of the "most characteristic forms of mass culture."¹ The concluding, constructive section will present, as a counter-analysis, a theologically informed "Jazz Anthropology" that both refutes Adorno's reading of jazz and offers a better model for understanding key aspects of human life.

¹ Adorno, "The Schema of Mass Culture," in *The Culture Industry: Selected essays on mass culture*, J.M. Bernstein, ed., (London: Routledge, 1991), 60.

My ultimate goal in this paper is to argue that, as we see in his analysis of jazz, the anthropological assumptions and commitments underlying Adorno's sweeping theory of the culture industry cause him to mis-hear, misunderstand, and mis-diagnose critical aspects of the society he hopes to free.

I. ADORNO'S DIABOLUS EX MACHINA: THE CULTURE INDUSTRY

Theodor Adorno's account of the "culture industry" is, arguably, the most influential diagnosis, analysis, and critique of modern capitalist society and culture of the 20th century. His key assertions concerning the systemic effects of capitalist theory (exchange value, commodification fetish) in societies based upon capitalism are regularly echoed in both academic and popular opinion on the current state of affairs in western society. Although the basic elements of his assertion seem to have been in place as early as the late 1930s,² the core of his account of the culture industry comes in 1944 and 1947, in writing that either appears in or builds off of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Adorno's chapter on the culture industry serves as a kind of case study within the larger argument of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Where the preceding chapters dealt primarily with a broadly historical or genealogical statement about the dialectic between myth and enlightenment, a statement which was itself based on broad sociological claims and categories, Adorno presents his culture industry thesis in an attempt to describe the particularly modern apparatus responsible for enforcing a frozen moment of the dialectic. As J.M Bernstein points out, Adorno and Horkheimer, though still solidly Marxists, had already found it necessary to diverge from the traditional Marxist claims about the inevitable "progress"

² J.M. Bernstein, "Introduction," in *The Culture Industry: Selected essays on mass culture*, J.M. Bernstein, ed., (London: Routledge, 1991), 2 and 4.

beyond the crisis created by industrial capitalism.³ The basic dynamic of the relationship between myth and enlightenment, though rooted in the antagonistic relationship between human thinking and nature, seems to have been captured and re-inscribed in a much tighter “loop” in the society Adorno observes and attempts to diagnose in the 1940s.

Where the history of enlightenment, whose pre-history is seen already in *The Odyssey*, stretched over more than two thousand years, the modern capitalist industrial system has somehow managed to harness the dynamic of the dialectic for its own purposes, and, like a biological or digital virus, to reproduce its own genetic code in such rapid cycles that one can no longer speak of, or even discern, the actual stages of the dialectic. Every stage is now doomed to exhibit and to reproduce the self-perpetuating characteristics of the virus. Under the conditions of the modern industrial state, enlightenment and myth roll into each other so quickly, in a tightly orchestrated parody of all preceding human history, that the dialectic now issues in a new form of mastery—a tyrannical twisting of desire and the destruction of thought; power that eclipses even the previous mechanisms of economic and political systems.

The question arises then—what accounts for the success and hegemonic stability of the modern, pathological variant of the dialectic that Adorno and Horkheimer describe in the preceding chapters? What kinds of creatures does the culture industry control? In the thesis of the culture industry, Adorno finds a multi-layered mechanism capable of imposing a system so unified and unrelentingly unifying that unity must be both its ontological basis and its telos. However, as I will discuss below, the theory of the culture industry itself proceeds from and is guided by certain anthropological assumptions. Although this section of the study is broadly “expository,” it may better be described as a

³ Bernstein, 3.

“guided close reading” of the chapter on the culture industry: the driving question concerning anthropology informs and guides my attempt to draw out the stages and bases of Adorno’s presentation of the culture industry thesis.

A. The Superstructure

Dialectic of Enlightenment puts forward a theory of enlightenment as a cyclical dynamic initiated by the necessity for humans to separate themselves from nature.⁴ This drive for separation leads to efforts to master nature, which in turn opens up the possibility for (or perhaps guarantees) alienation from nature. Paradoxically, perhaps, this ties enlightenment precisely to nature in that the whole concept of enlightenment *as such* is forever defined by its distance from key aspects of natural life. Because of the role of myth in earlier engagements with nature, in which humans attempted to influence nature without claims to absolute control and mastery—by shamanistic imitation, for example—the modern enlightenment intentionally set itself against myth in an attempt to sever ties with anything that kept humanity linked to nature. Reason, reduced to instrumental thinking that grasps at control and mastery, became a self-protecting totality, and enlightenment came to be defined by whatever functions of reason ensured the separation from myth and the progress of control.⁵

⁴ For more thorough summaries of the broad argument of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and of the introductory assertions of the chapter “The Concept of Enlightenment” in particular, see Lambert Zuidervaart, “Alienated Masterpiece: Adorno’s Contribution to a Transformative Social Theory,” in *After Modernity: Secularity, Globalization & the Re-Enchantment of the World*, Ed. James K. A. Smith, (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 106-114.

⁵ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, Ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, Transl. Edmund Jephcott, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002). The first sections of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (abbreviated in footnotes hereafter as *DE*) go on to discuss how this only serves to link enlightenment to nature even further, wrapping back around again to myth - but this aspect of the analysis goes beyond my focus here.

With this historical and conceptual understanding of enlightenment's dialectic in mind, we may observe that Adorno spends most of his time discussing the higher levels of the entire structure. In these regions, he observes the effects on people—the occupants of cities, consumers, watchers of film and TV, radio listeners—caused by the products of the culture industry, while occasionally descending to touch (briefly) on the underlying cause of the culture industry. It is a deeper structure, then, which actually provides the various but interlocking cogs visible in the machinery of the culture industry.

J.M. Bernstein notes that the chapter on the culture industry is “even more fragmentary” than the already fragmented whole that makes up *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.⁶ While this is true—Adorno's rejection of a linear argument moving through necessary steps of assertion and proof is never clearer—it is still illuminating to place side-by-side the elements he chose as building blocks for his own fragmentary thesis. The first major section establishes unity as the chief characteristic and goal of the culture industry. The apparent chaos of culture in the late 1940s was in fact merely the superficial symptom of a virus that infects everything with sameness. Technology is simultaneously the excuse for and the means of producing a hegemony of re-production. This is an important key to the success of a system that enforces sameness via the appearance of offering a multitude of differences in the form of choices.

In a brief reference to the “schematism” of Kantian epistemology, Adorno notes that the culture industry is not the root of the problem—it is

⁶ J.M. Bernstein, “Introduction,” in *The Culture Industry: Selected essays on mass culture*, J.M. Bernstein (ed.), (London: Routledge, 1991), 7. Bernstein is quoting introductory material from the 1973 Cumming translation of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Throughout my exposition of *DE* in Part I of this paper, I have summarized Adorno's argument in sections corresponding to the one-line breaks supplied in the Noerr/Jephcott edition. For example, pp. 94-98 present the opening claims regarding false distinctions and difference, pp. 120-124 present claims concerning the destruction of tragedy via social control, and so on. Obviously, there are many areas of overlap between these sections, but, as I hope is clear, the editors have presented the text in a way that allows us to see the major focal areas of Adorno's account.

merely operating via the rules of an even more fundamental schema. In the next section I will return to Adorno's crucial invocation of Kant, but it is sufficient for this overview to note that when Adorno locates the culture industry within his broadest view, he understands it in epistemological terms: "The whole world passes through the filter of the culture industry."⁷ This filter enforces sameness even via the material artifacts of culture; the products themselves, by virtue of their own reproducibility, stamp everyday existence, including language, with the imprint of the fundamental schema and call it "natural."⁸ Since Adorno defines artistic transcendence as moments of "discrepancy"—seeing harmony as a "questionable unity of form and content" and a "passionate striving for identity"—the regularity of the false art of the culture industry is no different than any other mechanically reproduced product.⁹ Whatever the language of style, genre, technique, and idiom may once have contributed to the understanding of real art, those categories now serve only to help with the administration and control of a unified culture of non-culture.

He next turns his attention to the ways in which the capitalist production and market mechanisms can be seen working throughout the systems of control operative within the "superstructure" of style and technology. All so-called entertainment offers only the repetition and prolongation of work. It is in this context that Adorno offers his famous invective against the parody of laughter, for only a parody of reconciliation or joy is capable under the conditions of capitalism. Even "pure amusement" and "mindless artistry" are forced to justify themselves according to "organizational reason": even the purposeless and

⁷ *DE*, 98.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 103. Here, as in most other cases where Adorno discusses "identity," he has in mind the attempt to dissolve differences into a single (false) identity. Concerning his comments on harmony, I address this strange misunderstanding below.

meaningless must either be eradicated or intellectualized into a form or context that reproduces the untruth of the product called "meaning."¹⁰

Adorno next addresses the dynamics of entertainment and amusement as actually oriented to agreement and powerlessness. Because the culture industry claims to concern itself with what people want while simultaneously seeking to annul people as thinking subjects, life within the culture industry is a life spent under the thrall of total deception.¹¹ Once they cease to be thinking subjects, human beings function almost like commodified objects—even to the extent that, as in Adorno's interpretation of exchange value, "everyone amounts only to those qualities by which he or she can replace everyone else . . . [a]s individuals they are absolutely replaceable, pure nothingness."¹²

Perverse Coincidences of Opposites

With this presupposition about total commodification in mind, Adorno's assertions about the destructive influence of the culture industry grow even more dire. He identifies several possible objections which might seem to undercut his description of an already-dominant, all-encompassing system, and, one by one, asserts that any seemingly contradictory characteristic of modern life is in fact already absorbed by, and made to serve, the system. "Chance and planning become identical" because "those in control" can raise up any of the interchangeable masses to, for example, win a competition or to become an engineer. The illusion of spontaneity and contingency serves to disguise "the web of transactions and measures into which life has been transformed," but

¹⁰ Ibid., 114-115.

¹¹ *DE*, 115-116.

¹² Ibid., 117.

actual existence is inscribed in a formula which accounts for all variables.¹³ Accordingly, even the invocation of nature over against the industrial serves merely to underwrite the industry: “Nature, in being presented by society’s control mechanism as the healing antithesis of society, is itself absorbed into that incurable society and sold off.”¹⁴

So complete is the deception that Adorno, in one of his most provocative assertions, finds that the merely formal freedom of the present (i.e., “late capitalism”) is a prison, anticipated by the concentration camp, but now guarded by “a system of churches, clubs, professional associations, and other relationships which amount to the most sensitive instrument of social control.”¹⁵ This is one of the highest levels of the superstructure of society—a realm in which even social welfare and caregiving are merely masks for a system concerned only with increasing production and with bringing “the last private impulse under social control.”

Even tragedies cannot provide the jolt necessary to disrupt the control of such a society. The tragic is recognized, but rather than allowing it to challenge the totalizing claims of the culture industry, the system appropriates tragedy as either an unavoidable anomaly (and proof that the truth is not glossed over) or as a childish version of just punishment for non-conformity.¹⁶ In fact, by naming a category of routine events “tragic,” or rather by inscribing tragic events into the routine, the culture industry disguises the evidence of its own failure by inscribing it as yet another variable in the formula: “Even the worst outcome . . . still confirms the established order and corrupts tragedy.”¹⁷

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *DE*, 119.

¹⁵ Ibid., 120.

¹⁶ Ibid., 121-122.

¹⁷ Ibid., 123.

Where the substance of tragedy was once made up of “the antithesis between individual and society,” such that it (quoting Nietzsche here) “glorified ‘courage and freedom of feeling in face of a mighty foe, sublime adversity,’” modern tragedy is diluted “in the void of the false identity of society and subject”—a demonic and fascist integration forced upon the subjects of “those in command,” that is, the subject victims of capitalist monopoly.¹⁸ The image of this void in which the subject and society are flattened together in a false identity sets the scene for the final two sections of the chapter on the culture industry, in which Adorno presents the effects on the notions of the self, individuality, and—ultimately and most insidiously—language.

One false individualism for all

Returning explicitly to the notion of commodification as the tool for the manipulative twisting of otherwise legitimate goods, Adorno next addresses “pseudoindividuality” as the primary mode of selfhood promoted by the culture industry. Blaming the “class-determined form of self-preservation” for limiting individuation to “the level of mere species being,” Adorno lashes out at a pseudoindividuality founded upon a “socially conditioned monopoly commodity misrepresented as natural.” Superficial effects and gimmick-based caricatures are the substance of such “individuality,” and it could never have been otherwise given the essential sameness enforced at the deepest structure of society. In a sentence typical of his most damning assertions, Adorno diagnoses a closed system, impenetrable because of its overreaching economic theory: “Every bourgeois character expressed the same thing, even and especially when deviating from it: the harshness of competitive society.” When the competitiveness of the market reduces individuation to mere self-serving

¹⁸ *DE*, 124. Adorno replaced “monopoly” with “those in command” in the 1947 revision.

individualism, otherwise positive developments like technology are forced to serve the machines of the culture industry and its underlying schema.¹⁹

Adorno's subsequent equation (or close approximation) of the typical citizens in western capitalist society with Nazis—they “are virtually already Nazis”—touches upon a key assertion.²⁰ For Adorno, fascism and western democratic industrial capitalism are in their essences the same. The genocidal, openly militaristic imperialism of Germany under National Socialism is only superficially different from—and essentially no worse than—the subtly manipulative systems of the seemingly free and democratic west.²¹ As Stephen Crook puts it, Adorno's analysis leads him to conclude that “the rantings of a [anti-Semitic preacher] Martin Luther Thomas or a Hitler play on the same regressed character structure as do soap operas and astrology columns. The rhetoric of fascist propaganda is simply a less censored version of the ubiquitous rhetoric of the culture industry.”²² Once again, we see that the culture industry itself merely serves to package, distribute, and endlessly recreate the poison produced in the heart of the society.

Pseudoindividuality promises individuation via individuality, but the true message, the elevation of imitation—of the film hero himself and of the mode of production that supplies him to the public—helps to accomplish the destruction

¹⁹ *DE*, 125.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ This claim, which today is ubiquitous in many academic and political circles, may have been first articulated by Adorno here in 1944 – at least in the context of a politico-philosophical analysis of culture. In 1950, Adorno suggested and described a psychological basis for this phenomenon in *The Authoritarian Personality*. More recent commentators, such as Slavoj Žižek, for example, continue to echo Adorno's thesis about violent atrocities being representative, rather than anomalous, of the underlying character of both fascism and western democratic capitalism.

²² Stephen Crook, “Introduction,” *Adorno: The Stars Down to Earth and other essays on the irrational in culture*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 14. See his summary of Adorno's explanation of the relationship between fascism and violence (9).

of human thought, and of any hope that the system might be beaten. "[T]he fact that the concept of human life ever existed is already forgotten," Adorno claims, in "the synthetically manufactured physiognomies of today."²³ Advertising and the commodification of beauty and art stamp the dominance of imitation on everything because of the underlying schema—the economic substructure which governs absolutely and absolutely governs every aspect of the superstructures of society—such that it rules culture, politics, and even the potential for human thought.

This concluding section of the chapter on the culture industry builds in intensity precisely as it returns again and again to a parallel critiques of, and equivocating comparisons between, life under Hitler's Reich and life under western capitalism. The medium is the message: the radio broadcast of a symphony is not substantively different from the broadcast of a Hitler speech. As art is destroyed, so too does culture-as-commodity impose the evil of the law of exchange even into language, so that no formulation of thought—even that directed toward resistance —can escape serving the system.²⁴ Like the special effects, tricks, and "montage character" of film and the culture industry as a whole, language is only allowed "to designate something and not to mean it." Words are reduced to their exchange value, just as the cinematic representation of time and action passing in a montage are merely correlations to an event or events.²⁵ Language becomes mere data that is either suspicious or useless when it attempts to provide anything more than mere data.

Since this anemic version of language is easily manipulated by means of propagandistic usage or fashionable semantic fads (perhaps like the current "memes"), distributed by "advertising bosses" or by German fascists, both

²³ *DE*, 126.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 131.

