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Radical Orthodoxy:

Theology, Philosophy, Politics

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Radical Orthodoxy: Theology, Philosophy, Politics

A “SOCIAL IMAGINARY” OF THE COMMONS: Its Ontology and Politics

Adrian Pabst and Marcia Pally

I. INTRODUCTION: ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REALITIES

In many advanced economies, the recent recession and uneven recovery brought to the surface systemic economic problems and worsened growing political polarisation. Economic difficulties include widening income and asset inequality, falling real wages, diminishing chances of upward mobility, reduced job opportunities, and increasing personal debt. Many not yet burdened by these fear that they or their children soon will be. Sources of these problems include globalisation of manufacturing, trade, and services; the finance, trade, and tax regulation shaping such globalisation; automation of industry and communication; and competition from emerging markets. These are aggravated by eroding support networks as extended families and communities disperse (often in pursuit of jobs), as local governments and communities lose resources, and as national economic policies fail to re-develop regions that have lost their economic base.

Associated with these economics are populist anxieties about economic competition from immigrants and minorities, loss of national identity, and national

control over borders and trade—all of which have spurred alienation from established political parties, elected representatives, and often from government overall, seen as out-of-touch with the citizenry. The US Tea Party, the Trump win, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), and the French National Front on the right and Syriza, Podemos, Jeremy Corbyn, and Bernie Sanders on the left have attracted support by giving voice to this alienation.

Our aim is not to add to the abundant literature on these difficulties but to analyse the basic conception of society—the social imaginary—that gives rise to them. What worldview undergirds these economic arrangements that contribute to so many societal problems? We submit that this imaginary misunderstands humanity's social nature and so even the conditions for individual flourishing, which depends on networks of reciprocal relations. After exploring this imaginary, we suggest an alternative grounded in the relational or networked nature of human living. As biologist Darcia Narvaez notes, "To approach eudaimonia or human flourishing, one must have a concept of human nature, a realization of what constitutes a normal baseline, and an understanding of where humans are—embedded in a cooperating natural world."¹ That is, to create productive public policy, citizens and their leaders need an understanding of what sort of creatures human beings are and develop policy to suit. In our final section, we describe specific economic and political policies that follow from this alternative social imaginary.

2. SOCIAL IMAGINARIES AND THE SPECIFIC SOCIAL IMAGINARY OF THE COMMONS

By 'social imaginary' we mean the model people have in mind of what society is and should be. It is both a descriptive and normative picture of the conditions and practices of societal co-existence, the spoken and unspoken rules of behaviour, and the values undergirding those norms. Values include the assessment of what is or

¹ Darcia Narvaez, *Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality: Evolution, Culture, and Wisdom* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), p. 438.

is not important and the contours of responsibility throughout society. Social imaginaries inform present mores, future expectations, and notions of change. They form the mental and emotional substructure from which both politics and policies flow. While they are neither the sole source of economics and politics nor a sufficient condition for state, civil society, and market functioning, they are a societal building block setting the often unarticulated bounds of the possible.

A ‘social imaginary,’ Cornelius Castoriadis holds, “creates for each historical period its singular way of living, seeing and making its own existence.”² Charles Taylor conceptualises it as “ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underline these expectations.”³ Often assumed and unarticulated, it is “that largely unstructured and inarticulate understanding of our whole situation, within which particular features of our world show up for us in the sense they have. It can never be adequately expressed in the form of explicit doctrines because of its unlimited and indefinite nature.”⁴

Our experience of life, Taylor continues, must conform considerably if not entirely to our social imaginaries. When these differ substantially, societal tensions and discontent arise. One example is the post-1945 expectation in Europe and North America that each generation would be better off than the previous one and that the middle class would expand relative to other classes. For many today, experience is now at odds with this expectation, yielding the discontent and political populism noted above. In December 2015, the Pew Research Center reported that the American middle class—once the largest class and the very meaning of the ‘American dream’—is the majority no longer.⁵

This gap between expectation and experience has increased as the social imaginary of the common good has in many advanced economies dimmed and

² Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), p. 145.

³ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 23.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 24–5.

⁵ Pew Research Center, *The American Middle Class is Losing Ground*, available online at <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/09/the-american-middle-class-is-losing-ground/>

no longer grounds much public policy. By common good we mean the standard use of the term: that economic and political resources be distributed for broad-based opportunity, for a present and future shared among society's members, and that such broad distribution warrants the support of civil society, state, and market. In mid-twentieth century advanced economies, common-good policies took the forms, for instance, of taxing the wealthy at rates sufficient to fund education, infrastructure, research, etc.; market norms for executive pay relative to employee compensation;⁶ co-determination of wages and working conditions by employers, trade unions, and government; worker representation on company boards and regional banks; and commitment to vocational training by government and trade/manufacturing guilds.

However, by 'social imaginary of the commons' we also include the worldview undergirding these practices. Part of every social imaginary is its primary worldview, an understanding of how human beings survive and flourish, what Robert Doran calls the "the mass and momentum of feeling," a "normative source of meaning."⁷

The worldview grounding the social imaginary of the commons is neither collectivist nor a binary that demands balancing personhood against societal relations/responsibilities. Collectivism subordinates the person to the whole while the binary fosters the zero-sum idea that contributing to society diminishes one's own resources. Instead, the social imaginary of the commons goes beyond the binary to understand individuality as *mutually constitutive* with societal relations. Each person, while separate and distinct from others, comes to be the person she is through nexes of relationships situated in a cultural and historical era. In short, the conditions of individuality itself are separability-*amid*-situatedness. There is no person without constituting relations, and no relations without separable persons to constitute and inhabit them. It is thus not only economic calculations but this

⁶ In the USA, the CEO-to-worker pay-ratio today is 354:1 (<http://www.aflcio.org/Corporate-Watch/Paywatch-Archive/CEO-Pay-and-You/CEO-to-Worker-Pay-Gap-in-the-United-States/Pay-Gaps-in-the-World>); fifty years ago, it was 20:1 (<http://www.epi.org/publication/ceo-pay-2012-extraordinarily-high/>).

⁷ Robert Doran, *What is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 166, 178.

ontology, this understanding of how human beings function and flourish, that is needed to ground public policy.

3. THE SOCIAL IMAGINARY OF THE COMMONS AS SEPARABILITY-AMID-SITUATEDNESS

In the worldview of separability-amid-situatedness, the separability aspect refers to the freedom and ability to develop ideas and forms of life different from those of one's past and neighbours. It is associated with physical and intellectual mobility, societal change, and innovation—precisely the ability to separate from one's milieu. This minimal “methodological individualism”⁸ becomes, with increasing separation among persons, the maximal “ontological individualism,”⁹ where there are only individuals and no such thing as groups or society as claimed by former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.¹⁰ The normative claims of separability are associated with liberalism, including negative liberty protected by rights-based law and “small government” political systems. Such systems hold that public policy should benefit the individual (not associations), also called “value individualism.”¹¹ Importantly, these benefits also include human and civil rights as they adhere to persons regardless of their relations.

Situatedness views the group and its traditions as conceptually prior to the individual, whose sense of self, values, and habits are formed by what Pierre Bourdieu called *habitus*.¹² Groups, Philip Selznick writes, entail “a common faith or fate, a personal identity, a sense of belonging, and a supportive structure of activities and relationships.”¹³ Selznick's is the minimal position as the individual is acknowledged (it is she who has a sense of belonging) even as the group remains

⁸ Colin Bird, *The myth of liberal individualism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁰ Margaret Thatcher, quoted in *The Sunday Times*, 31 October 1987, <http://briandeer.com/social/thatcher-society.htm>

¹¹ Bird, *The myth of liberal individualism*, p. 58.

¹² Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

¹³ Philip Selznick, *The Moral Commonwealth: Social Theory and the Promise of Community* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), p. 357.

formative. A more maximal view takes persons to be so societally constituted that they do not go much beyond that constitution. John Macmurray writes that "I exist only as one element in the complex 'You and I'."¹⁴ Normative claims of situatedness are associated with both progressive and conservative views, including the idea that policies and resources should support groups as they instill persons with values and life skills and make society work. Associated with this is that idea that a broad-based distribution of "primary goods" or the "social minimum" should be supported by societal policies and institutions rather than being available only to individuals as they can afford.¹⁵ A more sweeping normative claim is the notion that, as traditional communities carry extensive wisdom, they should resist change.

In the social imaginary of the commons, separability and situatedness in mutual constitution is the way persons and societies become who and what they are. Each person is distinct; even identical twins develop different characters and life goals—what Alain Badiou calls "universal singularity."¹⁶ Yet each develops through layers of relationships, both with those near and that extend out, as our educational and economic opportunities and obstacles are informed by those who are not necessarily nearby. This networked impact entails networked responsibility among individuals and among groups.

This sociological claim finds support in the biological sciences. Narvaez writes that "whom a person becomes is a co-construction of genes, gene expression from environmental effects [...] and the ecological and cultural surroundings [...]. There is no being without shared social relations."¹⁷ Her description of this *unselfish* gene continues as follows:

Immersion in communal rituals and joyful encounters [...] allow for community bonding and what we might call a 'moral mood,' both of which facilitate pro-social behavior [...]. If there is no baseline sense of empathy for others—what

¹⁴ John Macmurray, *Persons in Relation* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1991), pp. 12, 24.

¹⁵ Jeremy Waldron, *Liberal Rights: Collected Papers, 1981–1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 250–51.

¹⁶ Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, *Philosophy in the present*, ed. P. Engelman and trans. A. Thomas and A. Toscano, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), pp. 26–48.

¹⁷ Narvaez, *Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality*, p. 15, 103.

Adam Smith (1759/1982) considered essential for society—then the options considered are likely to harm others. If there is no sense of concern for all living entities, then actions that harm those outside the circle of concern will not receive a second thought [...]. There are two ways cultures can be set up, with either an emphasis on competition or on cooperation. In the natural world, competition is a thin icing on a thick cake of cooperation [...].¹⁸

Evolutionary biology too emphasizes this “thick cake of cooperation” as it notes that *homo sapiens* are a “hyper-cooperative species”¹⁹ in which “reciprocal altruism”²⁰ structures not only dyadic exchange and kin relations but large societal networks. ‘Cooperativity’ is the base for interactions among highly mobile persons and groups even absent long-term contact.²¹ Amid present-day mobility and urban anonymity, generous gestures continue to prompt generous responses not only dyadically but also expansively, in network fashion.²²

Moving more foundationally, we suggest that these biological and sociological findings are unsurprising because separability-amid-situatedness is structural to the world. Persons are separate and distinct yet in situated in relation *because* separability-amid-situatedness is foundational to laws of nature, to existence itself. To unpack this claim, one might begin by saying that being, the possibility of existence itself, results from the source of all that is. There could be nothing at all, but in fact there’s something. Franz Rosenzweig called the source of all something

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 27, 110.