²⁵ *DE*, 132-133.

totalitarians, Adorno finds that “countless people” essentially speak, and therefore think, in the linguistic equivalents of brand names. The language and gestures common to society are “more deeply permeated by the patterns of the culture industry than ever before, in nuances still beyond the reach of experimentation.”²⁶ Freedom is “freedom to be the same,” and the self becomes “an apparatus which, even in its unconscious impulses, conforms to the model presented by the culture industry.”²⁷

B. The Ground(ing) Floor: The Schema

How does this invincible system work and ensure its unwavering power? Recall my earlier comments about Adorno’s invocation of the Kantian “schema,” which categorizes raw data for processing by human reason. In this key passage, Adorno identifies the germ of the culture industry’s enforced sameness as that which has taken the place of Kant’s “secret mechanism within the psyche” that preforms “immediate data to fit them into the system of pure reason.”²⁸ Where this Kantian notion of an inner schematization is still active, in that the subject itself relates the data to concepts, the influence of the culture industry preempts all classification by the consumer herself by pre-classifying everything. This is not merely a question of broadcasting or enforcing a *system* of classification. In some way, “the schematicism of production” itself pre-classifies all products of the culture industry. The schema, the classification, somehow *inheres* in the products because they have been created under the material conditions of industrial capitalism. This manipulated and manipulating schema is a modern

²⁶ Ibid., 134-135.

²⁷ Ibid., 136.

²⁸ *DE*, 98.

mechanism which preempts the work of the relatively active mechanism posited by Kantian epistemology.²⁹

Here Adorno makes a key claim which reveals his most basic diagnosis: the planning of this mechanism "is in fact imposed on the industry by the inertia of a society irrational . . . and this calamitous tendency, in passing through the agencies of business [monopolistic agencies] takes on the shrewd intentionality peculiar to them."³⁰ The suppliers or producers of the culture industry and the culture industry itself are merely effects of a deeper structure. For this tighter focus on Adorno's use of the Kantian "schema," we may look not only to the sections of *Dialectic* in which he addresses it directly, but also to an essay written as "a continuation of the 'Culture Industry' chapter" of the *Dialectic*. Entitled "The Schema of Mass Culture," the essay pushes even further Adorno's claims about the extent to which all experience, thought, and behavior is preformed, and therefore controlled, by the epistemological schema underlying the culture industry.³¹

The primary characteristic operative in the "pre-digestive" function of the schema is a commercial commodification of all experience—intelligible and sensory. Since this structure is at the foundation of all society, deeper than the culture industry itself, Adorno claims that even the qualities and tendencies which seem to contradict his diagnostic analysis are actually part of the system. For example, the virtue of adaptation, trumpeted as a hallmark of freedom in industrial society, in fact serves to destroy all traces of real conflict. Via the

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ In "The Culture Industry Reconsidered," in *The Culture Industry: Selected essays on mass culture*, J.M. Bernstein (ed.), (London: Routledge, 1991), 85, Adorno explains that "mass culture" was the word used in the original drafts of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. He and Horkheimer changed this to "culture industry" in order to deny aid to the supporters of mass culture who claimed that their "culture" arose from the "masses" themselves.

“adaptive character” of the epistemological schema itself, mass culture has a “monopolistic filter which protects it from any external rays of influence which have not already been safely accommodated within its reified schema.”³² This claim requires serious attention, for a similar logic underlies one of Adorno’s most frequently deployed, and most influential, argumentative tactics: the enlistment of seemingly contradictory phenomena as evidence in support of his claims.

In this first example, Adorno describes adaptation, normally understood as a process of recognition and change in response to difference, as a tool for ensuring sameness which obviates the possibility of all real conflict. He describes a hegemonic, reflexive drive to force a synthesis or reconciliation that undercuts the potentially truth-serving function of real contradiction.³³ It is a “false reconciliation, the absorption of every negative counter-instance by an omnipotent reality, the elimination of dissonance in the bad totality.”³⁴ Accordingly, those living in mass culture suffer from the delusion that they are involved in constant engagement with, and enlightened accommodation to, difference—while both the terms of engagement and accommodation are actually predetermined by the schema. Characteristically, Adorno points to the realm of art in order to demonstrate these dynamics: the experience of art, an activity reliant upon the recognition of real difference and conflict,³⁵ has been supplanted by the evaluation of art in the form of information.

Of course, the culture industry is the natural conduit through which information flows, and the qualities of each department—whether music, film,

³² “The Schema of Mass Culture,” in *The Culture Industry: Selected essays on mass culture*, J.M. Bernstein (ed.), (London: Routledge, 1991), 53-84. 58.

³³ *Ibid.*, 70.

³⁴ “The Schema of Mass Culture,” 67.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

education, et. al.—serve to add an additional layer of manipulation via the kind of sameness and repetition peculiar to each. At its root in the schema, however, it is the preformation of epistemology into easily commodifiable units. Here is the fundamental for which the culture industry is a faithful overtone: thought is starved of anything not reduced to the quanta of the marketplace. The character of this data is governed by “the iron law that the information in question shall never touch the essential, shall never degenerate into thought.”³⁶

(Pseudo) Knowledge Is (Enslaving) Power

Adorno's explanation of the enforcement of this law reveals that the schema itself originates in the rule of the monopoly—his choice of epithets in 1944 for industrial capitalism.³⁷ Where the supply and promotion of traditional commodities might delude people into assuming that value inhered in an object, the system Adorno attempts to diagnose limits people to finding value *only* in the pre-commodified information, whose standards of “accuracy” (itself a category imposed for the purposes of control) can be manipulated to oppose any thought.³⁸ The information allowed by the system informs us only about mass culture itself: it is “a system of signals that signals itself.”³⁹ Since the system holding the reins of every aspect of society is the system of industrial capitalism, it is no surprise to find an endless desire for information—spurred on even at the self-identified “popular level” by the social need to be in-the-know, to gain the prestige of being “well-informed.”

³⁶ Ibid., 73.

³⁷ See Editor's notes at end of *DE* for list of and explanation of changes between 1944 and 1947 editions.

³⁸ “The Schema of Mass Culture,” 73.

³⁹ Ibid., 71.

This endless desire expresses itself in a kind of frantic curiosity, a link for which Adorno finds qualified support in Heidegger. Although agreeing with him that this kind of curiosity is the “cement of mass activity” and reflects a fundamental “fallenness,” Adorno rejects forcefully Heidegger’s assertion that it is a quality of man as such. This assertion is “an injustice” that virtually makes “the victim responsible rather than the jail-keeper.”⁴⁰ In Adorno’s metaphor, the system of industrial capitalism is the jail-keeper, responsible for the imprisoning “anthropological sediment of that monopolistic compulsion to handle, to manipulate, to absorb everything, the inability to leave anything beyond itself untouched.”⁴¹ Via the tool of the culture industry, the underlying schema enforced by capitalism corrupts curiosity, infecting it with a blindly passionate intensity, a fetish that destroys what value there may be in having more information. The actual data, so anxiously craved, becomes irrelevant for anything essential—for thought—because the consumer of information is nothing more than a well-informed buyer, scouring the market for a good deal.⁴²

Adorno also offers an account of the mechanism by which the schema of mass culture invalidates, and therefore renders impotent, any information that might allow for thought. Once information is defined solely as data, as “facts” that can be easily arranged in order to be grasped quickly, as that which can be “recognized, subsumed and verified,” everything in tension with that schema must—by definition—be rejected “as idiocy or ideology, as subjective in the derogatory sense.”⁴³ This is consistent with one of the introductory assessments of enlightenment itself from *Dialectic*. Adorno—here as secondary author and editor to Horkheimer—stresses the effects of the “mathematized world” created

⁴⁰ Ibid., 72.

⁴¹ Ibid. This reading of curiosity would, no doubt, benefit from a comparison and contrast with Augustine’s comments on *curiositas* in, among other places, *Confessions*.

⁴² “The Schema of Mass Culture,” 73.

⁴³ Ibid., 73-74.

by enlightenment. Just as “mathematics made thought into a thing—a tool,” so the schema that harnesses mathematical reasoning for the purpose of twisting every aspect of life into a market exchange “makes souls into things.”⁴⁴

II. THE UNDERLYING ANTHROPOLOGY?

In light of what Adorno claims about the culture industry—the reasons for its irresistible effectiveness and suffocating results—what kind of people must these be that they can be so utterly enslaved by the culture industry? What standard lies behind Adorno's diagnosis of a truly vicious people—those of the masses who love the bad generally and love precisely that which is bad for human life? What account of human life or anthropology supports such an explanation?

Adorno's characterization of the *people* who make up “the masses” is consistent throughout his analysis of the culture industry. For the most part, “plain persons” appear in a light similar to the following: “Capitalist production hems [the masses] them in so tightly, in body and soul, that they unresistingly succumb to whatever is proffered to them. However, just as the ruled have always taken the morality dispensed to them by the rulers more seriously than the rulers themselves, the defrauded masses today cling to the myth of success still more ardently than the successful.” To Adorno, it is precisely in and because of their debased and pathetic condition as the ceaselessly abused that the victims of the culture industry have learned to *love* Big Culture. Just as Winston Smith learns to love Big Brother via merciless torture, Adorno claims that the “pernicious love of the common people for the harm done to them outstrips even the cunning of the authorities.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *DE*, 19, 21.

⁴⁵ *DE*, 106.

Humans subjected to the culture industry are slaves who cannot even think without reinforcing their slavery; they are virtually Nazis already; they are victims of torture who love their tormenters *because of* the harm done to them; they are individuals whose individuality is an enslaving illusion forced upon them by a homogenizing machine; they take pride in that which debases them; they, especially Americans, know themselves as, and judge themselves by, nothing but their own market value and “find out who they are from how they fare in the capitalist economy.”⁴⁶ Even—or maybe especially!—those who attempt to dissent or rebel merely underwrite the system by playing within its rules.

At the core of Adorno’s account of the human is a highly nuanced deployment of a species of Marxian materialism in every context. Whether criticizing theology or positivism or the film industry, Adorno examines everything in terms of its attentiveness to, or mediation of, material historical conditions. For the effect this has on his account of human life, we may consider Adorno and Horkheimer’s defense of the dialectic of Hegel’s “determinate negation” in the chapter “The Concept of Enlightenment.” Determinate negation

does not simply reject imperfect representations of the absolute, idols, by confronting them with the idea they are unable to match. Rather, dialectic discloses each image as script. It teaches us to read from its features the admission of falseness which cancels its power and hands it over to truth. Language thereby becomes more than a system of signs.⁴⁷

Rescued from Hegel’s absolutizing and totalizing error, therefore, true dialectic is its own check on its own power, and the result is truth. However, we must ask which truth will necessarily wind up as the recipient of dialectic’s power. It seems that the material conditions out of which this dialectic emerges

⁴⁶ *DE*, 175. The number of possible counter-examples here is so staggering that one must wonder whether Adorno was at all serious with this claim.

⁴⁷ *DE*, 18.

would, in fact, predetermine what it recognizes as the truth to which it would hand over power. Despite the claim that no absolute idea stands behind his critique of the culture industry's representations, Adorno's definitions (of human flourishing and *telos*, especially) and understanding of human dynamics (epistemology, for example) are clearly guided by standards or ideals supplied to him by his own fundamental commitments: the definitions and dynamics of Marxist thought. The nature of Adorno's "truth" is such that it is simply not a part of, nor can it be recognized in or engage with, the capitalist society of the modern west.

Of course, Freud also plays an enormous role in Adorno's reading of a socio-politico-economic pathology which seizes control of the most basic psychological processes and structures. While I cannot fully address Adorno's debts either to Freud or to Marx, one need only consider the fascinating overlap between the description of the schema of the culture industry and the theories of false consciousness, sublimation, sadism and masochism, and projection (among many others) in order to realize the importance of both theorists. Although Freud is crucial to understanding the psychological dynamics at work, Marx looms largest in the discussion of the culture industry because of his influence on Adorno's claims about the schema controlling the superstructures at the societal level. Christopher Craig Brittain, in his very sympathetic reading in *Adorno and Theology*, is right to suggest that for Adorno, the goal of all critique—even a critique of Marxian materialism itself—is to serve a focus on "concrete social reality and the emancipatory goals of Marxism" even while emphasizing "how difficult it is to get to the bottom of this social 'concreteness.'"⁴⁸

So historical materialism, the primacy of the socio-economic/political material conditions, is the given standard. While this does not cause a problem

⁴⁸ Christopher Craig Brittain, *Adorno and Theology*, (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 31.

in itself—every critique must have its normative standpoints—Adorno applies his standard in such a way that only something completely outside the industrial capitalist “current conditions” could even allow the possibility of true thought and freedom. In effect, Adorno surreptitiously advocates for his ideal—as much as he rejects the charge of utopianism—by “pathologizing” the alternative that was already winning the day by the mid-1940s.

Mere Shades: Life as death

The anthropology underlying Adorno’s analysis and critique provides him with mere shades as humans: the non-incarnate and bloodthirsty simulacra of humans Odysseus encounters in the Land of the Dead. Homer imagined this as the state of the masses of the dead; Adorno accepts this half- or non-life as the state of the masses of the living. Without a conceptually coherent account of transcendence, Adorno is trapped in a hermeneutical spiral—an infernal vision where even genuinely utopic hopes cannot escape, on the one hand, the potential for evil (seen in whichever genius demons assembled and maintain the conditions for capitalism), and on the other hand, the soulless, *imago*-less sheep that make up the vast masses of humanity.

The reason for his entrapment helps us see the most important limitation in Adorno’s critique: because of his definition of humanity and of truth, and his commitment to a brand of materialism as the standard against which he judges everything, he must see key elements of human flourishing, and even of human thought, as completely contingent upon a social order. This is not a question of identifying better or worse social orders—for Adorno, the material conditions under capitalism create a system under which human flourishing and life itself are not possible. Although he refuses to adequately describe an alternative social order, the standards against which he judges and condemns “current conditions” adhere within rigid parameters.

Where he rightly diagnoses a strain of anti-mythological enlightenment thinking that reduces truth to the quanta of mathematics, he cannot escape the quanta of his own preordered formulae—a system of categories and dynamics in which human life is utterly bound to the material realities of economic and political power. Himself afraid of the “myth” of the non-material transcendent, Adorno binds truth to the earth and explains away any account of genuinely transcendent truth as another system-underwriting cog in the machine. Although more of the truth may one day be revealed under the right (economic/political) conditions, it is already—and has always been—present, susceptible to discovery in material reality. The materialist schema at the core of his epistemology and anthropology is at least as effective a jail-keeper as industrial capitalism: it makes humans entirely responsible for freeing up the truth (or at least more of it) because there is no truth that is beyond humanity.

Ultimately, Adorno cannot trust the human because he cannot give an account of human life that includes anything other than the already-present. All that can possibly change (within Adorno's anti-transcendent materialist cosmology) is only what already is within humanity. Thus the boundaries to Adorno's undefined eschaton are purely human: capitalism, industry, class, etc. In the absence of something like the Christian claim of Incarnational transcendence—something that is both materially present in history and really transcendent of all human experience and language—he is left with a notion of life enslaved to the materially present. He must hinge his critique of the closed system of the culture industry upon a standard of truth, excellence, freedom, etc., that exists in a place Totally Other than anything within the system.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ On this topic, see a fascinating article by Rudolf J. Siebert, “The Critical Theory of Society: The Longing for the Totally Other,” *Critical Sociology*, 2005, 31: 57-113. Siebert tracks, approvingly, the need for transcendence as such (i.e. whatever gives the mere possibility of transcendence) in critical theory over against Hegel's appropriation of Christianity as “the religion of freedom” (82). In doing so, I believe Siebert provides an excellent resource for a

But since even this Totally Other must already be entirely (and paradoxically) contained within the human, the Other must be merely the unrealized potential of the human. In other words, Adorno's "Totally Other" is merely a future and developed part of the "Same." When the Apostle Paul can cry out from within his own "closed system" of doing what he does not want to do and failing to do what he wants, he can give an account of why the standard against which he judges himself is good: the standard is not human. Similarly, when he cries out, much as Adorno tries to cry out, "Who can deliver me from this body of death?" Paul does so with both real despair and real hope—the question is, after all, "rhetorical" and directed at the transcendent source of the standard. By limiting himself to the merely material, Adorno destroys the human by limiting it to the merely human. By limiting himself to the merely human, Adorno destroys the hope he seeks to stimulate.