¹⁹ Paul Schmid-Hempel, Institute for integrative biology (Zurich, Switzerland), personal communication, 15 May 2015.

²⁰ Robert Trivers, ‘The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism’, *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, Vol. 46, no. 1 (1971), pp. 35–57; Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and its Evolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

²¹ Evolutionary benefits to hunter-gatherer societies (95 percent of our evolutionary history) included improved hunting among cooperative rather than competitive clans and more likely survival of offspring as families and communities helped each other. See Robert Seyfarth and Dorothy Cheney, ‘The Evolutionary Origins of Friendship’, *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol. 63 (2012), pp. 179–199.

²² Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler, *Connected: The Surprising Power of our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives—How Your Friends’ Friends’ Friends Affect Everything You Feel, Think, and Do* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2009).

“the eventfulness of the limitless possibilities that will come to exist.”²³ After the kabbalist Ein Sof and F.W.J. Schelling, this source is not so much what precedes effects as what is realized as it yields effects. As existence results from this source, something of it inheres, metaphorically speaking, “in” all existing things in order for them to be. Every particular participates in this source for its existence. In theological voice, Aquinas wrote, “God himself is properly the cause of universal being which is innermost in all things [beings] [...] in all things God works intimately.”²⁴ In Merleau-Ponty’s words, divine “transcendence no longer hangs over man. He becomes, strangely, its privileged bearer.”²⁵

On the one hand, particular beings are radically different from this source—differences in materiality/immateriality and finitude/infinity. On the other, particulars intimately partake of the source of existence to exist at all. We partake of the source of existence—something radically different from ourselves—in order to exist. *This difference yet intimate relation is the way anything comes to be.* The grammar of existence is distinction-amid-relation, separability-amid-situatedness. Kirk Wegter-McNelly words may serve to summarize: cosmos is “a place in which entangled independence-through-relationship is the fundamental characteristic of being.”²⁶

There is, in short, no other way to be. Persons, like all existing things, are separate and distinct from each other yet also situated in relation. Existence as distinction-amid-relation, or separability-amid-situatedness, makes humanity and society also a matter of distinction-amid-relation. Each becomes who she distinctly is through nexes of relationships, which inform her just as she informs them. Each bears the traces of those relations. On the one hand, we recall our distinct identical twins and the singularity of each person, yet on the other, “the

²³ Elliot R. Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift: Apophasis and Overcoming Theomania* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2014), Kindle Edition 2812.

²⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 1–5, trans. Fathers of the Dominican English Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1948), Ia, q. 105, art. 5.

²⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. Richard McCleary (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 71.

²⁶ Kirk Wegter-McNelly, *The Entangled God: Divine Relationality and Quantum Physics* (New York, NY: Routledge), p. 136.

individual is a fact of existence,” Martin Buber wrote, “insofar as he steps into a living relation with other individuals.”²⁷

One may get a sense of this also by looking at the sub-atomic level, where the trajectory of each sub-atomic particle is different from those of its neighbours yet each is formed in light of them. While remaining distinct, each particle develops and moves through its milieu by inter-formation. Physicist Carlo Rovelli writes that all existing things, “are continually interacting with one another, and in doing so each bears the traces of that with which it has interacted.”²⁸

Thus, a theologically informed ontology not only provides an account of why reality is relational but also resonates with some of the most ground-breaking findings in contemporary natural sciences. Indeed, the latest developments in biology, physics, philosophy, and ethics open the door to a revived theology and a renewed import of religion in debates on the universe and human nature. Hitherto, it had been assumed by most mainstream scientists that forms of life are the product of essentially natural, random processes—such that if we ran evolution again, life would look very different.²⁹ However, there is increasing evidence to suggest that evolution shows biological convergence and is not random: if it ran again, the world would look much as it does.³⁰ Here one can go beyond old divides (creation versus atheism; intelligent design versus natural evolution) and argue that recent research sheds new light on the teleology of life. Natural selection is no longer thought to be the main driver of biological change but rather a process within a bigger process. Life displays a certain kind of inherency, such that the beings which come about are a product *also* of their own, intended integrity—

²⁷ Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), p. 203.

²⁸ Carlo Rovelli, *Seven Brief Lessons on Physics* (New York: Penguin, 2015), pp. 69–70.

²⁹ Stephen Jay Gould, *Ever since Darwin: Reflections in Natural History*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin, 1991); Stephen Jay Gould, *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); and Stephen Jay Gould, *Punctuated Equilibrium* (London: Belknap, 2007).

³⁰ Simon Conway Morris, *The Crucible of Creation: The Burgess Shale and the Rise of Animals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Simon Conway Morris, *Life's Solution: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe*, new ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Simon Conway Morris, ed., *The Deep Structure of Biology: Is Convergence Sufficiently Ubiquitous to Give a Directional Signal?* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008).

intimating the possibility of being linked to transcendent principles, including those of relationality.

4. THE DIFFICULTIES OF SEPARABILITY AND SITUATEDNESS SEPARATED

If the foundation of human existence is separability-amid-situatedness, going against our foundation will yield difficulties. In particular, seeing separability and situatedness as separated rather than mutually constitutive—allowing an overdose of one untempered by the other—damages the viability of both individuals and communities. We first discuss the problems of excessive situatedness and then of undue separability, the greater burden in advanced economies and often exported to developing nations.

Untempered by regard for the unique person, situatedness may become, as Hannah Arendt diagnosed, a means of suppression, the collapse of the person into the mass under authority's boot.³¹ Within groups, it serves to buttress existing power structures, "old boys clubs," and prejudices and to stanch change. Among groups, it yields binary, us-*vs.*-them thinking that justifies aggression. Peter Berger was right to note that those who too sharply criticize modern separability "should pause and question whether he wishes to include in the denunciation the specifically modern discoveries of human dignity and human rights."³² Though the modern era did not first discoverer of human dignity or rights, it has ensured them for broad sectors of the population.

Like Arendt, Berger focuses on the grip of situatedness top-down, but the grip from the crowd too is pernicious. Keith Thomas has described early modern villages as dominated by "the tyranny of local opinion and the lack of tolerance displayed towards non-conformity or social deviance."³³ In these villages—where "ethnic and religious solidarity and attendant intolerance [...] provided the

³¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origin of Totalitarianism* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace, 1973), p. 478.

³² Peter Berger, 'On the obsolescence of the concept of honor', *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XI (1977), pp. 339–47.

³³ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 527.

atmosphere”³⁴—one finds also the *mix* of tyranny from the top and crowd. That is, both conformity pressures and the sort of top-down control that the counter-Enlightenment Louis de Bonald meant when he sought to replace modern empiricism, or “the authority of evidence,” with “the evidence of authority.”³⁵

In short, situatedness absent separability may become what Luigino Bruni calls the group as “a gigantic I,”³⁶ conformist and repressive, vitiating personal talent and initiative. Protests against authoritarian control in China, Latin America, Iran, and the Arab world reflect the top-down problems that Arendt describes. Protests against conformity pressures and oppression from the crowd are seen in many elements of the #metoo movement, in efforts for LGBTQ inclusion and in the continuing work against racial and religious prejudice.

By contrast, separability untempered by situatedness has the detractions of what Charles Taylor calls “the immanent frame.” The individual’s detachment from the group and one’s environment is foregrounded, and the mutual constitution of separability with situatedness dims. One sees one’s circumstances immanently, lacking an overarching picture of the reciprocal impact between oneself and surrounding world. Owing to the scientific and technological advances of early modernity, Taylor notes in *The Secular Age*, a sense of place within nature and among other persons all in a larger cosmos was replaced by the thrill of detached autonomy and lordship over nature.³⁷ Francis Bacon talked of subjecting nature to impediments and constraints; Leibniz, of the “rack” and “torture” until nature yielded to man. The new fascination with the power of human reason (for instance, to turn nature into an obedient tool) contributed to rationalist and idealist epistemologies and an inflated sense of self-sufficiency in the “immanent” world.

On Taylor’s account, as science brought the advantages of innovation and rising living standards, the disadvantages of an enlarged sense of self-sufficiency came alongside. One was a diminution in the value of group effort for a common

³⁴ Barry A. Shain, *The Myth of American Individuals: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 64.

³⁵ David Klinck, *The French Counterrevolutionary Theorist, Louis de Bonald (1754–1840)* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1996).

³⁶ Luigino Bruni, *The wound and the blessing: Economics, relationships and happiness*, trans. N.M. Brennen (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012), p. 59.

³⁷ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

future and its replacement by instrumental, contractual arrangements for individual pursuits and benefit. Producers and suppliers, for instance, may indeed work with each other under the parameters of a task-specific contract, but this differs from the parties working together on an understanding of reciprocal dependence and common future. Another early modern shift was the idealization of individual endeavour and self-reliance and decreased concern with the impacts of those endeavours on society, today called 'externalities.' My-pursuits, my-firm, my-party as *habitus* and *Zeitgeist*. Such shifts yielded, Taylor observes, boosts to competition and the assumption that others are similarly competitive. These others thus need to be guarded against, often by rights-based legislation, in what Tocqueville called the "tumult" of "this incessant conflict of jarring interests—this continual stride of men after fortune."³⁸ The Hobbesian fear of grabbing by others sets one to inconsolable competition and an agonistic stance towards others.

Anomie too may follow, for idealized separability may leave one not freely flourishing but lost. As relational networks provide values and goals worth striving for, their breakdown leaves one free to choose but with little guidance as to why one choice is preferable to another. One becomes *not unsatisfied but unsatisfiable*. "The modern buffered self," James K. A. Smith writes, "is also sealed off from significance, left to ruminate in a stew of its own ennui."³⁹ Even assuming one could develop priorities and purposes separately, on one's own, one would lack the networks, policies, and institutions at the community and governmental levels to realize them.

In short, Taylor, Smith and others observe, with modernity's increasingly mobile populace—separation by opportunity or enforced by land enclosures, the job hunt, or other duress—ties to the commons thinned. Indeed, the commons itself faded in priority along with notions of our networked impact and responsibilities. As Narvaez observes,

Economics, since the Enlightenment and especially since the world wars intentionally disacknowledges relationships to others. The contrast extracted by European history seems to

³⁸ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: The Library of America, 2004, [1830–35]), Vol. II, Ch. X, pp. 522–529, quote at p. 524.

³⁹ James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), p. 64.

break in fact with all the anthropology of the other cultures':
 ... we have maximized procedures that keep us from always
 owing, always depending, always giving back' (Latour 2013:
 449). Such theory breaks the gift economy that rules the
 natural world—the cycle of giving and taking.⁴⁰

A few examples from current political economy

Today, undue separability is one way to describe the neo-liberal worldview that individual, entrepreneurial action taken in relatively unregulated, competitive markets is the best generator and distributor of societal resources. We are not suggesting that neo-liberalism's disadvantages, highlighted by Thomas Piketty and fellow economists, emerge solely from such separability.⁴¹ Rather, our argument is that the idealization of separability emerged synergistically with modern changes in technology and epistemology. This idealization in turn reinforced those changes to further separability and diminished concern for the common good.

To be sure, certain periods throughout the modern era have had greater appreciation for the commons—for instance, the period from Teddy and Franklin Roosevelt through Lyndon Johnson in the USA and many aspects of the post-1945 settlement built by both Christian and Social Democrats in Europe. Yet the present emphasis on my-pursuits, my-firm, my-group—a '*solo social* imaginary' vaunting the individual or the group as the "gigantic I"—is an untenable paradox.

Current economic practices emerging from such a 'solo social' include the low capitalization and high-risk instruments of lightly-regulated finance sectors, which seek soaring profits for certain investment houses but have little concern for societal impacts built into them.⁴² These were seen in both the 2008 Great

⁴⁰ Narvaez, *Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality*, p. 182; the quote is from Bruno Latour, *Modes of existence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013) p. 449.

⁴¹ Thomas Piketty, *Le capital au XXI^e siècle* (Paris: Ed. Seuil, 2013), trans. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, tr. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Branko Milanovic, *The Haves and the Have-Nots. A Brief and Idiosyncratic History of Global Inequality* (New York: Basic Books, 2011); Joseph Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013).

⁴² David J. Rothkopf, *Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making* (London: Little, Brown & Company, 2008); Cynthia Freeland, *Plutocrats: The Rise of the New Global Super-Rich and the Fall of Everyone Else* (London: Penguin, 2013).

Recession and in the cyclical booms and busts of the present economic settlement, as even conservative economists acknowledge.⁴³ A second practice is privatised Keynesianism, whereby the public sector shifts its responsibilities onto individuals.⁴⁴ As real wages remain stagnant, citizens incur ever-more debt to pay for what should be common good resources such as education and health care. The loss of these common resources further hollows out the sense of a shared society and future. A third practice is the out-sourcing of manufacturing and service sectors while the outsourcers bear few obligations to worker retraining or regional re-development in the 'left behind' areas. This has been a source of a race to the bottom in wages, labour conditions, and environmental protection⁴⁵ and has been a factor spurring recent populism.

Another practice is tax flight, where multi-nationals incorporate in low-tax locations and contribute little to the areas in which they operate and on whose infrastructures they rely. A fifth is bonus structures that reward high financial turnover and high share prices. These operate as perverse incentives for management not to invest in long-term growth and innovation but to buy back shares, thereby artificially inflating the company's share price and their bonus payments.⁴⁶ As these profits are often under-taxed owing to corporate tax loopholes, local and national governments have fewer resources for re-training, regional re-development, research, and infrastructure on which these corporations rely.

Ironically, under these conditions, certain markets have become not competitive but monopolized. Intellectual property—patents, trademarks, and copyrights—is increasingly held by a small sub-set of corporations for longer periods of time, resulting in high profits rates. This is especially evident in the pharmaceutical, hi-tech, biotechnology, and entertainment industries. Higher

⁴³ Charles Kindleberger, *Manias, Panics, and Crashes: A History of Financial Crises*, 5th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2005).

⁴⁴ Colin Crouch, 'Privatised Keynesianism: An Unacknowledged Policy Regime,' *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, Vol. 11, no. 3 (August 2009), pp. 382–399.

⁴⁵ Jacob S. Hacker, *The Great Risk Shift: the New Economic Insecurity and the Decline of the American Dream*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁴⁶ David Sainsbury, *Progressive Capitalism: How To Achieve Economic Growth, Liberty and Social Justice* (London: Biteback, 2013).

prices for consumers and a ‘great divestiture’ have followed.⁴⁷ Monopoly corporations, other big businesses and banks, and network platforms (Amazon, Facebook and Google) benefit as well from ‘monopsony,’ the power to dictate prices to suppliers for substantial corporate benefit regardless of impact on others in the supply chain, on users, or on the common good.⁴⁸

Finally, under conditions of excessive separability, political economists such as Mancur Olson and Elinor Ostrom note, individuals and societal groups who have an interest in acting together are often unable because of the vested interests of persons or groups who have their own but not the common benefit in mind—who see themselves as separated from the commons or for whom the commons never appears as a concern.⁴⁹ Such parties may be more effective in implementing self-benefitting policies because they are fleeter, have greater resources, or have lower costs than larger, unorganized groups have when arguing for their position. This not infrequently leads to minority or sectional interests (and their lobbies) dominating the economic and political arenas by capture of legislative and regulatory bodies.

This ‘collective action problem’—the power of minority interests to hobble advocacy for broad-based goods—is aggravated by legislation and regulations that grant management of common-pool resources to private corporations. It may be aggravated also by state nationalisation as this allows the central state to dictate to all sectors and regions, hobbling local and other intermediary groups. Both models, privatisation and hyper-nationalisation, may undermine the participation of individuals and their

⁴⁷ Massimo Florio, *The Great Divestiture: Evaluating the Welfare Impact of the British Privatizations 1979–1997*, new ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

⁴⁸ Barry C. Lynn, *End of the Line: The Rise and Coming Fall of the Global Corporation* (New York: Doubleday, 2005); idem., *Cornered: The New Monopoly Capitalism and the Economics of Destruction* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2010).

⁴⁹ Mancur Olson, *Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons. The evolution of institutions for collective action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

representative groups—intermediary, civil society institutions—in policy making and common-pool resource distribution. Below we suggest an alternative.

5. GOING WITH SEPARABILITY-AMID-SITUATEDNESS AND THE COMMONS

Because persons are distinct entities in networks of relation, a social imaginary that accounts for these together—that goes with the grain of humanity's foundational inter-connectedness—yields more productive outcomes than one that does not. The question becomes, Narvaez writes,

which worldview do we select and, thereby, which type of society do we create—one that emphasizes cooperation or one that emphasizes competition? [...] modern life is set up against full engagement [...]. Individualistic striving for materialistic goods is encouraged over other values (which elevates inequality, crime, and ill-health).⁵⁰

Accounting for separability and situatedness together requires not an economic or legal codex but a process of reciprocal consideration, of seeing and *seeing to* the networks of relations and physical infrastructures that inform individual identity and broad-based opportunity. Though touted as the guru of greed, Adam Smith proposed just this: in markets as in all of society, he wrote, each should “endeavour, as much as he can, to put himself in the situation of the other, and to bring home to himself every little circumstance of distress which can possibly occur to the sufferer.”⁵¹

Reciprocal consideration brings out two things: common needs/goals and differences. If societies are to avoid the ills of *separated-ness*, differences need be approached with attention to the inter-linkedness of human life and future. This does not suggest ceding one's views or granting others any and all desires but rather a process of understanding how others have come to their fears, needs, and

⁵⁰ Narvaez, *Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality*, p. 214.

⁵¹ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. Raphael and A. Macfie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976 [1759]), p. 21.

hopes and how we have come to ours such that this reciprocal understanding underpins policy.

Thus, politics need be concerned *first* about fostering reciprocal consideration in norms, education, societal practices, and policy, without which the present neo-liberal momentum, though recent in human history, will continue. Minority-interest capture is likely and public resources will be commandeered for elites rather than for broad-based flourishing. The task of politics is to ask: do societal arrangements cultivate among the citizenry, its leaders, and the next generation an understanding of our interdependent, reciprocal situation? Do institutions at the community, regional, and national levels provide the means for economic development, problem-solving, and decision-making based on the interdependence of those involved? How can politics take into account the links between the public and private and, moving away from the binary, how can it foster private support networks in communities, families, and religious networks that may also work with public institutions?

To be sure, policies and practices that achieve these goals do not proceed by normativity and consensus alone, absent law. Such an idealized view may underplay the heft of current neo-liberal momentum and thus the effort needed to return our societal focus to the commons, to persons amid their situations and relations. It may also underplay the differences among persons and groups in aims and needs, and on a separability-amid-situatedness view, sameness cannot be a requirement of reciprocal consideration. To the contrary, our situatedness among *different* people is what must be accounted for in policy and praxis.

Law is in play also because it is a part of the social imaginary that guides more?s and conduct. In an imaginary where substantial separability and competition are normative, law will reflect and reinforce what Russell Pearce and Eli Wald call “autonomous self-interest” and the view of lawyers as “hired guns” who try to get away with as much as possible for their clients’ benefit and their own.⁵² By contrast, under an imaginary of the commons—where separability-amid-situatedness and reciprocal consideration are foundational premises—law will

⁵² Lawrence A. Cunningham, ‘A prescription to retire the rhetoric of “principles-based systems” in corporate law, securities regulation, and accounting’, *Vanderbilt Law Review*, Vol. 60 (2007), pp. 1409–1494, quote at p. 1423.

reflect and promote “relational self-interest.”⁵³ The interests of client and lawyer are here seen as woven into the interests of society and its future. It is “the view that all actors are inter-connected, whether [as] individuals [or in groups] ... [and] cannot maximize [their] own good in isolation.”⁵⁴

Law, on such a view, is a means to achieve common goals and projects, to further one's goals ‘woven into’ shared societal ones. The agonistic framework of the law suit is understood not as a first but as a last resort when negotiations and other means of addressing conflict have failed. Importantly, the imaginary of the commons yields first-resort, usual practices of reciprocal consideration, preempting an agonistic framework and constituting concern for the common good into regular legal praxis.

6. EXAMPLES OF POLICY IDEAS FOR A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE COMMONS

From a more practical perspective, the guiding principle of the commons—reciprocity and mutual benefit based on shared interests and a common future—contrasts with both the excessive separability of many markets today *and* with the excessive situatedness of bureaucratized governmental control. The imaginary of the commons seeks instead to unlock resources that are generated by building long-term relationships in the community, nation, and internationally (through governments, trans-national partnerships, and NGOs) based on the active participation of persons and groups. They provide a counterweight to the central state *and* ‘free market’ as they promote individual agency, a degree of local self-government, and international associations large enough to address global-market practices of ‘separability.’