III. WHY THEODOR CAN'T SWING: A JAZZ CRITIQUE OF ADORNO'S ANTHROPOLOGY⁵⁰

In this final section, I offer a tentative analysis of what I believe could have been an opportunity for Adorno to encounter a cultural phenomenon capable of guiding him to a more fruitful analysis of culture. I suggest that the underlying anthropology explored above predetermined Adorno's inability to hear jazz music as anything but a typical product of the culture industry. It is

larger critique of Adorno's so-called turn to "negative theology" as a desperate, but ultimately incoherent, grasping at something outside his own totalizing system. Needless to say, this critique goes far beyond the scope of the current study.

⁵⁰ I do not treat here Adorno's characterization of jazz as, quoting Nietzsche, "stylized barbarism" (*DE*, 101), nor his theories about the significance of jazz as dance music ("On Jazz," 170-171), nor his some of his wilder assertions about the socially unconformed element of jazz, i.e. the androgynous or bisexual voices of the instruments: "In undermining genital sexuality, the mechanism of mutilation and integration undermines the primary gender differences" ("On Jazz," 173.) See "On Jazz," in *Night Music*, Rolf Tiedemann, Ed., (London: Seagull Books, 2009), 118-176.

important to recognize that jazz was the target of special scorn from Adorno. In essays and books that span his entire career, he attacks jazz, calling it, as noted above, one of the two most characteristic products of the culture industry. For Adorno, then, jazz is an exemplary representative of that which destroys even the possibility of human thought, freedom, and progress. As James Buhler noted in a substantial 2006 essay, many, if not most, of Adorno's supporters have grown increasingly nervous, confused, and apologetic about this topic. Although I am in agreement with Buhler that these supporters have apologized for or defended Adorno for the wrong reasons, I disagree with Buhler's defense of Adorno's position as ideologically consistent in its demand that jazz should perform critique (as defined by Adorno).⁵¹

In the first place, Adorno offers a bad musical analysis in which he associates jazz with the superficial effects and false uniqueness characteristic of the products of the culture industry. Thus, when he hears the rhythmic innovation of jazz, which he treats as mere syncopation, he hears it as a superficial variation which seeks only to distract us from the unrelenting unity of the "underlying beat." Lost here is any kind of awareness that the "underlying beat" is itself dynamic—at the very least, it swings, and all great jazz musicians swing differently—regardless of whether one associates the underlying beat with drummers or bass players.⁵² But to Adorno, "the underlying beat" is a stand-in for the unifying sameness of industrial production methods. He writes about jazz rhythm as if an electronic metronome could fulfill the same function.

⁵¹ James Buhler, "Frankfurt School Blues: Rethinking Adorno's Critique of Jazz," in *Apparitions: New Perspectives on Adorno and Twentieth-Century Music*, Berthold Hoeckner, ed., (New York: Routledge, 2006), 131-150. "Jazz, his critique tells us, cannot be redeemed through facile appeals to syncopation, improvisation, spontaneity, and so forth; we must listen instead for the ironic sound of critique, for the blue note that mourns the loss of the individual to the collective" (150).

⁵² Consider the vast differences among the "underlying beats" of drummers Zutty Singleton, Jo Jones, Max Roach, Elvin Jones, and Tony Williams, or of bass players Jimmy Blanton, Charles Mingus, Ray Brown, and Christian McBride.

Furthermore, when Adorno does address the phenomenon of swing, the basic rhythmic propulsion of all jazz, in the lead voice or melody as the mere effect of “syncopation,” he theorizes it into something unrecognizable to the actual practice of performing (or listening to) jazz music. According to Adorno, syncopation “mocks the act of stumbling while elevating it to the norm,” an assessment in line with his claim that jazz “[f]undamentally. . . present[s] the self-mockery of man.” From this analysis he concludes that jazz aids the culture industry’s goal of forcing everyone to “show that they identify wholeheartedly with the power that beats them.”⁵³

Aside from his incredibly reductionist account of swing as mere syncopation, it is hard to determine just what Adorno is talking about. Swing, as much as it can be defined in the terms and notation of Western tradition, is much closer to a series of eighth-note triplets, in which the first two notes are tied together, than it is to basic syncopation. Furthermore, Adorno is deaf to the complex, multi-layered and subtle cross-rhythms that result from the interplay of these implied triple meters within “normal,” 4/4 time. These are far from superficial “effects.” Other than badly performed jazz or novelty pieces from the 1920s or 1930s, the comparison of the varied rhythmic fluidity of swing to stumbling is simply absurd—any knowledgeable jazz fan could rattle off a list of names that prove Adorno wrong (Louis Armstrong, Ben Webster, Stan Getz, Miles Davis, etc.).

⁵³ *DE*, 123–124.

*Freedom in the Groove*⁵⁴

There is much more to be said about the deafness to the purely musical components of jazz, but I will move now to some of the more theoretical aspects of Adorno's critique. He rejects entirely the notion that jazz improvisation is an expression of real individuality—or even real improvisation itself. Comparing it to the false individuality of the carefully groomed and presented film star, Adorno refers to the “*standardized* improvisation in jazz,” in which “pseudoindividuality reigns.”⁵⁵ Similarly, he rejects the notion that the improvisational character of all jazz, or the importance of improvised solos, negates his claim that all jazz reiterates a merciless drive to unity and conformity. Since some of jazz is written down, and since the solos continue to use the repeated harmonic framework of the composition, Adorno sees improvisation as yet another distracting and superficial effect that disguises the commodifying sameness of every industrial product.

As Robert Witkin notes, Adorno finds that the mere presence of a somewhat fixed harmonic framework underlying improvisation is proof that jazz provides “the quintessential examples of pseudo-individualization,” pseudo-spontaneity, pseudo-safety, and pseudo-freedom.⁵⁶ To Adorno, entirely new melodies, rhythmic sub- and superstructures, tonalities, and the frequent use of alternate harmonic relationships are merely superficial distractions—momentary substitutions “for the underlying schema that can always be perceived behind

⁵⁴ My analysis in this section is deeply indebted to Jeremy Begbie's *Theology, Music and Time*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000). My gestures toward a competing “Jazz Anthropology” are inspired by reading Begbie's chapter “Liberating Constraint” through the writing of Albert Murray. See *Stompin' the Blues*, (New York: Da Capo, 1976), *The Omni-Americans*, (New York: Da Capo, 1970), and *The Blue Devils of Nada*, (New York: Vintage, 1997).

⁵⁵ *DE*, 124–125.

⁵⁶ Robert W. Witkin, *Adorno on Popular Culture*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 105. In all of my citations to Witkin, he is drawing from Adorno's essays “On Jazz,” and “On Popular Music.”

them.”⁵⁷ However, both here and in his strange misunderstanding of harmony—as false identity that displaces moments of possibly transcendent discrepancy—we find another weakness of Adorno’s account of human life.

Harmony, even at the level of mere musical tones, always relies on both relation and individuality in a cooperative performance. A chord is the sound of relationship; relationality is the actual substance of harmony: an F, an A, a B, and an E-flat must maintain their F-ness, A-ness, B-ness, and E-flat-ness in order to have the relationship that creates harmony. If any of those notes stop being thoroughly and identifiably “themselves,” the resulting chord (a characteristic F dominant chord with a “flat-5th” or augmented 4th)—the material reality of the relationship—is destroyed. In fact, when Adorno criticizes the “blue notes” of jazz (which he derisively labeled “‘dirty,’ ‘false’ or ‘worried’”) or the dissonance of Wagner, he undermines the very notion of dissonance in order to oppose a totalizing, unifying underlying norm, “the naked scheme,” against which a note sounds dissonant.⁵⁸ Apparently, only the utterly autonomous and rootless sound—one that relies on no normative sonic environment whatsoever, much less a tradition of tonality—can be judged as true and free of a commodifying schema.⁵⁹

If we do not follow Adorno in his rejection of all musical tradition on this topic, we can hear other possibilities for the same issues with which he is concerned. Where mere individuality cannot destroy harmony, however much it ignores or tries to deny it, relationality that denies the absolute necessity of

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Witkin, 105-106.

⁵⁹ Though I cannot discuss it in detail here, Adorno’s advocacy for such notions is clearly rooted in one strand of mid-20th century 12-tone dogma – a school of musical thought infused with an ideological fervor for rejecting much of the western musical tradition. His writing on Schoenberg, though not blindly adoring, identifies Adorno as deeply sympathetic with the movement.

individual identity does destroy harmony. So, on a larger and unbelievably more complex scale, jazz improvisation offers a model of relational, cooperative individuality (or of individuated relationality) and freedom. Obviously, human musicians are capable of being aware of their individuality-in-relation and their relationality-as-individuals. As Jeremy Begbie has shown, music allows us a different experience and concept of relationality and time.⁶⁰ When people are making music together, thereby inscribing their human relating within the dynamics of musical identity and relation, we can see an alternative *way of being* that transcends the limits of other modes of human relating—all the while remaining rooted in materiality (via the bodily involvement of music-making and the physical components of hearing and making sounds).

Just as Adorno misses the implications for individuality and relation in basic harmony, he misses the further implications for freedom and social structure in the improvisational notion of “freedom in the groove”—where the artistic creation is the actual sound of negotiation, concerning a common good, not market economics (as his reductionist account argues): the negotiation among individuals in relation and every musician’s negotiation with freedom and structure, creation, and tradition. This aspect of jazz aesthetics would require a separate essay to explain, but the relevant point here is the relationship of the artist to the tradition and to the immediate, relational conditions of creation. For Adorno, to be “in a groove” is to be stuck in the service of some preordered and ordering system (hence his theorizing of the “underlying beat” as a tyrannical force for unifying sameness). For jazz musicians, even being “*locked* into the groove” brings freedom *precisely because* it is an experience of altered temporality and relationality among the musicians in which the freedom of creation and

⁶⁰ Obviously, throughout this section, I draw from Begbie’s writing, especially from *Theology, Music and Time*, 85-97, but also from his many lectures and musical demonstrations of theological concepts and possibilities.

expression is simultaneously individualistic and communal. Tradition and innovation, freedom and structure, virtuosity and emotion, theory and practice, are all performed—they are played, in play, at play, and played with.

There is much more to be said on this topic, but in order to conclude this whirlwind, selective presentation of Adorno's critique of jazz, we can observe how Adorno responded to his critics, who defended jazz as an art form autonomous from the culture industry that tries to exploit it. Buhler points to multiple essays in which Adorno simply accuses these defenders of jazz of "forgetting the origin in commerce" or of ignoring "the historical circumstances of production."⁶¹ Furthermore, any attempt to develop a terminology that disproves Adorno's assessment merely proves Adorno right, since developed terminologies merely prove the existence of an "expert class" devoted to obscuring the insidious standardization of jazz's pseudo-individuality and pseudo-freedom.⁶² The fundamentally ideological analysis is fully displayed in a response that manages to butcher both history and aesthetic judgment in its assertion of systemic intentionality: Jazz "asserted itself as the upper bourgeois form of contemporary vulgar music" *in order to* fulfill an ideological function of the culture industry. "[T]o conceal the commodity character and alienated manner of production. . . Jazz was to evoke the appearance of improvisational freedom and immediacy in the sphere of light music."⁶³

⁶¹ Buhler, 119-120, quoting from "On the Social Situation of Music," and "Perennial Fashion – Jazz."

⁶² Witkin, 105.

⁶³ Quoted in Buhler, 119-120, from "On the Social Situation of Music."

CONCLUSION

Regardless of one's sympathy (or lack thereof) for Adorno's commitments or judgment of his musical literacy or aesthetic sensibilities, it seems hard to deny that ideology predetermined Adorno's reaction to jazz. Were I to present, via Albert Murray and Ralph Ellison, the best counterarguments about the social significance of jazz, its aesthetic enactment of heroic action in the face of adversity, its insistence on artistic sophistication as a response to existential questions, and so on, Adorno's rebuttal is already prefabricated: any justification or defense of jazz cannot rescue it, because it was created, or at least easily appropriated, under material conditions ruled by industrial capitalism. This deafness is a *result* of the anthropological foundations underlying Adorno's hermeneutic, according to which humans under these conditions could not create something that escapes the demonic domination of a system rooted in a schema ruled by commodification and exchange value. Nevertheless, I submit that where no life should be found—the supposedly salted brimstone field of industrial capitalist America—a hybrid musical style emerged that embodies, and performs in new modes, artistic excellence and freedom, and provides a rich social model of individuality in community.

I believe that jazz confronts Adorno's anthropology with a unique moment of cognitive dissonance—or perhaps a decisive intervention. The question becomes, “Why does Adorno launch, and then sustain over the course of 30 years, such a strangely wrongheaded attack?”⁶⁴ Consider his anthropological hermeneutic: where humans are so susceptible to a cultural/societal system run from beneath by an economic principle, and where the culture industry is such a closed system

⁶⁴ At a certain point (the late 1940s, perhaps), it may be fair to say that Adorno simply focused on shooting down critics of his positions on jazz. Instead of engaging any new developments in the music over the next 20 years, he was content to point out the inconsistencies or errors of his critics.

that thought is not even possible, he allows these theoretical “givens” to predetermine his actual experience of jazz. In turn, his distortion of jazz aids his feedback loop of cultural analysis and conceptual theorizing. Rather than an actual encounter with jazz, Adorno arrives—aural filters in place—bent on finding nourishment for his theory, a totalizing monster which does not cease to be totalizing (as many Adorno apologists claim) simply because it does not explicitly offer an alternative ideal toward which synthesis might progress.

What does this failure with regard to the specific details of Adorno’s engagement with jazz (one of the two “most characteristic forms of mass culture”) suggest about his overall analysis of the culture industry? Although I believe that my final assessment here holds true for non-Christians, too, I will limit my focus to Christians in order to contrast specific anthropologies. For Christian theologians or philosophers hoping to sound the alarm about aspects of the Enlightenment project and its associated economic or political systems, Adorno is a highly problematic source for diagnostic description. Remember, for Adorno, churches—all churches and *the* Church, not merely “bad” churches—are part of the culture industry. By turning to Adorno, either explicitly or by accepting and repeating his assertions, diagnoses, and conclusions, Christian scholars import his anthropological assumptions in the form of implicit definitions, limitations, and standards.

Where Christians must begin an anthropology from the recognition of a transcendent Creator in whose image humanity was created, Adorno cannot allow for any real transcendence at any point. It is therefore ironic that the only theology Adorno wants (eventually) is an empty “transcendence” that he must have to get out of the closed system he serves (the mere possibility of which is denied by his own presuppositions) —a moment of the possibly-other that comes from nowhere (a filthy past which should preclude its existence), arises in a cesspool (in which it could never be recognized) and points to nowhere and no-

One that is not already materially present in humans and their material social conditions.⁶⁵

By pronouncing such a judgment on Adorno's anthropology, I do not proscribe the usefulness of some of his observations or analysis. This is not an argument that Jerusalem may have no dealings with Athens, nor is it to demand that Christian theologians choose only orthodox Christians as allies. However, I would like to suggest that some philosophy (and economic and political theory) offers at best a parallel alternative to a Christian analysis and critique—an alternative that may seem sympathetic or helpful for critiquing common enemies, but which eventually import categories and presuppositions in direct opposition to Christian thought. Openness to non-Christian philosophy, whether spoils of Egypt or of 19th and 20th century Europe, does not demand blindness to the dangers of philosophies or political theories grounded in and subject to closed systems antagonistic to Christian categories and definitions. As much as Adorno's approach to critical theory or his negative dialectics may seem to be promising methods, perhaps capable of a partial or cautious use, they are in fact content-rich philosophical positions—positions that inevitably impose their own theological or anti-theological commitments *even at the diagnostic or descriptive stage*. After all, if one has a faulty account of the creature being diagnosed, the diagnosis as well as the prescription will be flawed. The Christian tradition, at its best, has used even Greek philosophy in a highly selective, discriminating manner—and Frankfurt is no Athens.

⁶⁵ Again, see Siebert for a treatment of Adorno's "longing" for a totally Other.