⁵³ Russell G. Pearce and Eli Wald, ‘The obligation of lawyers to heal civic culture: Confronting the ideal of incivility in the practice of law’, *University of Arkansas Law Review*, Vol. 34 (2011), p. 17.

⁵⁴ Russell G. Pearce and Eli Wald, ‘Rethinking lawyer regulation: How a relational approach would improve professional rules and roles’, *Michigan State Law Review*, Vol. 2012 (2014), pp. 513–536, quote at p. 514.

Therefore, the first idea for an economics and politics of the commons is to strengthen the autonomy and political power of democratically self-governing intermediary institutions so that they and the individuals within them can act alongside the state and market. Such bottom-up ‘collective action’ (Olson) offers an alternative to the policies of nationalisation (top-down situatedness), which has often led to inefficiencies and bureaucratized “handling” of people. It suggests an alternative also to privatization (separability), which may yield policies that favour elites, allow minority-interest capture, and are remote from the needs of citizens.

Connected with this is our second idea: a broad-based sharing of risks and rewards throughout the economy. Emerging from the idea of reciprocal impact and reciprocal responsibility throughout society, this risk-and-rewards distribution contrasts with immunizing private profit against both common good obligations (education, infrastructure development, etc.) and national financial loss and debt—the excessive separability that was a source of the 2008 financial crash.

We begin our discussion of risk-and-reward sharing with debt because soaring personal indebtedness is a key feature undermining the common good. In fact, creditors and debtors have *shared* interests—for example, in preserving the value of company assets for future profits, dividends, and jobs. Thus when large debt accrues, a mutualized, reciprocal model would argue for the partial conversion of debt into equity to protect companies against bankruptcy for the sake of both company financial health and worker employment. Large, institutional shareholders who are creditors would be bailed-*into* the company as investors in order to save failing banks rather than banks being bailed out by taxpayers’ money (as was done in 2008–09). The prospect of a bail-in may temper risk-taking by bank management and would spread the costs of saving businesses more equitably among large shareholders (with some public contribution). Moreover, converting some debt into equity turns shareholders into longer-term investors and may reduce the number of short-term speculators besetting a company. Those seeking short-term wins are usually disinclined to invest where they might become part of a long-term bail-in. Thus, the interests of shareholders become more closely aligned with the long-term interests of stakeholders—managers, employees, suppliers, and consumers—especially if management bonuses are linked to long-term rather than short-term performance.

Another example of risk- and profit-sharing is better 'value chains' grounded in trust and shared decision-making among stakeholders as they discuss risks and profits. While employee 'compliance' remains necessary for corporate performance, it is insufficient for a well-running company as it can undermine mutual trust and cooperative behaviour within the firm. Therefore, it is productive and profitable for companies and industries to involve the main stakeholders in decisions regarding risks and profits, including remuneration, working conditions, and business strategy.

Such discussions might bring about 'living wage' cities and regions, where all workers are paid wages that support them and their families without individuals having to take on second jobs or turn to welfare.⁵⁵ They might also more equitably distribute profits by establishing a link between salary increases and productivity growth for workers and management. While the economic fruits of increased productivity today often accrue to top management and large shareholders, the proposed model would more fairly distribute productivity benefits, reducing employee dependence on credit and increasing their motivation, innovation, job retention, worker willingness to pursue further training, and employer willingness to invest in workers so that they have the skills to share in business decisions, risks, and rewards.

We also propose a new public 'trust' to replace the current patent system, which favours large corporations over small- and medium-sized businesses and social enterprises. A public trust for pooling technological advances would benefit business more equitably and, preserving their patent rights, help smaller and new enterprises grow.

As the work of Michael Porter and Mark Crane shows, a focus on reciprocal consideration and 'shared value'⁵⁶—strongly connecting worker and societal concerns to company policies and profit (beyond the window-dressing of much Corporate Social Responsibility)—means greater attention to 'externalities.' This has been shown to improve not only worker and community well-being but

⁵⁵ John A. Ryan, *A Living Wage: Its Ethical and Economic Aspects*, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1914); and *Distributive Justice: The Right and Wrong of Our Present Distribution of Wealth*, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1927).

⁵⁶ Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Crane, 'Creating Shared Value', *Harvard Business Review*, Jan.–Feb. (2011), pp. 2–17.

company profitability. Firms as ruthless and monopolistic as Nestlé in Europe, Unilever in the United Kingdom, and Wal-Mart in the United States are starting to see the costs of socially and environmentally unsustainable practices. If one over-controls employees, (too much compliance, too little trust and shared decision-making), if one frequently hires and fires workers, pays suppliers as cheaply as possible, buys out local rivals, and disregards local communities and the environment, the costs in broken trust, ill will, and damaged corporate reputation outstrip benefits. One is left with unreliable, unmotivated workforces, poor-quality suppliers, botched component parts, misdirected shipping, the resulting drop in demand, and diminished local talent in increasingly impoverished and undesirable habitats.

Such problems often arise in cases of consolidation through mergers-and-acquisitions and the creation of global supply chains, which have additional control problems of their own. As Barry Lynn has shown, this includes outsourcing to a single supplier, which then dominates a whole sector. For example, there are vast trading companies that supply all the carmakers and supermarket chains and are thereby ‘too big to fail.’⁵⁷ This in turn induces a ‘race to loot and scoot’—increasing profit margins by squeezing wages—before the system threatens to implode and to take down the whole economy, as with the 2007–08 financial crash. Corporate consolidation also yields other forms of concentration of ownership and control. In 2017, two-thirds of the total number of sectors across developed economies were characterized by a greater concentration of ownership and control than in 1997. This includes many of the old industries, including tobacco, food, construction, retail, the car industry, and Wall Street. These and other sectors have more than one producer but the dominant players are in fact giant trading firms, designed to govern entire production systems, like Wal-Mart. They do not so much eliminate competition as shift it from a horizontal plane—competition with other producers or providers—to a vertical plane—competition with workers, suppliers, customers, and the communities where businesses are located. None of this is compatible with a political economy of the common good that preserves the shared wealth of the ‘commons’ and enables all to participate in it.

⁵⁷ Lynn, *Cornered: The New Monopoly Capitalism and the Economics of Destruction*.

Reciprocity among businesses, regions, and consumers would need also a greater diversity of banks so that capital is channelled not only into existing large firms but into small- and medium-sized firms throughout the country and so that all sectors of the economy and a wide variety of work are supported. One option is to create regional investment banks funded by both public and private sources and managed by a tripartite structure of government, employers' associations, and trade unions. Another option is mutualized banks, local credit unions, and community-based investment trusts.⁵⁸

Public-private investment banks might be dedicated to certain regions or industry sectors and linked to corresponding professional associations in those areas. Such associations would guarantee among members minimum standards in production quality, labour conditions, and trade. They could also develop region- or sector-wide training programs that fuse the teaching of academic skills with technical training and help instil a sense of vocation throughout their sector, which would in turn strengthen responsible business behaviour. Membership in a sector-wide association could be required for a professional license, but to avoid association-monopolies, employers and employees would choose from a range of associations in their industry. This would also diversify the range of employers' associations and trade unions (many of which suffer from bosses who neglect the views and interests of their ordinary members).

Following from the above, a social imaginary of the commons would revise corporate law to make social purpose and decision- and profit-sharing the conditions for obtaining an operating license. For example, the 2006 UK company law stipulates social responsibility as the entrepreneur's legal obligation, but it is subordinate to profit-maximisation. A revised law would link economic profit to societal benefit, which would mean that companies either voluntarily develop common-good projects, such as environmental protection, apprenticeships, and through-life training, or else pay into a national fund that finances such initiatives.

Changes in the law would also replace the current corporate incentive structure with one that awards and rewards the common good. That is, behaviour that is

⁵⁸ Adair Turner, *Between Debt and the Devil. Money, Credit, and Fixing Global Finance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); John Kay, *Other People's Money: Masters of the Universe or Servants of the People?* (London: Profile, 2015).

about doing a job well for the sake of all those affected by a job well done. Awards refer to public recognition of societally beneficial practices that are not an expected *quid-pro-quo* within contractual exchange (though they may be desirable). Rewards denote public recompense for behaviour that blends self-interest with social benefit; they include the possibility of monetary payment such as tax breaks or preferential treatment in government procurement.

Crucially, businesses that provide for the common good could be given membership in prestigious professional associations known to uphold higher common good standards, which could give these businesses a market advantage. This would promote competition in quality, excellence, and ethos.

In sum, the long-term health and profitability of businesses become more likely with common-good, mutualized policies because they go with the grain of our separability-amid-situatedness. Such policies should not, therefore, be thought of as “coming from without” and as external *constraints on* business but rather as *coming from* the situated, relational nature of business itself. With this understanding of the conditions for human flourishing, including the flourishing of business, there would be far less need for draconian laws (top-down government regulation) or taxpayer-funded inducements, which deplete the common resource pool.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have argued for a social imaginary of the commons, separation-amid-situatedness, as an ontological basis for politico-economic ideas and praxis. This social imaginary—and not only economic formulae—is critical to our shared future because, while common-good economic and political policies are in development, they lack broad-based implementation. And they lack implementation, we suggest, because both large sectors of the public and its leaders have lost sight of our networked, relational ontology. In short, it’s not economic or technical know-how that’s missing but the undergirding social imaginary or worldview to support and sustain common-good praxis. Absent this, there is insufficient popular and political understanding of the inter-linkedness of business, communities, persons, and environment at the macro and micro levels: how does inter-linkedness affect *your*

job and neighbourhood and that of your family and friends? Without such popular understanding, there is not much culture of the commons from which common-good politics could emerge.

We thus return to the political tasks we believe are *first*: societal and educational institutions that promote public understanding of our interdependent, reciprocal situation; community and national agencies that foster economic development, problem-solving, and decision-making based on the inter-dependence of those involved; and political arrangements that link public and private efforts to build the common good and that draw on the creativity and energy of personal relationships that, as biology tells us, are our 'wiring.' Without this, we will ever be working against the grain of our natural situation that is also the basis for our shared culture.

CLIMBING THE DARK: William Desmond on Wonder, the Cave, and the Underworld

Steven Knepper

Plato's "quarrel" with poetry is well known. In the *Republic*, Socrates criticizes the Homeric epics, a cornerstone of Athenian education, for their obscene and ignoble depictions of the gods. He claims these depictions are likely to mislead the youth. Tragedies are not immune from Socrates' critique either. They stir unsavory emotions that unsettle the well-ordered soul. Most famously, Socrates critiques artistic imitation (*mimesis*). The painting or the poem is a copy of a copy of the Form. It is not anchored in real knowledge. A good carpenter can make a sound bed. A painter can make what appears to be a sound bed. The poet can describe a sound bed. But their depictions are misleading. Put either one in a workshop with tools and lumber, and they may well be at a loss. If they do construct a sturdy bed, it will be because they possess the art of carpentry, not because they are a painter or a poet. Mimetic art is alluring but misleads morally and cognitively. It appeals to an inferior part of the soul and is far removed from truth.

William Desmond is one of many scholars who argue that this account of Plato's relationship to art is too simplistic. There is ambivalence in the *Republic* and throughout the dialogues. There are also ironies that cannot be dismissed.

The dialogues themselves are poetic.¹ They make dramatic use of character and plot. They use myths like the story of the ring of Gyges. They also use images like the cave in the *Republic* or the winged chariot of the soul in the *Phaedrus*.² This suggests that the poetic image has an important place in both Plato's philosophy and philosophy as such, especially when trying to approach something as overdetermined as the Good. Desmond argues that no philosopher has bequeathed more poetic "imaginative universals"—a term borrowed from Giambattista Vico—to posterity than Plato:

But who has endowed the philosophical tradition more richly with its philosophical images, such as the Cave, the Sun, the winged soul, and so on? Do not these images present some of the imaginative universals of philosophy itself, to which thinkers return again and again, and not because [the images] are deficient in speculative reason but because something offers itself for thought that is in excess of the concept, even Hegel's.³

Such images spur continual thought and reflection. But they also, as Cyril O'Regan points out, involve "all levels of the self, the affective, sensory, erotic and somatic as well as the cognitive level."⁴ While Plato may be the great critic of poetry, he is also the great poetic philosopher.⁵ His work provides affordances for thinkers, like

¹ See Vittorio Hösle, *The Philosophical Dialogue: A Poetics and a Hermeneutics*, trans. by Steven Rendall (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).

² For a study of the winged chariot of the soul as an imaginative universal, see Douglas Hedley, *Living Forms of the Imagination* (London: T&T Clark, 2008). Desmond makes use of this imaginative universal throughout *Art, Origins, Otherness: Between Philosophy and Art* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003). In the concluding chapter art and religion become the wings of philosophy.

³ William Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness*, 19–20. Desmond's first chapter in this study explores Plato as a poetic philosopher. On the complexities and ambivalences in Plato's treatment of art, see also Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

⁴ Cyril O'Regan, "Repetition: Desmond's New Science," in *Between System and Poetics: William Desmond and Philosophy After Dialectic*, ed. by Thomas A. F. Kelly (Hants: Ashgate, 2007), 83. Desmond returns to Vico throughout *The Intimate Strangeness of Being: Metaphysics After Dialectic* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012).

⁵ Desmond often names Plato and Nietzsche together as great poetic philosophers, underlining a similarity between the former and his great antagonist.

Desmond, who are more interested in the porosity between philosophy and poetry than their quarrels.⁶

Desmond himself continually returns to the cave and its attendant symbols. It is one of the central philosophical images in his own wide-ranging project. Variations on it appear throughout his corpus, but this essay will explore perhaps the most prominent variation, one by which Desmond explores the possibilities of re-awakening wonder in a purportedly disenchanted world and of thereby affirming the goodness of being. In the tradition of Plato, Desmond uses ascent out of the cave as a metaphor for this re-awakening. Desmond notes that, after Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, philosophy has often been more interested in descent, in digging down beneath the cave in search of a dark origin in will. Desmond argues, though, that such an origin cannot yield the light that even Schopenhauer's stark project requires. Nor does it provide a convincing justification for Nietzsche's "yes" to life. As an alternative way of conceptualizing descent, Desmond reconsiders another ancient "imaginative universal"—the descent into the underworld of Orpheus, Aeneas, and Christ. Drawing on this imaginative universal, Dante and Shakespeare depict kenotic descents that are also paradoxically ascents, descents that undo the fixations and self-delusions of the will and allow for a rebirth of compassion and wonder. Ultimately, the example of Dante suggests that a widespread reawakening of wonder might require renewed porosity between philosophy, art, and religion.

ASTONISHMENT AND PERPLEXITY

At the heart of Desmond's project is a return to wonder as the departure point for philosophy.⁷ For Desmond the most basic form of wonder is not determinate

⁶ In another essay on Desmond, O'Regan writes, "If the vision of the Good in the *Republic* is central, the symbols which provide the context in which the resistance of transcendent reality to language and concept is communicated reinforces the necessarily symbolic character of all truth, for example, symbols of ascent and descent, fire, sun, cave, prison, shadow etc. The historical Plato represents only an opening. What is required is a deeper and more extensive performance of the symbolic resources of philosophy that realizes its intimate relation to literature," "The Poetics of Ethos: William Desmond's Poetic Refiguration of Plato," *Ethical Perspectives*, vol. 8, no. 4 (2001), 292.

⁷ On wonder, see Desmond, *The Intimate Strangeness of Being*, 260-300.

curiosity about how things work. It is instead an astonishment at the sheer *thereness* of being, at the mystery of things existing at all. This sort of wonder, of course, is not peculiar to philosophers. It is a primordial human experience. For Desmond it is an agapeic astonishment. It is not grasping but receptive. It entails a heightened awareness, a heightened openness or “porosity,” a patience of being (*passio essendi*) more basic than a striving to be (*conatus essendi*).

The experience of beauty can be a part of such astonishment, and a sense of release in the experience of beauty has of course been a recurring theme of the aesthetic tradition. Still, Desmond’s astonishment is not disinterestedness. It can be ecstatic. In the case of astonishment before the beautiful, one is drawn out of oneself. There is an eros at work in the openness, an eros not opposed to agape but companioned by it. Furthermore, in astonishment we are attuned to how being is not inert or indeterminate but aesthetically hyperbolic and overdetermined. There is a “too muchness” to it. It is more than we can take in or determinately word. It is qualitatively rich, charged with equivocal value beyond its use value for us.⁸ As Hopkins puts it in “God’s Grandeur,” “There lives the dearest freshness deep down things.”⁹ Such agapeic astonishment is often accompanied by gratitude and reverence. It carries with it an affirmation of the goodness of being.

Desmond thinks this kind of astonishment suggests an agapeic origin to being itself, an agapeic God.¹⁰ Dennis Vanden Auweele provides a useful gloss: “we find

⁸ See Desmond’s discussion of the hyperboles of being in *God and the Between* (Malden: Blackwell, 2008), 128–158. Some key works in eco-phenomenology are especially attuned to this qualitative richness. See, for instance, Erazim Kohák, *The Embers and the Stars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). In a different branch of phenomenology, there are interesting parallels between Desmond’s hyperboles and Jean-Luc Marion’s saturated phenomena. Cyril O’Regan discusses Desmond and the phenomenological tradition broadly, but also gives particular attention to parallels and differences between Desmond and Marion, in “Metaphysics and the Metaxological Space of Tradition,” *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, vol. 59, no. 3 (1997): 531–549.

⁹ Gerard Manley Hopkins, “God’s Grandeur” in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poetry and Prose*, ed. by K.E. Smith (Exeter: A. Wheaton & Co., 1976), 56.

¹⁰ See Desmond’s *God and the Between* and *Is There a Sabbath for Thought? Between Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005). This dimension of his thought has received extensive attention. See Richard Kearney, “Maybe Not, Maybe: William Desmond on God” in *Between System and Poetics*, 191–200; Christopher Ben Simpson, *Religion, Metaphysics, and the Postmodern: William Desmond and John D. Caputo* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Cyril O’Regan, “Naming God in *God and the Between*,” *Louvain Studies*, vol. 36 (2012): 282–301; Christopher Ben Simpson, “Theology, Philosophy, God and the Between,”

ourselves incapable of explaining an 'overfullness' on purely immanent terms, which refreshes our thought beyond its immanent self-insistence toward some enabling transcendence as other."¹¹ By agapeic origin Desmond means a "'too muchness' of enabling power—enabling power as letting the good of particulars and communities realize itself in one fashion or another."¹² Desmond's agapeic origin endows a plurality of beings with their own integrity and worth but also in integral relation to one another. As we will see, Desmond contrasts such an agapeic origin with the erotic origin of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche as will (to power).¹³ Desmond does not deny the imperatives of the will, but he sees these as subtended by an originating agapeic generosity that makes willing and self-transcendence possible as well as true service to the other. For Desmond we must receive an endowment of being before we strive to be, and to fixate only on striving for one's own sake is to risk a tyrannical will that not only runs roughshod over otherness but also cuts one off from sustaining reserves. The *conatus essendi* must be companioned by the *passio essendi*.

If this sounds too abstract, consider the sustaining reserves we access in sleep. For Desmond, sleep is a return to the porous *passio*. It is a primary example of how patience of being subtends striving to be. The striving can of course inflect sleep itself and cause nightmares. (Desmond points to *Macbeth*.¹⁴) But restorative sleep entails openness to what Desmond would call the agapeic energies of being. We might also consider the sun (especially given its resonance with Platonic myth) which spills capacitating energy onto the earth. Through an infinitely complex series of transformations and relations, this energy gives rise to the teeming

Radical Orthodoxy: Theology, Philosophy, Politics, vol. 1, nos. 1-2 (2012): 262-279; Dennis Vanden Auweele, "Metaxological 'Yes' and Existential 'No': William Desmond and Atheism," *Sophia*, vol. 52, no. 4 (2013): 637-655; and the essays gathered in *William Desmond and Contemporary Theology*, ed. by Christopher Ben Simpson and Brendan Thomas Sammon (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017).

¹¹ Vanden Auweele, "Metaxological 'Yes' and Existential 'No,'" 644.

¹² Desmond, *The Intimate Universal: The Hidden Porosity Among Religion, Art, Philosophy, and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 420.

¹³ For Schopenhauer, individuation is illusory representation—a magic lantern show put on by the will. In making the *passio essendi* more basic than the *conatus essendi*, Desmond positions himself against not only Schopenhauer and Nietzsche but also against their philosophical forefather Spinoza.