Interview

THE NEW POLITICS OF ASSOCIATION: An Interview with Maurice Glasman

Neil Turnbull

NEIL TURNBULL [NT]: One of the focal interests of *RO:TPP* is the issue of the wider political ramifications of the so-called ‘theological turn,’ especially its implications for the philosophical—we might even say the metaphysical—foundations of the Left. According to many contemporary philosophers, we are currently witnessing a shift away from a kind of simple-minded, ‘progressivist’ view of history, towards a more complicated, perhaps even paradoxical, conception of the modern historico-political landscape in which the insights of theology are becoming important. What kind of transformation to the philosophical foundations of the Left seems to be taking place at the moment in your view? Specifically, in relation to this I would like to ask you about your understanding of what has become known as the ‘politics of paradox.’ What do you understand by this term, and why do you think it’s so important for the Left to understand its politics through that particular conceptual prism?

MAURICE GLASMAN [MG]: First of all, the ‘politics of paradox’ would not have been so pronounced in the work that I and my colleges do had it not come up in the conversations that I have had with John Milbank. I want to acknowledge the important role that John has played in developing and facilitating this whole engagement—as has Radical Orthodoxy more generally. I am pleased and

honoured to be interviewed by you and I hope that there's a possibility of a genuine, constructive, and long-term engagement in relation to this.

To answer your question, the paradox I am referring to is twofold. The first part is to move away from what I call 'mentalism,' which is the exclusive concern with rational thought in relation to politics—and to understand that real politics always involves clusters of rationally incompatible and seemingly contradictory (yet, politically vibrant) relationships that in fact give political ideology genuine popularity and meaning in everyday life. Those societies with the strongest democracy have the greatest liberty; it is only philosophers who see this as a contradiction.

So what I'm arguing, in relation to the politics of Labour, is that Labour has always been both secular *and* faith-based. It always had a view of the polity—whether it should be freedom of association or whether people should have free democracy—as based upon a very strong conception of the Christian life. And in another paradoxical way, Labour is the only political institution in Britain that healed the Reformation. It was an institution through which Catholics and the Low Church could come together in a politics for the common good. Another way of talking about this is that Labour has always been simultaneously patriotic and internationalist. Now, the idea that you narrow it down to one conception or movement is the problem of philosophy—particularly liberal philosophy, which has a legal constitutional conception of politics that is divorced from action, divorced from contestation, and has become increasingly rationalist. So paradox is both a genuinely truthful way of understanding politics and a much deeper way of understanding normal politics than conventional ideological formulations would allow; it also allows for a genuine renewal, I think, of Labour politics that is much truer to its traditions and enables much more unusual ideological formulations to take place. Above all, it is the paradox of the ancient and the modern. So if I say, paradoxically, that a modern politics has to be

rooted in ancient values, only a paradoxical formulation could comprehend what that means. We are sitting here in parliament, the idea that the Lib-Dems and the Conservatives have put forward for P.R. for the House of Lords; well it's just a desecration really. But a paradoxical politics would see the need for a democratic renewal alongside ideas of vocation and faith.

So paradox is absolutely vital. This is not about principles or even values; it's about tradition, it's about a general orientation, it's about resistance to the domination of capital, fundamentally, and also resistance to the domination of the rationalist state. So it's trying to conceptualise the social in a political way and therefore 'the paradoxical' is absolutely essential for actual sure action because it enables you to bring together people for common good without requiring ideological tests. Paradox is a neglected understanding within the discipline that is rebuked by any rational reductive analysis of what politics is. Simultaneously it's a way of being always open to other people and not excluding them because you have a difference of view in trying to rework positions. It is to encompass disagreement and energy.

NT: Is this a peculiarly British idea? Or is it a political universal?

MG: Hmm, that's a difficult question. Well you know, if you look at France sadly they declared war on paradox a long time ago, maybe during the French revolution, and it's been pretty much downhill ever since. I do not share John's affection for Foucault, for I see his problematic as deeply rooted in a very rationalist and kind of morally pure philosophy. You know, there's 'big problems' with that. French philosophy, in its more contemporary manifestations, has had some paradoxical moves but on the whole, you know, French thought is rationalist. I think Germany became fearful of paradox because there it has combined some very ugly political matters. Thus Germany became very sceptical of paradox for obvious reasons, good reasons, because it became associated with an authoritarian irrationalism. Now obviously I put paradox in

opposition to rationality, to reason. However, I believe in a *reasonable* politics that can understand opposing views and how they could be meaningfully held in a kind of civility. So, Germany hasn't been very paradoxical for a long time; America as an optimistic rationalist liberal progressive country is constitutionally anti-paradoxical—that's not to say that the music isn't fabulously so; I love jazz, which you know is obviously a fusion of folk and high art, and all of that. So I do think there's a peculiar link between the English political tradition and paradox, as represented in our institutions and in our common law and in the fact that we as a nation developed this common language and in the fact that parliament was always simultaneously democratic and hierarchical. We're kind of used to this stuff. I think the Italians are too.

NT: This may strike some as though you may be articulating something of an anti-philosophical position—as for most western philosophers paradox is just an irresolvable contradiction and intellectually an absurdity. But at the same time there seems to be an aspect to your work that's about recovering the Aristotelian dimensions of politics in a shift away from Hegelianism. Do you think you could say a little bit more about that? And why you think Aristotle is so important?

MG: I don't want to get into an outright objection to Hegel. There's some really genuinely interesting work being done there. Or a rejection of philosophy. But there is a polemic here against a certain form of rationalist abstract philosophy that has become really strong in the analytical tradition in Britain and the United States—most particularly in political philosophy, which I think has become a part of constitutional law and offers little more than an idea of what are the acceptable limits of politics. You could spend a lifetime trying to smuggle stronger synthetic notions of the good into their thin analytical framework—and you know Rawls said that “the right’ draws the line but that ‘the good’ makes the point.” I don't think that anybody has been making ‘the point’ for a very long time, so this mode of philosophy feels kind of pointless to me. In that sense

there's a very strong polemic against abstraction and against a certain way of doing philosophy, but that is not to be confused with an anti-philosophical position and neither is it to be confused with a relativist, postmodern, arbitrary—however playful—position which ignores the truth that exists in the world, the realities of power, the realities of humiliation, exploitation and oppression—which I hold to be real relational things. I would go further and say that contemporary philosophy has no conception of sin; what you get is that the most objectionable thing about political philosophy at the moment is the general conclusion 'wouldn't it be great if everybody was like us'—which is why they can't they look at the world and their own power within it. So there's an arrogance in contemporary philosophy that I don't like.

Also there's the path of reason against rationality which is another part of this story—that things are true! But truth is not exclusively about facts; it's about plausible stories that are rooted in reality. So the Aristotelian route is very important—there's a bit of a disagreement here between me and John on Plato. I think that the historical reality of the Platonic legacy has been in a kind of abstract, arbitrary removal from the world, 'the cave,' and a starting point from outside lived experience and ethical learning. So I root myself very strongly in Aristotle. Alistair MacIntyre is a very important philosopher for me inasmuch as he incorporated Aquinas into the Aristotelian tradition—which I think was very important in several ways, particularly in minimising Aristotle's absolute love of power—which I think is a very big problem. Aquinas' conception of Christianity has manifested itself in the enormously important role that Catholic Social Thought plays in my thought and in Blue Labour generally. But most of all because it's based on reasonable assumptions about the nature of the person; the person flourishes only in strong intermediate institutions that are based on certain forms of ethics and vocation. Also drawn from Aristotle is a certain conservatism of dispositions as regard status and the limits of markets. So my

position is not anti-philosophical at all *if* philosophy is viewed as a tradition of trying to make reasonable statements about the world that we're in and how we should live.

NT: That takes me onto the question of the significance of Christianity in your thinking. As you know, in the 20th century Christianity, if you look at its overall political trajectory, sided with the Right against the Left—sometimes for good reasons, because of what the Left was trying to do. Do you think that times have changed now? Is a re-alignment of the Left with orthodox Christian institutions possible today?

MG: Oh certainly. That's fundamental. I've written about this, on the reconciliation of citizenship and faith (particularly concerned with the church). You mention for 'good reasons.' Obviously the Christian objection to the Left was that it was based on a soulless modernism that worshipped technology and power and that despised traditional institutions of love and solidarity. I think that when we look now, the Christian critique of Marxism was more or less right. There was terrible sin, wickedness, and evil committed by the Soviet Union that should never be forgotten. The abandoning of the dead in Siberia—I try to think of it every day. When I'm involved with polemics with the Left I urge them not to step back from this just because they improved literacy and built a lot of bridges—that doesn't really make up for it. There was also a trace of that in Fabianism—there was a certain form of eugenics, a certain form of sort of scientific know-all authoritarianism and I think that affects the Left right across the board. There was also a certain belief in a very facile conception of scientific—and social scientific—superiority; if you know the way that history's going then that gives you the right to rule over people and be very cruel. So I just want to honour the Christian and particularly the Catholic critique and recognise its importance. But then there was a terrible thing in the Christian support of fascism. That was also wicked. In terms of the Lutheran Church in

Germany there was its absolutely despicable relationship with Nazism and its support for the rich and the privileged. Also, although I feel the Catholic critique was fundamentally right, Catholic politics has been fundamentally wrong—well there you go, there's another paradoxical position for you! However, Christianity has a tradition and a conception of the person that is capable of love, capable of loyalty, of faithfulness and responding to kindness. The whole idea of loving institutions and loving relationships is rooted in the fundamentally Christian conception of the person; it holds that the person is capable of good and bad, is capable of wickedness and grace, and that these things are true. This is a very real, true conception of the person; it is one that maintains life isn't just individual martyrdom because to flourish a person needs an institutional arrangement that facilitates the good, and this must take place in a world constituted by power and by sin. The church has great things to say about the essentially social, creative, loving nature of the person in a world of sin. This is the foundation point for the Labour tradition. I've said many times, and it's important, that the most important person in the history of the Labour movement is Jesus. That's not a religious statement, that's a historical statement. If you look at the Labour movement, the idea that you defy the power of the market and the power of the state through the sheer power of association with others in pursuit of the good is a fundamentally Christian idea. You know Jesus had the apostles; he was the son of a carpenter. So the figure of Jesus actually was massively inspirational for the labour movement in Wales, in Scotland and in England. In the North it was overwhelmingly a Catholic Jesus, in the South it was overwhelmingly a freeborn English Jesus. But the key idea here is that through association with others you are not defined by the existing definition of power. Now that is a huge element of the Christian tradition of social action and something that the Left should actually have massive respect for.

NT: How do you deal with the question of the relationship between politics and modernity? One of defining orientations of the Left has been an embracing of the modern in order to find a way of dealing with its diremptions, its existential fractures and so on. Historically, the Left has advocated ways of living with these things in ways that are 'progressive'—'forward moving' in historical terms. A lot of people on the liberal left have complained that you are anti-modernity—engaging in a reactionary politics of nostalgia; a backward-looking kind of politics that doesn't really embrace the modern but effectively flees it. How would you respond to that particular charge?

MG: Okay, nostalgia is another form of wickedness because it sentimentalizes the past. But nostalgia's twin is modernism, a modernism which believes that we do not have a history and that we do not emerge from relationships and traditions of thought. This is a modernism that despises the continuity of things through time and believes that you're constantly in a revolutionary moment of beginning again. And this is where the paradox lies. In order to have a genuinely relevant modernism you have to have an appreciation of the ancient institutions that shape that. What is the most successful economy in Europe? It is the German economy. It has the most high-end, value-added, productive sector, and when you look at the German economy one of the key institutions is a genuine vocational economy. There market regulation is actually restricted by guild membership; belonging to particular parts is an absolutely central aspect of the apprenticeship/journeyman/master model. These are the ancient medieval institutions described, for example, by the Labour leadership in 1995 to 97 as 'Jurassic,' and that were bound to be swept away. It was called the 'German problem.' It was Christian Social Democrats who devised the basis for this in the post war consensus. This was actually a medieval corporative model where labour and capital were represented on the boards of companies. For the Left this was class betrayal. For the right this was an unbelievable obstruction to the

free movement of capital on labour and management's right to manage (you can remember this language very well from the Miners' Strike). So in Germany, there is a very strong vocational element, a very strong balance of interests in corporate governance element and also regional banks, which you're not allowed to lend outside the region or the county that you're in. Yet this has produced the most successful and sustainable form of modern capitalism.

So the reaction of all forms of revolutionary modernists, whether they be economic liberals or whether they be modernist art critics—of which we know many—is a despising of tradition and the reasonable nature of tradition, and a rejection of the very reasonable statement that the future is going to be built on a reassembly of the inheritance of the past (and it's not going to be delayed, writing on a tabula rasa). The first response to forms of revolutionary modernism is to show their contempt for the beliefs of ordinary people. And that's exactly where I'd like to be, showing a love of and reverence for meaning. We need to recognise that modernity is constituted by working with what we constantly inherit, not a revolutionary dramatic idea of originality as something absolutely new but a combination of previously disconnected forces.

NT: Since the 1970s a lot of the intellectual innovation on the left has come from what you might call 'theory'—with a capital T, what we might dignify with the term 'the Theoretical.' A lot of this had its roots in the work of Althusser—but from him you get Foucault and the whole postmodern turn and, of course, the recent proliferation of many, many different social, political, and cultural theories. I think this engendered the *Marxism Today* moment in the 1980s and 1990s, which was very influential in informing a lot of the cultural politics of the New Labour era. What do you think about that particular moment? You seem to be saying that the Left should draw its inspiration from history and not from theory. How would you respond to those who try to make the case for it being the other way round?

MG: Do I believe that theory or philosophy on its own holds the answers? No. There's got to be a relational approach to disciplines. For me, much of this moment was the return of an egotistical romanticism where great thinkers believed that they were going to reconceptualise the world. I think that the judgement on that that will be pretty low grade on the whole. There were obvious contradictions and problems in Althusser. Specifically, what was his epistemological position and how could he have an understanding the whole? The Frankfurt school, which ended up in a sort of Kantian/Habermasian position, was always a form of cultural criticism rather than real political engagement. I don't know if the lifeworld is really going to yield too much, because the world is always constituted by power and you've got to find strategies of resistance. You can do this by the rehabilitation of Aristotle via Macintyre. Polanyi is also an enormously important thinker for me because he has a conception of capitalist commodification—which is a crucial theoretical insight (lacking, by the way, in the vast majority of the people which you were referring to). He recognised that capitalism operates as a system of power that tries to turn human beings into commodities. Democracy and Christianity are the two fundamental ways in which human society has resisted that move. Now that's a historical position and a theoretical position and an orientation towards practice. So theory is a friend, a partner, and a guide—at best an orientation of people in the world who wish to act in fellowship with others in order to make the world a better place. It's not about totality. The whole yearning, "if you can't have totality then what you have is postmodernism," this is what I call the idiot dialect: if you can't have it all you've got nothing. This is no way to make a marriage work.

NT: I would like shift the discussion a little now and ask you to talk a little bit about your ideas on economics, especially its relation to the idea of the 'good society.' This question emerges with a vengeance after 2007/2008. Given the

likely sluggishness—at best—of the economy in the medium term, how do you think that the politics of Blue Labour translates into a model of economic growth or even a model of economic dynamism that might deal with this particular situation and is compatible with the idea of the good society?

MG: Just to say that the whole world begins in the economy. It's not that politics is secondary; politics is fundamental and very important. But it's based on a fundamental theoretical orientation that says that the economy is not something entirely separate from politics. This returns to what I was just saying about commodification—that a capitalist political economy is a threat to human existence because it wishes to turn human beings into commodities, both in terms of consumption and in terms of their role in the productive process. To separate politics from the economy is a mistake, a mistake about production and a mistake about consumption, too. It's a mistake about production because knowledge, skill, innovation, and growth are built on association. The first thing to say here is that the Blue Labour position is first and foremost a political economy. The politics flows from Aristotle, but so does its political economy. It's Aristotle with a big twist of Macintyre thrown in, but it's also Aristotle with a big twist of Polanyi thrown in. Also, there is a very strong respect for Hayek in this position, in that there was this socialist calculation debate in the 1920s; here you had socialists arguing essentially that if you develop a big enough computer you could put in all the data and you could predict what peoples wants and needs would be. You could plan the economy on that basis. Hayek said well, hang on, this is a mistake about prices and the discovery process given by prices and our legal order. I'm a member of that dissident left-wing tradition that thinks that Hayek won that debate and that millions of different decentralised decisions made by people on local knowledge and tacit knowledge are absolutely incapable of being modelled, are incalculable. This is part of the critique of the state in relation to the sole resistor to the market order.