¹⁴ On sleep and *Macbeth*, see Desmond, *Is There a Sabbath for Thought?*, 33-72.

biodiversity of Earth. Desmond writes that the sun “enables the between to be, it shines on the between, enabling the beings in it to be and grow and to know.”¹⁵ The literal sun can be described as agapeic, and it is also an obvious symbol for an agapeic origin for being itself.¹⁶ In general, Desmond’s terminology tends to be anchored in such experiences of the particular. He is a metaphysician with a phenomenological bent, one who remains close to embodied experience.¹⁷ For Desmond philosophy itself requires a receptivity, a *passio* that lets being be and eventing happen before trying to give them determinate wording or systematic organization.

Crucially, Desmond does not simply oppose either the *passio* and the *conatus* or agape and eros. The first terms may be more basic, but they are intimately bound up with and help generate the latter. The *passio* is receptive, but it is not necessarily passive. Instead it is often experienced as a passion that seeds the *conatus*. We sleep (*passio*) and awake re-energized (*conatus*). While running one can catch a second wind where one’s self seems to dissipate—a companioning of *passio* and *conatus*. Likewise, as mentioned above, agapeic astonishment is itself seeded with eros. This eros can often lead to more determinate forms of wonder like perplexity and curiosity. There is a danger that this can in turn lead to a tyrannical eros or an instrumental mind that seeks to dominate otherness, but it can also give rise to Plato’s heavenly eros—a desire for the beautiful and the Good that draws us beyond our self. A beautiful landscape painting can render us still and silent before it, but astonishment can also seed a longing to be in such a place or a deeper longing for beauty as such.

¹⁵ Desmond, “Wording the Between” in *The William Desmond Reader*, ed. by Christopher Ben Simpson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 200.

¹⁶ Desmond thinks there are hints of an agapeic origin in Plato, but he does not claim that Plato’s Good can be simply equated with the agapeic origin.

¹⁷ This is also evident in his description of the human as an open, porous whole. This description has epistemological and ontological dimensions, but it is anchored in the body: “To breathe is to inhale and to exhale, to take in and to let loose, to incorporate and to free. Stop this rhythm of passing in and passing out, and death soon comes. If we are warm flesh, there is also a sweating, a porosity in the flesh itself. Close the pores, and the body overheats and closes down just through its own lack of access or openness to what is other to itself. We are in this breathing between all the time,” “Wording the Between,” 205. Our cells, our inner organs, our skin and sensory organs—all have their own integrity, but all are porous.

Yet if agapeic astonishment is primordial for Desmond, it is also easily lost. We are so intimately a part of being that we inevitably become inured to its strangeness. In our striving to be, we can recess our patience of being. This is a perennial human danger, but it has manifested in particular ways in modernity, where dominant technological and economic paradigms have created a widespread ethos of "serviceable disposability." Wonder is consequently reduced to curiosity about how things work, which in turn easily becomes an instrumentalizing stance, a curiosity about how things might work *for us*. Desmond quotes Wordsworth: "We murder to dissect."¹⁸ Being is disenchanted in this ethos, its value reduced to mere use value.¹⁹ Such critiques of course became central in twentieth century philosophy and social thought. We might think of Weber's "iron cage," Heidegger's "enframing" and "standing reserve," the "instrumental reason" critiqued by Adorno and Horkheimer, Marcel's "technical man," Voegelin's modern "Gnosticism," Ellul's "technological society," or Charles Taylor's "buffered self."

Desmond both draws on and contributes to this varied line of critique, but he cautions against describing the modern dominance of "serviceable disposability" as too complete. For Desmond humans can attempt to close off their openness. They can recess the *passio* and exaggerate the *conatus*. They can clog their porosity. A culture's dominant ethos of being, like the modern ethos of serviceable disposability, can act like an anesthetic or a distorting lens. But humans never cease to be open wholes. Wonder can still strike us anew and strike us despite ourselves—through the starry sky or the brilliance of fall foliage, through the face of a new love or a newborn child, even through a close brush with death. These constant eruptions of wonder may be one reason why Desmond uses "ethos" and "clogged porosity" rather than more rigid metaphors that suggest total closure. (Furthermore, the ethos of modernity is complex. It is inflected by countervailing

¹⁸ William Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned," in *Selected Poems*, ed. by Stephen Gill (New York: Penguin Classics, 2004), 61.

¹⁹ On "serviceable disposability," see Desmond, *Ethics and the Between* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 415-441. On the modern "ethos of being," which conceives of being as valueless yet is haunted by the possibility that it is actually evil, see Desmond, "Ethics and the Evil of Being," in *What Happened in and to Moral Philosophy in the Twentieth Century?: Philosophical Essays in Honor of Alasdair MacIntyre*, ed. by Fran O'Rourke (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 423-459.

elements. The dominance of serviceable disposability, for instance, has been challenged by an emergent ecological consciousness.) Still, Desmond does not discount the problems that accompany the ethos of serviceable disposability—from environmental destruction, to an exploitive commodification, to the loss of meaning and depth in life. Unexpected experiences of wonder can be restorative to the individual, but the dominant modern ethos of being makes it harder for them to be transformative, and especially transformative on the societal level. They can be easily dismissed as merely aesthetic or subjective rather than as instances of truer vision where reductive scales fall from our eyes.

There is another reason why we can easily lose our sense of astonishment. In the “between” of life we find not only hints of an agapeic origin but also strife and violence. Often they are overwhelming: wars, famines, epidemics, natural disasters. In the wake of world war and mass genocide, the twentieth century was haunted by the possibility that being was not neutral, as serviceable disposability assumes, but instead hostile or even evil. This is of course an ancient fear, one that can even spring up in the intimacy of beauty and catch us unawares. Consider Robert Frost’s unsettling sonnet “Design,” where the narrator is struck by a very different sort of wonder than agapeic astonishment when he discovers a white spider on a white flower feeding on a moth:

What had that flower to do with being white,
The wayside blue and innocent heal-all?
What brought the kindred spider to that height,
Then steered the white moth thither in the night?
What but design of darkness to appall?—
If design govern in a thing so small.²⁰

There is a “chiaroscuro” of light and shadow in the between, and this can lead not to agapeic astonishment but to an anxious perplexity, even a horrified perplexity. This sort of wonder animates Frost’s poem, and Desmond acknowledges that it too is essential to philosophy.

²⁰ Robert Frost, “Design,” in *Robert Frost: Collected Poems, Prose, & Plays*, ed. by Richard Poirer and Mark Richardson (New York: The Library of America, 1995), 275.

THE CAVE

A “chiaroscuro” also plays on the walls of Desmond’s cave of everyday experience. The perplexed philosopher could follow the Platonic path of ascent by looking to the light of the sun, by seeking to reaffirm the goodness of being without denying the realities of strife and violence.²¹ But Desmond points out that “*different directionalities*” are possible within the cave: “We can move up, we can stay where we are, we can also move down.”²² Desmond holds that many moderns have pursued the latter. They have burrowed down below the surface of the cave. They have sought an origin not in the light above but in the subterranean depths below—a dark origin. They “seem seized by the notion that our motion is not to come again to the surface of things but rather to descend below all surfaces where there is a truer darkness that the surface hides, even as the surface also shows some foreboding of it.”²³ Rather than seeking to reaffirm the goodness of being, the philosopher delves deeper into the horror of being, seeing this as the ultimate reality.

Schopenhauer and Nietzsche are key figures here.²⁴ Schopenhauer is a self-proclaimed follower of Plato, and Desmond finds the allegory of the cave particularly useful in sketching Schopenhauer’s project. He argues that Schopenhauer, before Nietzsche, offers an upside-down Platonism: “If we were to liken the world as representation to Plato’s Cave, could we liken Schopenhauer’s will to Plato’s Good? Quite the reverse. Will is no sun, but a dark original, darker even than the shadow land of representation. At first, it is more like a second underground, *beneath* the first underground as its origin, not above it as the Good.”²⁵ But we also need to double the image. There are two caves. We find ourselves in the cave of representation, and beneath it is the dark origin of the will,

²¹ For a suggestive “metaxological” approach to light, see Catherine Pickstock, “What Shines Between: The *Metaxu* of Light,” in *Between System and Poetics*, 107-122.

²² Desmond, *The Gift of Beauty and the Passion of Being: On the Threshold between the Aesthetic and the Religious* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2018), 69.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Desmond discusses Schopenhauer and Nietzsche throughout this work, but particularly relevant are the chapters on them in *Art, Origins, Otherness*, 131-208. See also the chapter on Schopenhauer in *The Gift of Beauty and the Passion of Being*, 164-195.

²⁵ Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness*, 131-132.

which is defined by blind “endless striving.”²⁶ Yet we are a cave of representation in our own right, and within us too are the subterranean depths of will, exerting profound but often disguised influence. (Freud, too, would go spelunking in this cave.)²⁷

Schopenhauer agrees with Silenus that it would be better not to have been born, but he does not think we are absolutely captive to the dark origin. We can escape the rack of boredom and lack. Art can give us at least a temporary respite through the release into disinterested beauty. Ascetic religion or a sober philosophy can offer practices and knowledge that allow for a more lasting renunciation of the will. This renunciation can even give rise to compassion. But Desmond points to difficulties here. He wonders how “any reversal [is] possible if the will as described is the primal dark origin? For then even the reversal of the will is itself in the evil of being—will-lessness is itself will—and all that this entails. It is worse than Luther’s bondage of the will, for there is no way out. Release from our will would seem to meet in every direction the will again, and hence it would be no escape from the evil of being, only a new encounter with the universal horror.”²⁸ This tension is evident in the theological language that Schopenhauer draws on to describe the experience of will-lessness. He uses “grace” to help describe the transformation from will to will-lessness, and he talks of “bliss” in the release into the latter. He of course qualifies these terms. Schopenhauer insists that will-lessness is an experience of pure negation and criticizes even the Buddhist concept of *Nirvana* for obscuring this.²⁹ Yet the language of grace and bliss suggest positive experience, as does the compassion that Schopenhauer claims accompany them.

The tension is particularly pronounced in Schopenhauer’s account of beauty, which “can save us, if only episodically, from the devouring darkness of the will.

²⁶ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. by E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), 1:164.

²⁷ Desmond agrees that the imagery of the cave needs to be doubled. We are in the cave, and we are also a cave ourselves, a cave with subterranean depths. It contains some of what Schopenhauer and Freud says it does, but it is also the inner abyss where the Platonic daimon dwells and where Augustine greets the divine. It is the inner abyss where the heavenly eros is seeded that leads us to ascend.

²⁸ Desmond, “Ethics and the Evil of Being,” 443–444.

²⁹ See Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 1:359–412.

But how it can do so, is a good question.”³⁰ For Desmond the aesthetic has ontological bite. The experience of beauty is a primordial affirmation of being: “Schopenhauer is right in his description of the way beauty releases us but his explanation of this cannot account for this ontological pleasure. One might think here of music and the porosity—music and the flow of sounds, the secret history of the will, as Schopenhauer somewhere calls it: But why is this often so lovely, if the will is the horror he suggests it is?”³¹ These possibilities for release suggest some light, some inherent goodness in being, but how can this be if the origin is inscrutably dark? Desmond wonders “whether at a certain limit some good ‘to be’ must be granted and we be released into its affirmation.”³² He notes that agape does make a brief, suggestive appearance in *The World as Will and Representation*,³³ but Schopenhauer never develops it into his broad account of our predicament.

Nietzsche, the vituperative critic of Plato and prodigal student of Schopenhauer, delves below the cave as well. Desmond notes that in the opening line of *Daybreak*, Nietzsche describes himself as a “subterranean man,” “one who tunnels and mines and undermines.”³⁴ His is a dark erotic origin as well, a voracious will (to power). Where Schopenhauer says no, though, Nietzsche wants to say an ecstatic yes. Yet Desmond writes, “We are still below the ground of the cave when Nietzsche tries to reverse the ‘yes’ and ‘no’ of Schopenhauer. The basic description of life persists. We live in foreboding of the Medusa below the surface—the horror that turns us to stone.”³⁵ Art has an important role for Nietzsche vis-à-vis the dark origin as well. In his early writings he offers an “aesthetic theodicy.” In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Apollonian art shields us from the terrifying truth of the origin. Dionysian art intoxicates us on its energies and allows us to say a more vital yes. The metaphor of intoxication is suggestive, though. If you drink too deeply, you might poison yourself. A fuller reckoning with the origin would be fatal.

³⁰ Desmond, *The Gift of Beauty and the Passion of Being*, 71.

³¹ Desmond, *The Intimate Universal*, 309.

³² Desmond, “Ethics and the Evil of Being,” 444.

³³ See Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 1:375–376.

³⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.

³⁵ Desmond, *The Gift of Beauty and the Passion of Being*, 85.

There are many turns in Nietzsche's body of work, and he is a self-professed wearer of masks. He tries to distance himself more decisively from Schopenhauer in his later writings. In *Human, All Too Human* he attempts to move past the metaphysics of appearance and reality (with their vestiges of Schopenhauer's "representation" and "will"). Desmond argues, though, that the break with Schopenhauer is never complete and that the dark origin remains in Nietzsche's project. He points to an aesthetic theodicy re-emerging in Nietzsche's later writings. *Twilight of the Idols* revisits some of the themes of *The Birth of Tragedy*. There are echoes of Schopenhauer's claim that "eternal becoming, endless flux, belong to the revelation of the essential nature of the will"³⁶ when Nietzsche calls the Dionysian "an excess of force"³⁷ in *Twilight of the Idols* or when, in the writings posthumously collected as *Will to Power*, he calls the world "a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm, iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself [...]"³⁸ Throughout his later works Nietzsche attempts to "sing the world beyond good and evil, in all its joy and monstrousness, its rapture and suffering," to embrace the innocence of becoming.³⁹ Desmond shares Nietzsche's desire to say "yes," but he wonders if Nietzsche finds a persuasive way to the yes:

Nietzsche, properly interpreted, and this means sometimes interpreted against himself, is on the right track in asking about the ultimate amen; but he is betrayed by the whole horizon of his thinking. What is this horizon? I note four major aspects: First, it is defined by the view of valueless being, worse, by being as pain, even horror, at bottom. Second, by a view of the protective, recuperative power of creative will to power as affirming, *despite* worthlessness and horror. I call this whistling in the dark. Third, by a totalizing claim with respect to will to power (*all being* is will to power [...]). But this totalized claim cannot sustain in full the sought affirmation. A different consent to otherness is needed—beyond the will to power that either dominates the other or wills its own will. We need an agapaeic origination and self-

³⁶ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 1:164.

³⁷ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1982), §4, 560.

³⁸ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968), §1067, 550.

³⁹ Desmond, *God and the Between*, 27.

transcendence. Fourth, by the fact that our affirming will to power collapses in view of the totalized will to power: if all being is valueless, we too are valueless finally, in the valueless whole, and all our brave, heroic valuing is swallowed by the valueless whole. Inference: for the Nietzschean affirmation to make any sense at all, there must be some *inherent hospitality* of being to good."⁴⁰

Desmond notes that in his accounts of festive affirmation Nietzsche can sound more agapeic notes, and that Nietzsche is attuned to positive possibilities of selving that Schopenhauer denies.⁴¹ Again, Desmond wonders if the dark origin can ultimately provide even the spare light needed by the spelunkers.

Nietzsche, of course, wants to stay true to the earth. Even when he delves beneath the ground, he aims to return to "daybreak." Desmond responds, with the Platonic myth in mind, that the surface of the earth is lit by the sun. And while life often has storms and clouds—the chiaroscuro of light and shadow—the shadows themselves necessitate a source of light. The Platonic legacy is often accused (and perhaps most vociferously by Nietzscheans) of metaphysical escapism. Platonists want to leave the surface behind, to ascend from the phenomenal to the noumenal. The theory of the Forms denigrates the material world and especially the body. Historically, some strands of Platonism have tended in this direction. (Desmond is undoubtedly more affirmative of the body than ancient Platonists.) Still, he thinks that Platonism is often caricatured. Matter may be ontologically deficient for Platonists, but when given form it is shot through with the overflowing excess of beauty and the Good.⁴² Consider Platonic and Neoplatonic accounts of beauty,

⁴⁰ Ibid., 27-28. Furthermore, if there is a primal goodness of being, then one cannot reach the innocence of becoming by going absolutely beyond "good and evil." One would end up not just sloughing off convention but also betraying the primal good upon which we depend. Again, Macbeth is illustrative. He tries to go beyond good and evil but ends up murdering sleep—the primal goodness of the *passio*. There is no longer a trustful repose for him. The true innocence of becoming is not will-to-power but a companioning of *passio* and *conatus*, with the former being fundamental.

⁴¹ In "Metaxological 'Yes' and Existential 'No,'" Vanden Auweele puts pressure on Desmond's reading of Nietzsche on this point of selving. He argues that Nietzsche recognizes the excessive origin, but does not affirm it. Nietzsche's existential "no" is an atheism in the name of autonomy. Vanden Auweele is a sensitive and sympathetic reader of both Desmond and Nietzsche.

⁴² Douglas Hedley explains, "The material realm, for the Neoplatonist, is—though subject to decay—not alien to the soul because it is produced by the non-deliberative intelligence of the World-soul. The apparently inanimate exhibits intelligence. Our planet, and indeed the entire physical universe, is a dynamic and harmonious unity that mirrors the unity of the noetic

in which all forms shimmer or radiate: “The *eidos* shines on the surface of things to the looking that is mindful of the ‘look.’”⁴³ Desmond is concerned with the ancient philosophical task of “saving the appearances.” He has debts to the Platonic legacy, but he also has a phenomenologist’s close concern with happening. He, like Nietzsche, wants to stay true to the earth, to sing its song, and to say “yes.” He would ask, though, whether the dark origin of a Schopenhauer or a Nietzsche can ultimately do justice to how being manifests, most strikingly in agapeic astonishment but also in patient mindful attentiveness, as a community of singular beings charged with qualitative value. Another return to the cave will illustrate this:

Restoring what it means to stand on the earth and resurrect the surface of things puts one in mind, paradoxically, of the Platonic analogy of the cave. We live underground, and when freed we undertake a painful and blinding ascent to the surface of the earth, there to be able to behold a light only equivocally present under the surface. Platonic ascent is often now said to be treasonous to the surface of the earth, but we could read this ascent differently. Is it not the sun that enables the earth to be the dynamic, becoming, intelligible, indeed worthy and good reality it is? Without it not only the underground, but also the surface would be plunged into darkness. To live in the light of the sun we need to be on the surface and behold the shine on things.⁴⁴

This ascent does not involve leaving the world behind as much as re-awakening to it, seeing it anew and more truly, seeing its goodness.

cosmos. [...] Nature is a harmonious unity because it is an image or expression of the divine mind. It is weaker and less valuable than the Intellect, but nevertheless possesses its own derivative goodness—which Plotinus defends vigorously against the Gnostics.” *Living Forms of the Imagination*, 22. See also Stephen R.L. Clark, *Plotinus: Myth, Metaphor, and Philosophical Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), a work that challenges the view that Plotinus was as hostile toward the body as Porphyry claimed in his biography.

⁴³ Desmond, *The Gift of Beauty and the Passion of Being*, 68. Desmond also points to the *Timaeus*, where “the Demiurge is motivated to create out of a desire to make the world the *most beautiful and good possible*,” *Art, Origins, Otherness*, 220. One could also point to the Christian Neoplatonism descending from Dionysius the Areopagite to figures such as John Scotus Eriugena and the Victorines that proclaims the world a theophany. On Desmond’s relationship to this tradition, see Simpson, “Theology, Philosophy, God and the Between.” It would also be interesting to bring Desmond’s recent writings on beauty, life, and creation into conversation with Hildegard of Bingen’s concept of “viridity.”

⁴⁴ Desmond, *The Gift of Beauty and the Passion of Being*, 68.

If we return to Desmond's diagnosis of modernity, being is often seen as inert, as having no value beyond its use value, its "serviceable disposability." (Desmond does not make much of the shadow-casters in the cave, but that element of Plato's allegory seems useful here—our "ethos of being" is shaped by advertisements, consumerism, education, technological mediation.⁴⁵) We are struck by wonder, and we see things anew—the same things we have been viewing all along but through distortions. We may not literally ascend, but Desmond would claim that a mindful attention to the phenomena themselves, their mysterious *thereness* and aesthetic overdeterminancy, does raise the question of the origin. There is transcendence in staying true to the surface.

Yet in Plato's allegory there is also the return to the cave. How can the "ethos of serviceable disposability" be ruptured, a sense of value beyond use value restored? Desmond affirms that the philosopher must return to the cave, but the likelihood of the philosopher's success in awakening those still entranced is another matter. There is also a second sense in which we are bound to return to the cave. For Desmond, the equivocal chiaroscuro is never fully dissipated. It is constitutive of the human condition. What the ascent secures is not determinate knowledge so much as a renewed attunement to the agapeic dimensions of being, a renewed sense of the goodness of the "to be."