NT: And this is another aspect of your anti-rationalism?

MG: It's anti-rationalist but reasonable. Hayek's position is reasonable because it's true. Therefore we have to work within constraints and limits and a certain contempt of humility, which Hayek uses but no other economic liberal uses. That leads to a position of the de-commodification of human beings and land, but a general commodities market in pencils, bottles—real commodities. That's because people shouldn't be exclusive judges of their own worth. There are many poets, writers, musicians—you know, what we call 'legends in their own living room'—but nobody would buy their work. The key to political economy for me is the idea that what you have to have is vocations, de-centralised institutions, the German social marketing economy, the combination of Catholic, socialist and liberal thought. This would allow us to resist the commodification of labour through the upholding of status, and to recognise the importance of interests on the pressure of capitalism to commodify, in the representation of the labour force and on the corporate governance structure. And then a system of regional banks that are not allowed to lend outside—in England it would be, you know, 'socialism in one county.' Where there's genuine regional banks, that helps to build up a civil society that reflects the balance of interests between unions, owners, churches, mosques, universities—brought together for the common good. The idea here is to generate energy, growth, innovation, and regeneration of the workforce. Here, the power of labour remains central, which it should be in any Labour conception of politics. A balance of interests between labour and capital is reconstituted here. One of the paradoxes of Blue Labour is that you can only have a common good if you recognise the importance of class. So there is a very important role for self-organised unions here, but they'd be reconstituted in a vocational sense where they uphold proper work and not proletarianisation. This goes back to an old Catholic debate. It was the French Catholics who first developed the concept of the proletariat—Marx picked up on it quite a bit later.

The proletariat were that class in Rome that were sacrificed to the state, had no status, had no land, and had no place. The proleterianisation of academics, for example in our new universities, is one of the most astonishing things, as is the way that the union is complicit in that proletarianisation and refuses to uphold a guild ethic, a self-regulating ethic, because it's concerned with part-time workers and various other forms of pay and conditions.

So in terms of the political economy, the domestication of capital is the role of democratic association, but it does not in any way minimise the creative role of capital in driving innovation and creating new energy. So it's once again back to faithful relationships. Capital is by its nature promiscuous. Capital by its nature wants to leave its relationships as soon as it has its satisfaction. Politics wants to entangle capital. I would argue since Athens democratic politics has always been the way that people protect their status and try to entangle capital in long-term, stable relationships. And that's still the foundation of the political economy. So there's a rejection here, in traditional left-wing terms, of the role of the state as planner; there's also a critique of the role of the state as a calculator—and a recognition of a much bigger decentralisation of institutions, but all-in partnership with the state in order to domesticate capital. But not to then have the terrible move on the Left where the state becomes the predominant administrative force—which leads to powerlessness as well. So just to summarise it in a trilogy—it is relationships-power-action; that means facilitating a relationship between capital, labour, and institutions locally in order to facilitate energy and growth.

NT: I wonder what you think about the power of finance capital in this context. Because one of the main arguments—and one that explains why the left has become so market-orientated, at least since 1979—is the belief that finance capital simply *cannot* be domesticated. It is just too powerful—too hyper-mobile, too

promiscuous in your terms—for any political institution or any set of political organisations to be able to tame it. How do you respond to that?

MG: You begin with Aristotle's statement that anything outside of relationships is either a beast or a god. In terms of Capital it has managed to combine the two very beautifully. What we have to look at here is very old left wing concept—*reification*. I would also say that we need bring back a very old religious concept—idolatry—because we tend to worship the power of Capital. But Capital, in order to reproduce itself, has to land somewhere; it has to exist in the world. It's a bit like God in that regard. You know that conversation between God and Moses, where Moses says we the children of Israel are your chosen people and you made yourself known through us and so you are basically stuck with it and have to live with it—otherwise you will be defaced in the world. Then Christianity built on that with the Jesus in the world as a manifestation of the divine. If we can domesticate and humanise God, you know, it's not too difficult to begin to think about domesticating capital. So that's a political battle—we have the City of London down there. In the history of the British state essentially the City of London is part of the ancient constitution. It's a commune and has been so since 1190. It used to be a self-governing city-state—which it still is—but has basically managed, by hook or by crook, to expel virtually all of the living people from its area. It now represents purely the interests of capital. So what we have to do is extend the City of London Corporation to all of London, to make everyone in London a citizen. When we talk about the promiscuity of capital we're also talking about the domination of the rich—and that's just old-style politics. They said that in Athens, they said that in Rome—that if you take on senators, if you take on the rich, then it would lead to poverty. But they brought in interest rate caps, they brought in taxation, they brought in ultimately vocational constraints as well. The church itself became a force and finance was eventually entangled. Now obviously globalisation is an attempt to say—well no, no, no, you can't do

this now. But the City of London invests less than 1% in Britain and then we bailed them out when they went wrong. So when there was international capitalist disorder, there were national solutions to this. So what we have to do is to think about forms of internal investment and ultimately Capital will have to make judgements about its long-term interests. The one night stand's turned sour—we know this. In relation to sustainable long-term returns on investment, we need to look at the German economy here; it is very attractive to investment precisely because it yields very stable long-term returns. Britain is increasingly unattractive precisely because its flexible labour market strategy is so flimsy. So, I think both the political domestication of the City of London, combined with a genuine negotiation—that was the problem with Gordon Brown; he bailed out the banking system and asked for nothing in return. This is Weber, not political action. Capital needs people; capital needs places. Obviously, in England we've got to front up and be prepared to build a genuine political relationship with Capital. Now that would work by means of a very old left-wing thing that we haven't thought about for a long time. We've got to build an alliance with productive capital against finance capital in order to facilitate long-term internal investment against short-term speculation. Labour's got to do that. I know I get shouted at by the Left every time I talk about a genuine private sector growth strategy, about bringing CEO's into the Labour Party to share knowledge on how to bring the workforce into a key innovative role. That's what they are talking about all the time, but they have no political partners in the political process; that's why they are despairing. The Conservatives are just craven to the banking system, the Lib Dems don't understand anything about business and Labour is going back to a position where it is very obscure about where it stands in relation to all this. So this is all about an offer to the unions about a genuine social partnership and forgetting about the class war aspect—whilst class representation remains hugely important—and an opening to capital to those who want to develop private sector growth within the British economy,

particularly the regional economy (and to stress to them that Labour is its friend). In that way you build broad-based political alliances that can take on extreme speculative volatility (pointing to the City of London).

NT: There is an argument that's been put forward by many of the Left that British capitalism is a very distinct kind of capitalism that has its roots in imperial preference and still tries to view itself as dissociated from any particular location—specifically, that is still more interested in its pseudo-colonial investments than national economic renewal. Do you buy into that?

MG: Halfway. But it does have an address and it's EC1. It's just down the road. The city of London acts as a sort of hub of an international global freetrade imperialism (a brilliant paradoxical conception of the British this; only we could do 'freetrade imperialism'—magnificent!). The maritime economy, which I really look at and appreciate because it didn't involve the domestic tyranny of the French—the landed imperial glory—was just a maritime system of ports with the commodification of labour and land and everything followed from that. Incredibly, the British ruled India with 1800 people who were basically employed by the East India Company for about 150 years. Light touch regulation I think!

NT: Minimal governance—only of nodes in networks.

MG: Yes. What we're left with post-empire is a system of tax havens through which companies in Britain are engaged in massive tax avoidance and money laundering. Essentially, the City of London acts as an offshore island that acts as a supreme hub of all tax havens, and it is within our power to regulate it. Now all of these people have children, all these attend really good schools. Also, London is a wonderful place to live. If they want to go and live in some culturally denuded spot in the middle of the world, fine, but I don't think that will happen. I think we have much more leverage in our negotiation with Capital than we think.

NT: I would like to ask you about the issue of the decentralisation of powers. I think it was Tom Nairn who, a long time ago, said that Britain wasn't a nation-state but a city-state. That there is a concentration of wealth and power in the London and environs to such an extent that London becomes a pathological phenomenon as far as the North, Scotland and Wales are concerned. How would you respond to this? Is your politics a decentralising politics with respect to the concentration of wealth and power in the South East of England?

MG: It is. It's not a 'Tom Nairn politics,' who went a long way on a very weak reading of Gramsci—that's a very immature left wing spat! Roughly there are two types of economy: maritime—which is freely contractual—and territorial—which is much more status-oriented and embedded. What you have with globalisation is the 'rising of sea levels'; we're all at sea. So a sense of place is hugely important in generating any kind of political resistance to the domination of Capital. However, this is made so much more complicated here, as we have a state which is so subordinate to the interests of the City. So this goes back to what I was saying about the political economy. What we had before was regional savings—you had regional banks, you had regional industries, you had pension funds—but they were legally compelled to invest in the City of London because of best value which demanded they get the best rate of return. The logic of this is that these were all inefficient. They were just sitting there getting sluggish rates of return, and pensions demand that they get higher rates of return. They put them all in the City. Then they all got lost in the crash. That's where we had to double step in and bail them out in order to protect our savings which had been removed from regional economies. So there was a double denuding. There's the political power concentrated in London and then there's the economic power which is reconstituted through the City. So everybody's energy, and the accumulation of our ancestors' energy, is centred into the City of London. This is the political nature of globalisation, that it forces the drying of regions

through rates of return which are in fact fantastical, which then requires state action that double decentralises. So a genuine return to regionalism is vital, but this has to be organic and it has to work within the sensibilities of people and not be perceived as another layer of government. For this reason I'm interested in constituting city parliaments that could address issues in relation to another aspect of globalisation—immigration, the breakdown of the common life and the stress on individual rights against the political common good. City parliaments would go along with the regional banks and would go along with vocational training that is located in the regions. Also, I'm very much in favour of bringing back *counties* and particular varieties of life which are very much worth preserving.

I'm very also very interested in energy security. We have technology now which can turn freezing cold sea and wind into heat, and if you look at England we are very well-endowed with wind and sea. How are we going to turn that into energy security? What are the regional varieties involved in that? That's one very big project that goes along with micro regional projects to generate energy and growth. A genuine reconstitution of guild halls is one aspect of it, as is return of the country 100s so there's genuine political potency in the countryside. All of that would broker a much stronger sense of both political and economic county life. Cities having a hub role of linking up with the world and feeding back into the countryside in terms of technological innovation and in terms of best practice. So it's got to be institutional, a reconstitution of genuine regional variety.

NT: Is this a German model of national politics? Is your vision a federalist one, based upon the *Länder* system of devolved power?

MG: Yes, it's going to have connexions with that. But in England we've got our own counties—England has earned the right to forge its own way in this respect.

NT: I think that takes me onto my final question, which touches on a concept that has had a spectacularly bad press in the recent philosophical and sociological literature, especially on the left—the concept of the nation. The idea that the nation is pernicious fiction—something imaginary—that is currently being reinvented because of anxieties that Britain is experiencing on another leg of its long-term relative decline, has provided a focus for a kind of cultural critique of Britishness and national identity more generally (we can easily apply this critical discourse to the US). How do the concepts of nation and nationhood play out in your particular view?

MG: Hugely. I'm Jewish, and I think that's an important background. It's an historical love based on my being born here. It's also been relevant because alone in Europe those of us who managed to get here lived; all of my relatives who were in Europe were killed. There's a real personal love of this country because there was liberty and democracy and bravery in this country, and I honour it. And I honour every family who lost a son or got hit in the blitz. You know there is a real bravery in this land and that's an immediate family story. I don't consider the nation a constructed thing—when you're shot in the head it's hard to say that's a 'social construct.' That is the problem with postmodernism; it is not an exclusively linguistic world; there's power, there's cause, and there's no alternative but to participate in the stories of the world. Here in this building is Parliament. The House of Lords is one great fairy story, there's engravings everywhere of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. In the chamber there are twelve huge statues of the lords who held the knife at the throat of King John at the signing of *The Magna Carta*. We have a story of conquest and of resistance to conquest, of the balance of power, of the mixed constitution. You can say, well, these were socially constructed, but they were also really manifest in the world. And so there is a genuine tradition of democracy and liberty which does exist in England that's very unique and very wonderful. So, I work within

the ancient constitution as a general orientation framework which believes there should be a balance of power in all institutions. Winston Churchill said it well: “as a freeborn Englishman I should never be at the mercy of one power alone.” Managerial sovereignty is about holding power over you—there’s something deeply unEnglish about that. I see liberalism as a revolutionary force; I believe socialism is a conservative force in resistance to that; that’s embedded in a very long history of resistance, whether it be resistance to the king or the capitalist.

Now we have a problem, because we had an incredibly superficial constitutional conversation before we gave national devolution to Scotland and Wales. We thought that it wouldn’t matter; it matters. I write a lot about England. I think the Scottish tradition is quite different; I don’t think they have that balance of power ideal and have still got quite clannish chieftain models. Wales is a much richer story. Whilst congregationalism is hugely important in Labour history, in fact the relationship between England and Wales is rich and complicated. We’ve got to get back to England and a renewal of the English political tradition which is vitally important. This is the whole concept of radical traditionalism that I’ve put forward. I don’t think patriotic commitment is to be dismissed in the same way as faith is dismissed as just a mistaken mythological fantasy. We’re an ancient country, a great country. Our contribution to the world has been extraordinary relative to our size. It is still the case that the world looks to us as defenders of liberty and democracy and as a force for innovation. So I’d say with no trace of hesitation that I really love my country and I believe it to be true.

NT: Thank you very much.

Review Essay:

**WHAT'S THE USE OF A *SKELETON* KEY
FOR CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY?**

A Report on an Essential Problematic in
Kathryn Tanner's *Christ the Key*

W. Chris Hackett

Christ the Key. By Kathryn Tanner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 309+ pp.

Kathryn Tanner has given what for many is a long-awaited text. Here, in the book version of her 2007 Warfield lectures at Princeton, we have the promised sequel to her concise systematics, the highly praised *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity* (2001). Here also does appear the book to which Tanner referred in her response to Amy Plantinga Pauw's important critique in the *Scottish Journal of Theology* (57.2, 2004). There, in response to Pauw's probing concerns regarding the incipient ecclesiology of *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity*, Tanner referenced several of the essays that finally became chapters in this book. Those looking, however, for a well-developed, reflective, and patristically-inspired account of the human community in relation to Christ, and hence the Triune God (for such is surely the Church or the Church is nothing), will be sorely disappointed. In fact, a careful reading of the text, such as the one I endeavor to offer, will hardly lend an instance of the word at all. Is this

a problem for her Christology—*especially* if applied to some basic aspects of human life in the world, and thus for the very project that this book undertakes? Perhaps we will find that the lack of a concrete ecclesiology is a symptom of a fundamental problem of her Christology itself, one that militates directly against her primary intuition of the Christological shape of human life and experience.

Yet Tanner's task in this book is clearly not the construction of an ecclesiology. This, of course, could be taken as the very heart of the problem itself. But before an assessment on this score, let us rehearse the progression of the text, testing it from the vantage of inquiry that we have only just adumbrated above. Her task is to show how a rethinking of a number of classical debates in theology from Christological perspective can refresh our thinking. Tanner attempts this laudable intervention by way of an equally laudable *ressourcement* of some patristic intuitions in Christology. In this she is the avid heiress of what is best in 20th century theology. The verdict is certainly out regarding how much this book, with its minimalist approach, and the cursory distance it keeps in relation to complex, multi-faceted, and religiously significant debates, accomplishes such grand intentions. At best, it certainly allows us a fresh look at some fundamental theological problems: human nature as the *Imago Dei* (ch. 1), the relation of nature and grace (chs. 2-3), human relationships in light of the Trinity (ch. 4), and thus politics (ch. 5), atonement (ch. 6), and the work of the Spirit (ch. 7). The real value of Tanner's text lies in the way it helps the reader survey the shape of this vast field. At a second level, and more important to an assessment of Tanner's contribution to theology, the fresh approach to these problems that organizes the book reveals all the more clearly the constructive theological project that underwrites it. When looked at this way, I aver, Tanner's remarkable post-liberal liberalism is clearest. And here we see a thinker who should be understood at the forefront of a loose but growing trend in academic theology that we could call "progressive Barthianism"—not in the sense of some

grand “appeal to Barth as modern Church Father” (Barth is hardly mentioned in the text) but rather in its coupling of a simple, Christologically-shaped account of the relation between God and humans to “liberal” theological conclusions that are, in Tanner’s work, themselves charmingly elusive to get a hold of, often found subtly inscribed within the *indirect* conclusions to which she directs her Christological reflection, as well as in the *implied* targets of each chapter that sometimes remain faceless in her work.

The attempt to reform classical debates, as in Karl Barth or Hans Urs von Balthasar, is likewise here undertaken in a masterfully simple way: namely, by a return to the center, to the living essence that makes Christianity what it is. In this way the obfuscating layers that have exhausted centuries old ‘back and forth,’ spun in our day into a stasis of miscommunication, are neutralized and left to the side. This allows this center, the Christian intuition, to speak anew. Here then is the book’s beautiful articulation of the Christian “thing,” inhabiting the prominent place of its second sentence: “God wants to give us the fullness of God’s own life through the closest possible relationship with us as that comes to completion in Christ” (p. vii). The incarnation, classically understood, reveals and enacts the very meaning of our humanity in God’s desire to give us a share in his eternal life despite our alienation from him, which God overcomes at all cost. And again, on the very last page of the book, Tanner exclaims: “Divinity is indeed what gives this human life the only human character it has, the character that makes it what it is” (p. 301). And a few page earlier, if in a less precise way: “Divinity and humanity in Christ are, indeed, fully themselves in being together” (p. 296). Such an intuition is an echo of the Christological revolution in Catholic thought that occurred in the middle of the last century and found its way to the heart of modern Church teaching in the Christocentric ecclesiological anthropology of Vatican II. I speak of *Gaudium et spes*, n. 22, a refrain in the background of all modern theology since: “Christ...in the very revelation of the

mystery of the Father and his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling." Tanner owes much, as do we all, to Henri de Lubac, who, in 1938, observed in his first book, *Catholicisme* (to which I will return below), that "by revealing the Father and by being revealed by him, Christ completes the revelation of man to himself" (Ignatius Press edition, p. 339). Here the paradox of the "non-competitive" nature (Tanner's celebrated signature) between Creator and creature emerges; theologically, this means that the either/or between an anthropocentric starting point and a theocentric one is ultimately idolatrous on both sides: theocentrism without anthropocentrism makes for a distant God, whereas the opposite empties humanity of its significance.

THE "ESSENTIAL" PLASTICITY OF THE IMAGE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Appropriately then, Tanner's first chapter articulates the nature of humanity, addressing the question of the *Imago Dei*. Does protology or eschatology give us the key to human being? Is the "first" or "second" Adam the human archetype? The answer is obvious. The Incarnate Christ is the perfect revelation of the divine glory and therefore the true human, in whom is the vision of God and therefore our life, insofar as we identify him with the Father. Considered in themselves (as in psychological analogies popular in the classical tradition of the West), humans only "weakly" image the divine. By contrast, as the Alexandrian Fathers emphasized (upon whom Tanner fundamentally draws for her Christology), Christ *is* the *Imago Dei*, an image that is one in nature (*homoousios*) with its prototype. And the creation of humanity "*according to* the image" (hence at a second remove) is first and foremost a Christological statement. Human nature is therefore not some nebulous "substance" upon which are transposed a self-contained triad of "faculties" (as in reified readings of Augustine and

Aquinas); rather, it is most itself when it is attached to the divine image that is its uncreated prototype, the Word of the Father, revealed in these “last days,” through whom the creation, with humanity as its crown, was made. In Christ, “the first and the last,” the most human man in being fully divine, the two ends of the chain of life—creation and redemption—clasp together to form a perfect ring.

In the relation of humanity with its archetype, there are, on Tanner’s presentation, two “levels” of attachment, “weak” and “strong.” The “weak” level of attachment (“simple participation in God as creature,” p. 16) defines the creaturely image in its difference from the uncreated Image, the perfect image of the Father without distinction. The “strong” level of imaging (“participation by having the divine image for one’s own,” p. 16) is a result of the creature’s participation in the uncreated Image by virtue of the hypostatic union. Drawing on the Alexandrian thematic of the malleability of human nature, and boldly—if implicitly—echoing strains of Renaissance neo-Platonism refigured around a deep consideration of human freedom, Tanner grounds the potentiality for humans to receive the elevation into the divine life that defines grace in this radical freedom itself: the unformed and plastic quality of human nature is the essential precondition for its participation in that which it is not, that is, being shaped in the divine image and thereby becoming vessels of the divine Spirit. In fact, *to be human* means having this capacity to be remolded in the divine image through the passage from weak to strong participation in the Incarnation.

For Tanner, the Christological conception of the *imago* eschews any “communio” inspired “personalist” model of the social Trinity as the archetype for humanity, defined thus by the complementary relations of “roles” stamped into its nature (as, for example, male and female). In a concise exposition, she states:

The common theological view that divine persons are constituted by their relations, along with the idea of their indivisibility in being and act, is simply hard to square with the politics that would like to foster the agency of persons traditionally effaced in relations with dominant members of society... Moreover, the various ways of ordering the divine persons, no matter how complex, still distinguish the persons by their unsubstitutable functions or places within such orders. The Holy Spirit, for example, customarily has to go third, as in the liturgically favored, biblically derived formula, 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit.' Order among the divine persons is thereby ripe for justification of hierarchy. It easily supports claims of fixed social roles, and the idea that people are equal despite the disparity of their assignment to such roles. And so on (p. 211).

Here Tanner would see the imago in *exclusively* Christological terms. Yet even so, Tanner's social vision is not "binitarian." Tanner holds to the important principle that "the trinity cannot give answers to political questions without socio-historical mediation" (p. 223). Here it is redemption history that must come to the fore. Hers is a "Trinitarian anthropology" at a second remove, insofar as participation in Christ means elevation into the particular *taxis* of his "relations" with the persons of the Trinity that exhaust their personhood: Christ, as begotten in perfect receiving and giving in return, is the Son, the perfect image of the Father, the unbegotten and unoriginated-origin of divine life, united by virtue of the *donum* of the Holy Spirit, which is the collaborator and seal of Triune life, and who is (as in Augustine and Bonaventure) the essence of divinity as love in perfect union. Humans become "sons" of the divine life by entering into the relations that define the Trinity. If, in his relation to the Father, "*obedience* is part of Christ's nature," as Tanner permits (p. 35, quoting Nyssa, *Contra Eun.* II, 11; emphasis mine), then it is also definitive of humanity, all the more strongly as it is elevated to participation in the Trinity in the order of the Son's own filiation. Life-giving love is enacted in perfect complementarity, and

therefore the highest union, by the divine persons in their person-specific ways as they share the divine nature in absolute freedom, and such defines the human inasmuch as it images God in its freedom; and this freedom is why the human is destined from creation toward participation in God. It is hard to see here how a Christological conception of the *Imago* requires the rejection the “communio” model of persons, for which social relations, at least at some fundamental level, are “hierarchically” ordered, if not by power then by love, and therefore do not contradict the absolute equality of persons as bearers of a specific nature, be it divine or creaturely (and creaturely because of the divine). Tanner seems to uphold this distancing distinction between a Christological and Trinitarian conception of the image (and thereby, somehow, reinforcing the most homogenized egalitarianism) by virtue of the amount of *stress* she puts on the “absence of an ontological continuum” between God and creature (cf. pp. 12, 18), which requires that humanity can never even approximate the divine Image, even when the humanity of Jesus is *identified* as the humanity of the second Person of the Trinity (since such human nature is still not God). The gift of participation in the Trinity remains eternally “alien” to humanity in this fundamental way. Hence (implicitly echoing Jean-Luc Marion and referencing de Lubac) humanity images God by virtue of its own intrinsically “apophatic” character, marked by its negative imaging of the divine in the emptiness of its bizarre, creaturely infinitude, the lack that remains at the base of its desire for the absolute, its indefiniteness, its essential openness to the unbounded, etc. (cf. p. 53). This is all profoundly true. But how does it undergird a theological anthropology that denies some kind stable *taxi's* of relations basic to human nature (in such controversial *loci*, for example, as the family or marriage)? Here only one side of the Christological paradox is emphasized (alterity), it seems, for the sake of underpinning certain pre-arranged theological-ethical conclusions. Does this emphasis (and most, if not all, of the critical theological work is done by “emphasis” throughout the book) implicitly reduce the paradox from the level

of antinomy to that of contradiction, where two sides are in irreducible opposition instead of reciprocal tension? Yet if the Christological *paradox* can be aptly applied as the metaphysical principle par excellence we must observe that only by simultaneously affirming both poles, such as alterity and proximity here, irreducibly at once, is the paradox rightly raised up. One needs here a Dionysian correction to what seems to remain an *extrinsicist apophaticism* in her (Christological) anthropology: precisely *because* there is no ontological continuum between creatures and God, *because* the gulf is absolute, God is absolutely present in distinct ways at every level of the continuum, and it is precisely the immediacy of the divine presence which distinguishes kinds and even individual 'things' or persons. Hence matter is no more distant from God than the brightest among the seraphim; what distinguishes them is the exclusive way each manifests the absolute proximity of God, which it does in its own unique and irreplaceable way. And therefore a "hierarchy" of relatively stable differences among the plenitude of creatures is necessary in order for the infinitely multifaceted plenitude of God to be truly manifest at all. Apophasis, at its height, is not lack but excess, and difference itself, precisely as difference, is an expression of unity—precisely as Christology teaches us. There is, contra Tanner (at least here), no competition in difference. Regarding the sort of absolute mutability of human nature that Tanner envisions, where, to take a biblical image dear to the Fathers, God is the potter and the creature is the clay (Jer. 18:6): Does such, as an image of the Son's own "absolute" obedience to the Father, and in concert with it, not actually reassert all the more strongly the nature of human passivity and radical abandonment of self-will to the divine that Tanner sees as "politically problematic" (cf. p. 212)? We will have to connect the essential malleability of human nature with the will, and with the *fully human will of Christ* below, especially if we want to understand such malleability in a more than indeterminate way, in the clarion of a Christological key.

NATURE AND GRACE

Chapters two and three are a long engagement with the nature/grace debates that, according to Tanner, have reached a sort of stalemate, mainly between Protestant and Catholic sides (if also, in a lesser mode, between competing Catholic accounts). The first Catholic view conceives of a “natural desire for the supernatural” as paradoxically definitive of the natural itself, thus raising the question of the gratuity of grace. Though let me break in from the outset: the idea of a *desiderium naturale* surely considers itself as a product of the kind of *Christological thinking* that Tanner herself espouses, all the more if the *post-Chalcedonian* contribution to Conciliar Christology—as Aaron Riches has demonstrated so well in his “Christic humanism”—has any credence (one wishes Tanner would have acknowledged this). On the other hand, there is the Catholic view that conceives of creation as a natural realm integral in itself, and thereby worthy of the ascription “good,” apart from the consideration of grace. The question fundamentally posed to the second Catholic position, as Tanner poses it, is whether a creation considered substantially complete on its own in this way makes grace itself fundamentally irrelevant to the meaning of the creature. The question posed to the first Catholic position, one that Tanner considers to be substantial, is whether God is required to save his creation since nature already calls for, and even protologically participates in, its supernatural end by virtue of its created “nature” as in itself supernaturally oriented. Interestingly, such was already more or less Athanasius’ position in *On the Incarnation*, one which echoes God’s reasoning in delivering Israel: the fall into self-erasure of creation by virtue of its rejection of its divine support calls God’s divinity into question, since the salvation of a good creation is requisite for a good God. Thus, for Athanasius, God is in some sense compelled to save creation by virtue of his own nature. I will return to this in a moment.

If chapter two, then, unfolds the general account of grace implied by the conception of human nature as image of God by virtue of imitative union with Christ, then chapter three is taken up with “resolving” the problem of grace’s gratuity without recourse to the conception of a “pure nature.” It is interesting that Tanner finds much to critique in the first Catholic account of paradoxically graced nature; much of the second chapter on grace is concerned with carefully distinguishing her position from the *nouvelle théologie* and demonstrating that she is after all Protestant, despite her “Catholic” ontologization of grace and (arguably) sin that forms her basic theological orientation (as she recognizes: cf. p. 58-9). This is a tall order. Tanner’s position is, of course, “Catholic” inasmuch as it couples grace with nature (as opposed to sin, conceived “forensically,” as for traditional Protestants), yet it claims “Protestant” status by means of placing the “emphasis” (yet again) on the “discontinuity” in the passage of nature to grace. It is certainly hard to see where an emphasis on discontinuity in particular differs from the positions of Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, or Erich Przywara on anthropology, with their radical commitment to the Jesuit-inspired *semper maior* of the divine nature in relation to that which is created, which arguably in all three cases has a Christology and a radical theology of the Cross(-Eucharist) concentrically dancing at their center. Tanner’s greatest claim is that her account pulls the rug out from under the feet of any “natural desire” for the vision of God as defining human nature, which, she says in fundamental agreement with the neo-Thomists, dangerously threatens the gratuity of grace. By contrast, “our nature,” she says, “is perfected and completed, ironically, by making us act unnaturally, in a divine rather than human way.” Replace Tanner’s “ironically” with “paradoxically” and you have something that is surely at home in the pages of de Lubac’s *Surnaturel*.

The most sympathetic reading would suggest that like Athanasius, the focus of Tanner’s account is on the divine will to save—it is of the divine nature to do

so—rather than on the question of the creation’s “nature” as such, which is a derivative of the latter. On this reading, Tanner’s approach would seem to echo the Athanasian perspective, and thereby attempts to escape the aporias that she thinks arise in de Lubac, particularly the “Aristotelian” focus on “natural desire” as somehow “self-generated” (cf. pp. 123-7), suggesting continuity between nature and grace and threatening to collapse them into one another. Tanner considers de Lubac’s position, and indeed the fundamental problematic of both sides of the (Catholic) debate, to be a “distortion,” inasmuch as it “starts from the character of the creature” apart from “any question of grace” and only at a second remove comes to “ask about the character of the grace to come” (116-7). Such is a “bottom-up view” that must be replaced by the “grace-centered account” (116) that she offers. Here grace can only take the parameters laid out for it beforehand by the account of the creature (as natural desire). For Tanner, by contrast, eschewing the natural desire problematic altogether alone will refuse the creature any ability to “merit” grace. In other words, Tanner stresses the “weakness” of natural participation in the divine life by virtue of one’s creatureliness, in order to emphasize, then, a discontinuity between the “strong” mode of participation that is granted in the absence of a “natural desire” for God defining the creature.

Now, besides questioning whether Aristotelian and Thomist “desire” is in any way initiated merely from within the creature as such (surely an offensively reductive view), we ought to observe that for de Lubac (and Thomas), such desire is itself as elicited by and manifests the divine presence, and is all the more ours by being not ours; there is the presence of Another at the heart of our creaturehood that makes us creature, “more inward than our innermost” by virtue of being “higher than our highest,” as goes the great Augustinian refrain. De Lubac does not deny the cosmic Athanasian vantage, but rather, like the documents of Vatican II, addresses a particularly modern problematic, with its

anthropocentric concentration, by recalling a fundamental dimension of traditional Christian thinking long veiled over. Someone as historically sensitive as de Lubac would have hardly considered his theology a definitive or even static description of the relation of nature and grace, but rather as an interpolation of the tradition into present debates. Such a view, at any rate, is virtually a refrain in Balthasar's own descriptions of de Lubac's significance scattered throughout his own works.

Yet in many respects it can be difficult to find the substantial differences between her fundamental position (admittedly setting aside the essential question of desire) and de Lubac's own that Tanner works so hard to make evident—particularly if a charitable and more thorough reading of the “Aristotelian” character of the “natural desire” can be re-extended on her behalf. From this vantage point, however, it is finally hard to see the value of Tanner's “intervention” into the nature-grace debates at all. First, she unfortunately does not interact with any of the current literature, which is by all accounts essential to understanding the state of the problematic today. Because of this, and along with a shallow and misinformed reading of the philosophical dimensions of the debate, it is hard to see how Tanner unlocks anything whatsoever in the “current impasse” of what is perhaps the most essential theological problem of our time.

SKETCHING THE LIMITS OF AN ABSTRACT KEY

Chapters four and five concern the Christological reassessment of God as Trinity, most fundamentally in its practical consequences for human life. In chapter four Tanner proffers the principle according to which the concrete shape of Jesus' human life is the paradigm for any human life—and therefore what the life of the human community, as a “Trinitarian way of life” (140) is intended to look like. “In being one with the Word,” Tanner says, “Jesus achieves this new

way of life before us; and we gain it through close connection with him" (141). In order to fill out this sketch, Tanner, following the method the Fathers utilized in the Christological debates, appeals to the biblical passages that directly illustrate the Trinitarian order of relations, abstracting them from the narrative(s) of the Gospels in order to construct a general pattern of Christ's relation to the Father and Spirit. Such a method of proceeding is perfectly adequate, of course, when the question concerns an initial account meant to justify basic theological tenets at the most general level, such as the question of Christ's natures, the deity of the Spirit, or the relation of Christ's divinity to his humanity. The account of Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, crucial indeed for the full development of orthodox Christology, as the triumph of Maximus the Confessor at Constantinople III attests, is virtually absent (as are the parables and Christ's prophetic actions), outside of a general statement that Christ "seems to do the Father's will with some reluctance since it involves his own suffering" (181), meant only to highlight the differences between the Trinitarian relations *ad intra* and their unfolding in a fallen world in redemption history. Yet it is precisely in the theology of Maximus the Confessor's meditations on the mystery of Christ's "agony" in the Garden that the concrete meaning of human life implied by abstract sketches of previous classical Christology is unfolded: here we see the essential, where the gift of one's freedom is revealed as the height of freedom, thus remaking human being an image of God, and becomes definitive of the Christian conception of *love* in the synergy of humanity with God that the ineffable union of human and divine nature in Christ signifies (Tanner's reflections on the essential plasticity of human nature in chapter one should have found their concrete terminus, as classical orthodoxy does, precisely here in Maximus' conception of Christ as the "living icon of love."). The description of classical conciliar Christology as a "sketch" is important, for it shows the unfinished nature of, for example, Chalcedon's definition of the hypostatic union; the participatory and paradoxical conception of the meaning of Christ for

human being contained in Chalcedon is materialized—that is, takes on flesh—in the dyothelite reflections of St. Maximus. Now, all of the events of Christ's life that Tanner looks at (for example, the Virgin birth, his temptation in the wilderness, etc.) are mentioned for the sake of quickly extracting the Trinitarian pattern implied within it, a circuit of descent and ascent that forms the general pattern of the Christian understanding of human life (cf. pp. 160-1). We ought to ask here whether Tanner's "primary intent" to "interpret the New Testament *story* of Jesus' life and death in Trinitarian terms," and thereby provide an "account of the basic shape" of the inter-Trinitarian relationship(s) and, finally, its "consequences" for human life (147, emphasis added), is completed almost without getting off the ground. I will return to the significance of this abstract and incomplete picture of the humanity of Christ, theoretically extracted from its narrative context below—a context that is essential if we desire to apply Jesus' own life, in flesh and bone, to crucial questions related to the appropriate shape of human life "in the flesh" and all of its perplexing specificities.

The fifth chapter is especially concerned with revising the typical Trinitarian accounts of human social relations, which tend to err in painting the Trinity in the image of some human utopian vision. The point is that without a Christological mediation of the Trinitarian relations, human relationships themselves can never reach such a level of relation; the *diastema* of Gregory of Nyssa or, as Balthasar calls it, the absolute "spacing" between Creator and creation (or the Kierkegaardian-Barthian "infinite qualitative distinction," if you like), is only Christologically and therefore paradoxically navigated, and as such is the only intelligible way the Trinity can be a model for the structure of human relations that is the political. One wishes, incidentally, that Tanner's (implicit) recognition of the fundamental pertinence of the Nyssan *diastema* for a Trinitarian politics would have been supplemented with the Nyssan account of the *epectastic* stretching of creaturely being in the infinite desire to overcome the

diastema here: the infinite becoming of the creature in the eternal unrest of the ecstasy of divinization would seem to balance the emphasis on absolute distance with that of an absolute proximity (as expression of true distance), the play between them being definitive of human being in Christ. Seen in its light, the *humanity* of her account of the political seems rather chilled and bloodless; the description lacks the dramatic quality of human malleability tied, in real human experience on the ground, to decisions and radical consequences that surely define our human relations in their very humanity—*most especially* in Christological key.

The sixth chapter is the shortest investigation in the book (being just a few pages longer than the second half of the study on grace in chapter 2). Yet here Tanner is at her best. Developing the brief sketches of her thoughts on the atonement in *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity* (to which the present volume is to be thought the sequel), Tanner assumes and pushes forward womanist and feminist critiques of traditional atonement theories, especially the much-maligned models of “vicarious satisfaction” and “penal substitution.” If womanist and feminist theologians are right to protest the ways in which certain atonement theories have been used to justify the oppression of people on the margins (even if simply by having nothing to say to their situation), Tanner seeks to place the atonement square in the middle of the Incarnation: Christ effects the restoration of fallen humanity by means of his transforming assumption of our human nature *tout court*. It is to her merit that Tanner does not wholly reject the notion of sacrifice, but rather takes seriously its centrality in the history of religions as much as in Christianity. Her brisk passage through much theological and ethnological reflection on sacrifice takes only a few pages, but nevertheless offers more or less the germ of a coherent perspective on the phenomenon. According to Tanner, sacrifice concerns only the establishment of social parameters, such as inclusion/exclusion and the organization of community (cf.

p. 265). The goal and purpose of sacrifice is not at all to "propitiate" or pacify the anger of the Deity; rather, more fundamentally, sacrifice is the act on God's behalf who desires fellowship with his estranged creature. For Christianity, God sacrifices himself, that is, gives himself to us for our good, in order that we may make use of his gifts for "life-enhancing use," especially the "satisfaction of human needs" and "the reversal of the effects of sin on human life." This means that for Tanner, "humans are not to offer sacrifices to God" (272). Here, service to others takes the place of blood sacrifice, though this service is not "sorrowful renunciation" but rather "joyous communion" between God and humanity—which is precisely what it has in common with the ancient cultic sacrifices of Israel and Greece (cf. p. 266, developing Robert Daley). Thus sacrifice becomes the gift of life in the celebration of life, as opposed to the gift of death.

For Tanner, the sacrifice of the Cross is "a rite performed by God and not human beings" (268). Tanner draws this conclusion from the self-evident observation that Cross is an act of redemption that follows upon God's decision to incarnate. Hence it follows that the Eucharist is not to be considered a sacrifice, but rather a simple meal, the "provision" of which is the "point of his death" (267; referring to Calvin). What is at the forefront here is not the incarnation; it is rather the divine will to save that matters. "The whole act is God's"—there is no room for humanity in it. Sacrifice is reduced to sanctification (cf. p. 269-70). Hence Tanner offers the strange conclusion that "despite the fact that it takes place on the cross, this sanctification is not being identified with death but with life" (p. 269). All this is a matter of *emphasis* and, I would think, of *overemphasis*. One wonders why here, again, in this radically monergistic account, it becomes an either/or between God and humanity. The purpose for Tanner seems to be that, in order to safeguard against a positive conception of suffering as redemptive, sacrifice cannot be a "work" of humanity at all, even Jesus' suffering on the Cross: and here it seems that the opposite extreme from Docetic

and Gnostic conceptions that sought to protect the divine nature from abasing itself in the mire of historical experience has remarkably occurred. Thus it is inconceivable and unfitting for the human to undergo the Passion. Rather such tainted and unpleasant messiness is only for the divine—for humans “do not have to sacrifice anything ourselves, anything whose use might otherwise have contributed to our well-being” (268-9). The implications for Christology of this view are of course deleterious; thought through, it is evident that they would end in a new Nestorianism: Nestorian results for precisely inverse reasons—safeguarding “humanity” from contamination. Such a view of the Cross/Eucharist cuts directly against Tanner’s primary Christological intuition.

One wishes she would have been able to negotiate more directly with the biblical material itself on sacrifice, especially, for example, in the Letter to the Hebrews and in St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans (which revolutionized the notion of sacrifice altogether, not simply “spiritualizing” it, but actually *incarnating* it all the more in the concrete activity of human life *coram Deo*), if not also in the Apocalypse of St. John (for which the sacrifice of Christ, and the Church’s *participation* in it through her travails on earth, is the cosmic-liturgical center of creation and history). A return to Scripture would protect Tanner against “dividing the Christ” of the Cross/Eucharist and her *de facto* apotheosized humanity, which, at worst, would seem to “lord it over” God. This observation points out yet again the abstract character of Tanner’s Christology in its application, and especially what we could call the still “extrinsicist” relation of Christ to the life of believers in the Church (which again only works against her otherwise superior Patristic retrieval of participatory Christology), for it minimizes at least one half of its participation in the full Christ—that is, in his death. A straightforwardly Pauline theology of baptism and its underlying ecclesiology, highlighting their radical realism, ought to be enough to point out Tanner’s limitations here: surely if we *participate* in the Christ, as his Body, then

our participation in his Cross (death) is as much required, and indeed, according to Paul, is a prerequisite, for our *participation* in his resurrection (cf. Tanner's undeveloped remarks on baptism, pp. 198-9). Such *concrete and fully human participation* is a passage from the regime of death to the kingdom of life and it is the Christologically shaped key to history. There is no resurrection without the requisite passage of death. We do not escape the trial of death, and the historical passage *through* the reign of death because of Jesus; rather, we are given the strength and power to persevere and overcome where Adam failed (for Christ succeeded in his garden and thereby renewed human nature for its *essential* task of synergistic, *free* collaboration with the Triune God, which in Adam was reduced to "opposition" or even "competition"). For if life-giving love in freedom is what the divine Persons share in their "absolute" sharing of the divine nature, and if it is the likeness to this freedom that is corrupted in humanity as a result of sin (since sin is this very corruption that reduces human freedom to the parody of competition with God), then the passage from opposition to synergy requires the sacrifice of absolute obedience, the gift of self, even through suffering and to its death (like Abraham's gift of Isaac, internalized and suffered through completely in Christ). Only in this way, at least for classical Christological reflection, is human freedom and dignity not supplanted, but transformed and elevated, precisely as freedom, to its destiny as absolute (human) freedom in God. Suffering and sacrifice even unto death are, on this view, paradoxically marks of a truly non-competitive account of the Creator-creature relations (and surely it accords more fully with both the "humanity" of the biblical material and human experience!), whereas the denial of the redemptive aspect of suffering harbors a secret "competition" at the very heart of the question, namely freedom. These are, of course, not easy lines to write. Yet what is true and good in a fallen world is often hidden, and agonizingly so. Even theological reflection itself, perhaps above all, must fully "enter into" this mystery. The "sacrifice of obedience" which imprints humanity anew with the mode of the Eternal Son's

existence from within the very “heart of darkness” at the base of human experience in opposition to God *freely* elevates human freedom to the full freedom of love.

My remarks here suggest that Tanner ought to take history (where the meaning of creation unfolds and where the incarnation happened, where she writes and where her audience lives) and especially the mystery of iniquity itself (where humanity suffers, creation groans and God’s love and justice seem far away) more seriously as fundamental elements to her Christology. In light of the travails of history, and the entrance of God into it, Tanner’s “Christ the key” seems too intellectually detached, too flat and mechanistic. The concept of sacrifice and atonement, at least biblically speaking, ought to be the place where the grit, humanity, and full historicity of the Incarnation as atonement ought to come out with full force. And an ecclesiology as radical as the incarnation will emerge here as well. There is nothing, of course, in her participatory Christology that directly cuts against this kind of development; rather it seems to be, at least here a result of her concern to use it as a means to overcome the social repercussions of traditional atonement theories, as developed in the theologies of womanists and feminists, which of course ought to be negotiated with full care, yet *never* at the expense of the Scriptural witness and of the full “historicity” of the Incarnation and atonement. Tanner’s appeal to “historical complexity” and the “historical humanity” of the incarnate Word (cf. pp. 261, 263, etc.) is not yet enough, because it separates Christ’s sufferings from our own simply by refusing to allow our own suffering a (participatory) soteriological place and thus undoing, as I already mentioned, the very theology of baptism and even the anthropology/ecclesiology of St. Paul. Could it really be that the patristic “metaphysics” of incarnation is more directly tied to a theology of baptism and of an ecclesiology that is just as universal? What I offer here of course is an interpretive judgment of Tanner’s position—one that she would strongly disagree

with—but the importance of raising the question ought not be underestimated, since here it may very well be the case after all that we risk a sort of backdoor docetism that even womanism and feminism are at least designed to avoid, and that is the very opposite of what a participatory Christology requires.

Such an observation raises the specter of what may turn out to be a deeper problematic in Tanner's thought. Following my practice in this review I will only introduce it here. Tanner's treatment of the various atonement theologies of tradition considers each one as an "image" (cf. p. 247). The "classical images of the cross" are mere images, that is, are *extrinsically* connected to something ineffable of which they signify, it seems, in a non-participatory way. This is fine if we want to talk about mere "theories" of the atonement, but if we are to talk about such theologically significant "images" as sacrifice, obedience of the Son, economic exchange, etc., then a more profound account is needed—that is, unless biblical images are things we can replace at our own convenience or even *as a result* of our own requirements placed upon the meaning of love, of justice, of the divine and of grace. However, it is surely the very meaning of these concepts fundamental to the meaning of our humanity that the images of Scripture, even and most especially its difficult ones, are given to address. A non-participatory conception of biblical imagery and signification contradicts patristic views of theological signification as well as those, it is needless to say, implied by the liturgy. With the biblical material on sacrifice and on the Cross especially (and on liturgy and the Eucharist as well), such a non-participatory theory of the image falls far short. In fact, we ought to observe, such an extrinsicist conception of biblical image contradicts the robust theology of the image developed in the first chapter of the book. Yet for patristic thought, there is a profound and living link between the incarnation of the Word in the flesh and the inspiration of the Word in the biblical text. In short, Tanner's theology of language, her theology of theo-*logy* first of all, ought to be developed in order to catch up with her

Christology—this ought to be undertaken, I would suggest, by a return to Cyril of Alexandria, particularly as explored by Marie-Odile Boulnois in her remarkable monograph, *Le paradoxe trinitaire chez Cyrille d’Alexandrie. Herméneutique, analyses philosophiques et argumentation théologique* (1994). As implied throughout this review, something similar applies here: the judgment of a theology ought to be upon its ability for revision based on an ever-greater commitment to revelation’s priority in judgment over our own theological judgments. Such revision is of course always rooted in a dialogue, of course (that is, between divine revelation and human reflection), one that is already intrinsic to revelation itself, and thus ongoing. As Tanner seems to recognize, to preclude the critique of one’s present theological judgments by an always-deepening recognition of the priority of revelation, precisely by recognizing its essential dialogical form (whether or not my critique raised here has any merits or not), is no longer theology but something else that we might as well call mere politics.

The last chapter is probably the weakest of the book. Here Tanner is concerned with re-navigating the question of the normative means of the Spirit’s work in the lives of believers. Does the Spirit work primarily in the mode of immediate, exceptional events, and by interior illumination beyond critique, or in the midst of and within normal human activity, the “often messy and conflict-ridden public processes of give and take in ordinary life” (p. 274)? It is interesting, and beneficial, that Tanner classifies conceptions of the Spirit’s activity according to whether there is a “competitiveness” (explicit or merely implied) between divine and human action. It is the second view, she says, that bears the conception that “the Spirit does not begin to work where the ordinary sorts of human operation come to an end” (p. 274). As one would have guessed, Tanner sides with the second position, assembling an impressive amount (at least for one whose theological expertise is in Patristics) of mainly Puritan critiques of “establishment religion” coupled with classical Anglican articulations of its

“middle way” between a institutionalism and radical subjectivism to underpin the view that the Spirit’s action and human fallibility are not at odds. Here Tanner rightly notes that the bifurcation of subjective and objective conceptions of the Spirit “has everything to do” with some fundamental elements of modern religious thought that can be described in various ways, such as the split between interior and exterior, the personal realm of the essentially religious, fundamentally irrational and the public realm of scientific reason, and most especially then, with “the bifurcation between faith and reason that breaks out in modern times” (p. 276). The upshot of Tanner’s commitment to the metaphysics of non-competition in the work of the Spirit, inasmuch as it implies a God who “gets his hands dirty” in the mess of human action and does not contradict or supersede such fallibility, is that there is a concomitant lack of resolution regarding theological beliefs and their practical implication. Hence any religious principle considered objectively absolute or unmediated is all the less valuable (even if necessary at some level) as concerns practical and political decisions. The point is to neutralize the political significance of any attempt to transcend human fallibility by equating the Spirit’s authority with specific, historically localized judgments, whether, for example, in “unbending scriptural witness” or “unwavering church tradition” (p. 289). Here “reform” or self-revision in the light of experience is the key to progress in the knowledge of the Spirit’s work. Because the Spirit is “at work everywhere” in the church, in its practical life, it is “opened up to greater flexibility and greater appreciation for the surprise of the new” (292). Such reform is fundamentally a “public” and democratic process, as truth is a process of complex mediation, unfolding through time along the path carved out through the history of the community’s life. The question raised, of course, by this view, is whether this “modest” (295) and “invisible” (299) account of the Spirit is itself open to a “metacritique.” The implied reference to Hamann is of course critical (and here lies, indeed, our “key to the abyss”). For here the “prophetic” would seem inevitably to be equated with the community’s present

self-conception, *inasmuch* as it sees itself “opening up” traditional authorities, which are measured by the standard of whatever is considered to be the common voice. And do we not encounter here a near perfect justification of the ecclesiological convictions of progressive American Episcopalianism? This observation is not a critique, necessarily, for what else are we to expect from a thoughtful Episcopalian theologian? However, speaking wholly outside of her tradition, I would simply like to raise in all modesty and good will the following question: Are we not here again in the realm of an “extrinsicist” Christology, and indeed, a “competitive” account of the Spirit’s work where human fallibility totally swallows up the freedom of the divine and calls it “non-competitive”? What separates us here from a *de facto* Nestorianism recapitulated on the level of pneumatology?

Whatever the answer to this question, this chapter would have been much more interesting if more difficult questions were addressed head on, questions that directly pertain to the heart of a Christology that rightly elevates the human to an overwhelming, theological dignity: if God’s grace, in the mode of the Spirit’s presence in human affairs, does not depend on, respond to, or in any way “compete” with human action for the accomplishment of its purposes, then, as we all believe, *how* does human action matter? Why is human freedom (implicitly made fundamental to an account of human nature essentially malleable) then not an epiphenomenon or at least reduced in stature? How can there be any standard for human thought and action, outside of itself, and by which it can be measured, on this account? Is there possible here any final weight to human decisions, to human life in the historical process that depends on them? Are not love and justice thereby evacuated of any final meaningfulness since we are here left with no capacity to allow the continual reformation of our preconceptions of what love and justice are and therefore what the human is, particularly the significance of its existential depth (surely a modern insight)?

Does the Pauline warning to avoid “quenching” or “grieving” the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19 and Eph. 4:30, respectively) make sense on this scheme? What does such a scheme imply about the Cross, and therefore about the weight of human responsibility and of sin in a world where humanity is the image of God (to gloss Augustine in his *Literal Commentary on Genesis*) by virtue of its “prerogative” of authority over all other creatures (L, III, XX, 30)? It is here that the “subjective” account of the Spirit swallows the “objective” completely, and paints the picture of a Spirit who is intrinsic to and unable to transcend the religious experiences of this or that community. What if these religious experiences and the convictions of a community are dangerously self-identified with the “prophetic” (for the sake of political ends)? How do we avoid a *radical* democratization and thus relativization of religious truth, where the measure of truth itself is ever only intrinsic to our individual and corporate religious experiences, however “publicly” tested? Yet the non-contradiction of human and divine action, where (metaphorically or literally) eternity is at stake (as in Aquinas, for example) does not reduce the irreducible significance of human action, nor does a non-competitive account of the Spirit’s work in the world require a Protestant odium to an ecclesiastical *magisterium* (whether or not such is considered valuable). In fact, the argument could be made in just the opposite direction: just such an objective “guarantee” of the Spirit’s activity alone can overcome the limitations of the subjectivization of the Spirit and underwrite a truly non-competitive account of divine and human action based on the Incarnation, where the radical fallibilist position falls short in refusing the Spirit of God the power and authority to contradict or work over and against human failures. Would such a view take into account in a deeper way the real significance of human action, the priority of grace (God’s *incarnational* commitment to the creation that presses through history by virtue of the concrete participation of the Body in the Head) and thereby not run roughshod over the irreducible “infinity” of the human will simply by virtue of a vague commitment to the ultimately non-competitive

nature of divine and human operation? One wonders, on this view, whether Tanner has taken into account the necessarily *eschatological* quality that surely colors the metaphysics of divine and human relations on the plane of human history, precisely by virtue of an *incarnate* Christological concentration, in a way that Balthasar, for example, acknowledges and faces head on in his *Theo-Drama*. As much of the Pauline and Johannine material is concerned to tell us, and which can be seen when its proper debt to apocalyptic traditions is acknowledged, it is in the end that the *mysterion* or key to the meaning of human life and history is divulged (which we know because the end has been *introduced* into history in Christ by his Cross and Resurrection); yet we have only been given enough to trust in such a *final* non-competition between the violent oscillations and convulsions of human history and the divine purposes, and we cannot presume to know how it works—for such would require a God’s-eye-view that is not ours within history, and we would only reduce it to the horizon of our own intellectual powers (even if we identify them with Christ). Even the Apocalypse of St. John veils the vision of the end in the thick smoke of images and symbols proper to the cosmic temple that is heaven and earth and the wild drama of human history that unfolds upon it as a stage, manifesting the hidden war between the legions of the abyss and the “Lamb, looking as though he was slain.” Perhaps it is Chesterton’s “wild truth, reeling but erect” after all—and nothing less—that serves as a key that fits the lock of the arcane and fabulous mystery of human existence in Christ, before the majesty of the Triune God.

DRY BONES DRY. BUT WHERE IS CHRIST IN FLESH AND BONE?

Let us, for a moment, cease trembling and return to the beginning and ask again: who or what is Christ, according to Tanner? What is the shape of this “skeleton key” that unlocks the mystery of God and humanity, and in doing so

purports to vivify the otherwise dry and scattered bones of inter-confessional debates? In keeping with her style, Tanner's use of this metaphor is probably the most straightforward and perhaps gains its force by virtue of its (here at least) appropriate vagueness. Her "Christ" is simply a "theological vision" (p. vii): standing for God's universal and unconditional desire to communicate his life to humanity, thereby giving humanity to itself in the fullness of the divine life. Christ is the way to cut through the Gordian knot of debates in theology that have become hopelessly tangled. One of the basic problems with this work is, as we have repeatedly seen, the fact that Tanner's Christ remains wholly in the realm of the abstract (despite her assertions to the contrary). Yet such a blunt blade would hardly cut through anything. Given, in the chapter on politics, to take an example, Christ is only *the Key* to the "translation" of the perfect community of Trinitarian life to relationships in human community (and keys must remain generalized and consistent in their contours, especially if they are to unlock multiple doors, as Christ is asserted as doing throughout the chapters of this book), and as such must remain without much of the flesh that the Gospels give us in Christ's symbolic actions and teachings. Her Christ, as "theological vision," tends to remain only a skeleton as opposed to a living person, *Christos Pantokrator*, the Lord of history, who, "conquering every enemy," sits enthroned in glory "at the right hand of the Father," the slain Lamb and High Priest of the cosmos who "holds in his hand the keys to Hades and death." Instead, she presupposes a Christ that every modern reader presumably more or less already agrees with. She makes a fundamental appeal to this basic picture: "Jesus' own healing, reconciling, and life-giving relations with others" (p. 240)—though she nowhere gets more concrete than that. Is this the Christ of the Gospels? Well, yes, of course, but is that what "Christ" *fully* is for us—the pathway to human flourishing and fulfillment: a means to our end? Well, yes, he is *that*, thank God, but *how* he is such is what really matters. To reach a real picture of *that*, and I dare say to encounter the living Jesus, theology must itself dare to become

cruciform. What of that “grace” that “costs” (to invoke Bonhoeffer)? What we paint with our theologies may very well always be a distorted image, though distortions, exaggerations, heavy shading, are not without much theological value, and probably necessary in order to capture at least an authentic glimpse of the Christ who always exceeds our grasp. But what of the Christ, the Son of David who burns with fiery justice, the prophet of Jerusalem’s destruction, the cleanser of the Temple, who “comes not to bring peace but the sword,” and “to divide fathers from their children and children from their fathers,” the “sign of contradiction” who embodies in his person the Great Day of the Lord anticipated by the prophets? Do we want this Lord who gives his blood for us *to swallow* and his flesh for us *to choke down* in real space and time? Any Christology must wrestle with the whole portraiture of Christ that the Gospels gives; it must wrestle and it must persevere through the night that collapses our preconceptions and wounds us; it must not let go until the blessing of understanding comes. Tanner would certainly agree that the Christ of the Gospels must perennially be allowed to smash through our tenuous and paltry constructions, for he passes through them to reach us. As Barth reminded us, so he reminds theologians first of all: Christ is Lord, we are not. The first task of the theologian, it would seem to me—but I confess, I am young, and hardly a theologian—is to digest this one great, all-encompassing fact, and to give oneself without reserve and without fear to this very Jesus who is, through the lineaments of the whole of Scripture, the true “face of God” *pro nobis*.

I suggest therefore that the problems associated with Tanner’s work outlined above may best be reached by way of her abstract notion of grace, which, in order to be adequate, must, precisely as a *work* of theology, sub-mit (L. *submittere*) itself to the data of revelation and take the shape of the Christ of the Gospels. Second, following this problematic and indeed intrinsic to it, is the concomitant question of ecclesiology. As we have seen above, many readers of

Tanner's works have asked, and continue to ask: where is the Church? Even here, throughout the text, the Church remains as abstract as the Christ does, if not more so. Aside from some generalized images such as "life-brimming, Spirit-filled community" and the like, there is, as I said, hardly a word on the *ecclesia* in the book. In fact Tanner mostly replaces the role of ecclesiology with repetitions of 19th century moralizing accounts of the "kingdom" as "a community of mutual fulfillment in which the good of one becomes the good of all" (p. 241). Again, such is indeed laudatory, but hardly the full story. There is likely a connection here between Christology and ecclesiology that should be *fleshed out*. For such an endeavor, for my part, I would recommend the following Augustinian rule: any ecclesiology is only as good as the concreteness of one's Christology, *and vice versa*, since Christ is the Head of the Body, itself united to its Head, bearing the material grittiness of the eternal Incarnation through history in a sacramental and thereby realist manner.

Next to the dancing candle of this work, one ought to hold the flaming torch that is Henri de Lubac's *Catholicisme*, where "the Catholic, the all-embracing" of the Church becomes (according to Joseph Ratzinger's preface) "the key" to unlocking the integral unity of the relation between the Trinitarian God and humanity in the one Christ and only thus to human life in its social, moral, economic, political and all other practical particularities: the incarnate catholicity of the Church manifests and is united with the very incarnate catholicity of Christ. This book shows precisely what is still missing in Tanner's avowed "internalizing" and "redployment" (p. ix) of patristic Christology, namely the fundamental patristic intuition of the ecclesiological concreteness of the Christological "common destiny of humanity" (to quote the subtitle of the English translation of de Lubac's work). In other words and in sum: to separate Christ from the Church only leads to an abstract Christ. Therefore, precisely

what is missing in Tanner's Christology, considered as the key to understanding divine and human relations, marks the scope of its failure.

Second, a "personal" engagement with the man who is the Creator-come-to-save in his incarnate historicity—had by way of a thinking reception of *the faith that is Scripture's own*, that is, by an "incarnate" immersion of thought in the words, parables, symbols, events, and narratives of the Gospels themselves and hence a recapitulation of this living Word by a life become transparent to this Word, overflowing in words that give witness to it—is surely the fundamental work of theology, as the Fathers attest. Let us hope that in future work Tanner will undergo the risk and challenge of exposing her theology in the fullest way to Jesus of Nazareth in the Christological fullness of the rich diversity of Scripture's "symphonic" witness. In this way, surely, she will only come to understand more deeply the thought of the Early Church "from within." Only then can an ecclesiology—inseparable from a Christological account of the human, and surely no less scandalous—be adequately and faithfully developed. The Christ of this book, and of Tanner's work to date, can only be a placeholder for what, seen in this light, becomes a necessary labor that would become the true test and measure of her thought.

The brilliance and significance of Tanner's *oeuvre* will probably finally be found in the way it ties together a classical and vibrant Christocentrism, surely at the heart of Christianity, with a progressivist social program. Christ is the Key, to understanding God, humanity and therefore *what it means to live in this world*: surely Christ means nothing if he does not teach us this. Tanner's work springs from this sound intuition. The key question is whether Tanner is right in the practical results of her Christology, that is, in her hermeneutic of the Christ. Does Christ the Key (A) entail a post-liberal liberation theology (C)? Such is the wholly un-argued *argument* that defines, I would suggest, her entire theological project, manifest through the studies of this book. What matters here, of course,

is (B), the implicit passage from (A) to (C). It is the identification of (A) and (C) that her entire project is one consistent, and often beautiful and striking elaboration. I believe, for what it is worth, that anyone committed to the Christ of the Gospels ought to have serious reservations concerning Tanner's theological conclusions, mainly for the reasons made evident through this report. Perhaps the end is the place to offer a summary of a tentative assessment raised by the critical dimensions elaborated above: the limitations and blind spots of Tanner's no less important and profound contribution to 21st century theology are probably best seen in her construction of a post-liberal liberation theology on a traditional Christological infrastructure: her flesh to his "skeleton." Here grace is defined primarily in patristic neo-Platonic terms (though tipping the hat to Protestant wariness of "divinizing language"—thus somehow appeasing it?) as "strong" participation in "what we are not," that is, the divine life, by way of "attachment" of our human nature to it in Christ. Yet this is underpinned by a generalized affirmation of God's "unconditional love," which is arguably separated from an adequate account of justice and truth—*that is*, one that would transcend its simple identification with the political aims of postmodern liberalism. Harsh words again, perhaps too much so: let the reader (and author) forgive me. My judgment on the matter is only secondary to be sure. What matters is the question raised by the "problematic" identified here.

Yet surely the debate lies here and nowhere else. It is to Tanner's credit that she has not only identified what is at stake, but also continues to propose a hermeneutic of the Christ that we must agree to be a compelling theological vision. It certainly fits very well with our late modern, liberal understanding of the meaning of human persons and of life together in the world; in fact, we could say that her Christ powerfully *incarnates* the liberal values that we cannot help but presuppose, and in shadowy ways shape who we are today and certainly what we think and do. There is nothing in Tanner's Christ, as abstract

as it is, that calls them into question; rather, they are only justified by means of their identification with Jesus of Nazareth himself. This is the original liberal move. Is such inevitable for theologians? Perhaps to some degree. But let us console ourselves, as we contemplate Jesus from within the confines of our linguistic and hermeneutic cells, with the rapturous memory of Albert Schweitzer. The fact that her work raises such a question and demands an answer from us all makes Kathy Tanner a noteworthy theologian; it makes *Christ the Key* a “must-read” book—but if there exists some holy sage in our day who has glimpsed the *light of the world* as it burns, lifted up and resplendent, outside of the dark confines of our stuffy abstractions and feeble constructs, let them speak! And may we be given the grace to hear them—no matter what we take the ephemeral shadows dancing on the wall to imply.