Heidegger argues that Plato's allegory of the cave both affirms the Greek conception of truth as disclosure (*aletheia*) and also introduces a conception of truth as correspondence. The latter ultimately comes to dominate the Western philosophical tradition.⁴⁶ Desmond challenges Heidegger's reading of both Plato and the wider tradition, but he agrees that a reductive ascent is possible, a reductive desire for truth that would reduce wonder to curiosity, that would treat the chiaroscuro as a problem rather than a mystery (to borrow terms from Gabriel Marcel). The aesthetic hyperbole, for instance, would become a problem of optics shorn of ontological significance and a sense of overdetermined worth. As Desmond explains, "Some searches for the Sun are resolved to turn the Cave

⁴⁵ See Paul Tyson's suggestive re-imagining of the cave in light of contemporary artificers in "The Politics of the Metaphysical Imagination. Critiquing Transnational Corporate Power via Plato's Cave." *Im@go. A Journal of the Social Imaginary*, vol. 1, no. 6 (2015): 151-170.

⁴⁶ See Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Cave Allegory and Theaetetus*, trans. by Ted Sadler (London: Continuum, 2009).

entirely into a glare of garish light: scientistic enlightenment. What is produced? A different darkness.”⁴⁷ This is not the sort of ascent he counsels: “Other searches for the Sun come more deeply to grant the truth of the Cave, the equivocal truth that will always be our lot as finite beings.”⁴⁸

THE UNDERWORLD

Desmond’s critique of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche is hardly a dismissal.⁴⁹ They are themselves great poetic philosophers, in large part because of their attunement to the excessiveness of being. They are also attuned to wonder in a way that many moderns are not. In *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer writes, “No beings, with the exception of man, feel surprised at their own existence [...] And [man’s] wonder is the more serious, as here for the first time it stands consciously face to face with *death*, and besides the finiteness of all existence, the vanity and fruitlessness of all effort force themselves on it more or less. Therefore with this reflection and astonishment arises the *need for metaphysics* that is peculiar to man alone; accordingly, he is an *animal metaphysicum*.”⁵⁰ This is not the wonder of agapeic astonishment, of course. It is the wonder of a darker perplexity, one stirred by death, destruction, and disappearance. This wonder is essential to philosophy too, and it is an unavoidable experience in life. We are struck by it just as we are struck by astonishment. In the ethos of serviceable disposability, such perplexity can be manipulated for economic or political ends, but these manipulations rarely involve a full confrontation with the questions of ultimacy that perplexity raises (since such questions might unsettle the ethos itself). Yet these questions haunt modernity. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche are among those who raise them directly and who confront the sufferings and horrors of life. And

⁴⁷ Desmond, *Is There a Sabbath for Thought?*, 277.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ In his introduction to the *William Desmond Reader*, Christopher Ben Simpson notes some of Desmond’s affinities with Nietzsche: “From Nietzsche [Desmond] gleans the recognition of becoming and the equivocal; the yea-saying, affirmative, Dionysian celebration of the finite and the earth; the critique of rational reductionisms, the nihilism of our merely human valuations; the poetic mode of philosophy (like Plato),” xiv.

⁵⁰ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 2:160.

while they may be hyperbolic, they are undoubtedly alert diagnosticians of self-delusion and hypocrisy.

In light of unavoidable perplexity, Desmond launches a second foray: Is there another form of descent that is also paradoxically an ascent? Perplexity can be simply debilitating. It can lead to crippling despair. Both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in their different ways want to provide us with a shield against this Medusa's head. Desmond points out that there are multiple possibilities for ascent and descent: "There are ways of going up that cast one down: hubris and downfall. There are ways of going down that lead up: redemptive passage through Hell—see Dante conducted by Virgil. There are ways of going up that do go up, ways of going down that go deeper down and don't come up."⁵¹ For Desmond perplexity is not necessarily opposed to agapeic astonishment. Perplexity often emerges out of astonishment, as one returns with new awareness to the equivocal chiaroscuro of existence. And astonishment can in turn emerge out of a perplexity that acts as "a kind of purgatory."⁵² In this sort of perplexity we might find ourselves carried down into dark depths, but the harrowing descent undoes our self-delusions and our fixations. Our *conatus* is humbled, and we are harshly returned to the *passio*, to a cracked open porosity. As Desmond puts it, we become as nothing. Yet this new porosity can open us to more than rending forces. We can also be reborn into a purified awareness of otherness, a new agapeic astonishment. This is akin to what Desmond calls "posthumous mindfulness": "Suppose we were to think from out of the future when we will be dead, about what is worthy of affirmation here and now [...] What would one love to behold again, behold with a kind of love? What would one mourn to see utterly destroyed? What are the nameless things we now love which we would delight to greet again?"⁵³ Desmond recommends that we cultivate such mindfulness as a practice, but in purgatorial perplexity an analogous

⁵¹ Desmond, *The Intimate Universal*, 310.

⁵² Desmond, *The Intimate Strangeness of Being*, 296.

⁵³ Ibid., 294. Desmond's "posthumous mind" echoes ancient spiritual practices in interesting ways, but for this essay's purposes, it especially invites comparison with Nietzsche's "eternal return." They are different in that Nietzsche's infinite repetition can feel like a curse, "the greatest weight," but they are similar in that they can also occasion affirmation. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche posits a demon that comes and tells you of the eternal return. You may "gnash your teeth," but there is another possibility: "Or did you once experience a tremendous moment when you would have answered him, 'You are a god, and never have I heard anything more godly,'" *The Portable Nietzsche*, 273-274.

(though harrowing) experience is unwillingly undergone. Perplexity can strip us of our pretensions and allows us to see anew, as if reawakened or reborn.

Desmond turns to two literary exemplars to explore this possibility. Consider Lear on the heath. He has been stripped of his power and humiliated. He is exposed to an unrelenting storm. Here at his nadir Lear is utterly perplexed, but there is a remarkable agapeic rebirth out of his perplexity. He finds himself overwhelmed with compassion:

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your looped and windowed raggedness defend
you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this. Take physic, pomp.
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them
And show the heavens more just. (III.4.32-41)⁵⁴

Obviously Lear's sufferings (and anger) are not over yet, but this rebirth on the heath arguably allows him to truly see and love Cordelia at the end of the play—to love her in her singularity, agapeically, and not for how she can indulge his willful aims (as in Act I). Importantly, this renewed love for Cordelia carries with it a renewed wonder for goods the earlier Lear would have likely brushed away. When Lear and Cordelia are captured, he takes consolation in an imagined life together of simple pleasures: “So we'll live,/And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh/At gilded butterflies [...]” (V.3.12-14). Indeed, Lear's reawakening is part of what makes Cordelia's loss so unbearable at the end of the play.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Folger Shakespeare Library/Simon and Schuster, 2015).

⁵⁵ Schopenhauer explores a similar dynamic. Most people will not achieve will-lessness through voluntary asceticism. “Therefore in most cases,” he claims, “the will must be broken by the greatest personal suffering before its self-denial appears. We then see the man suddenly retire into himself, after he is brought to the verge of despair through all the stages of increasing affliction with the most violent resistance. We see him know himself and the world, change his whole nature, rise above himself and above all suffering, as if purified and sanctified by it, in inviolable peace, bliss, and sublimity [...],” *The World as Will and Representation*, 1:392. Schopenhauer and Desmond seem to describe the same phenomenon, but they read its implications differently. Both emphasize an undoing of the *conatus*, but the result for Desmond

Desmond sees in the story of Lear the echo of another ancient imaginative universal, one with affinities to Plato's allegory—the descent into the underworld. With Lear “we are under the underground, below Plato's cave, where the light above earth does not penetrate. And yet deep down under, the intimacy is not avoided, for we are it, we are in it, and to be so is always to be companioned. The divine is there in the bowels of hell. Jesus harrows hell. Dionysus is also Hades. Orpheus sings in the underworld and the dead and the lords of the dead are moved.”⁵⁶ There can be traces of the agapeic even in the underworld. *King Lear* is set in pagan times, but the Christian allusions in Lear's speech on the heath are overt. In Christianity salvation lies through the Cross and Christ's descent into hell. Descent can be a sanctifying *kenosis*, and suffering that draws us closer to Christ can also issue in Christ-like compassion.

Dante's is the greatest literary descent into the underworld. At the beginning of the *Inferno*, Dante is perplexed in the dark wood of error. He tries to take the direct path of ascent, but this is closed off by the monsters of vice. The shade of Virgil arrives to guide him, but the path to paradise leads down through hell. In the descent, Dante encounters manifold possibilities of self-delusion, vanity, and viciousness literalized in the punishment of sinners. “In general,” as William Franke points out, “the punishment simply makes explicit and permanent the life-choice that is elected in committing the sin.”⁵⁷ Consider, apropos of Desmond's concern with affirmation, Dante's encounter with “the sullen” in Canto VII. They are trapped beneath slime, so Virgil must rehearse their speech for them:

“Sullen were we in the air made sweet by the Sun;
In the glory of his shining our hearts poured
a bitter smoke. Sullen were we begun;

is a renewed astonishment at the world and at beings in their singular worth. Desmond also discerns a renewed sense of the elemental kinship with being in such experience, but for Schopenhauer the result is a far more radical deindividuation. The secret obscured by representation is uncovered: “evil and wickedness, suffering and hatred, the tormented and the tormentor, different as they may appear to knowledge that follows the principle of sufficient reason, are in themselves one, phenomenon of the one will-to-live that objectifies its conflict with itself by means of the *principium individuationis*,” *The World as Will and Representation*, 1:394.

⁵⁶ Desmond, *The Intimate Universal*, 69.

⁵⁷ William Franke, *The Revelation of Imagination: From Homer and the Bible through Virgil and Augustine to Dante* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 323.

sullen we lie forever in this ditch.'
 This litany they gargle in their throats
 as if they sang, but lacked the words and pitch."
 (vii. 121-126)⁵⁸

Note here that the sin is in part a betrayal of the given, which entails a scorning of the "Sun" and the "shining" as gifts of God. Each encounter is an opportunity for searching reflection or even self-chastening on Dante's part. Kathleen Raine notes, "His journey follows a descending course through ever-narrowing circles, each representing some of the sins that deform the soul; and there, in each of the states, the poet is moved, now with pity, now with horror, to find persons he had known on earth. But each successive hell is at the same time a recognition of what lies within himself."⁵⁹

Dante's descent is kenotic. By the time he reaches the center of hell his own delusions are undone, his own porosity cleansed. This stands in marked contrast with the Satan that he encounters there. Desmond explains that "the frozen Lucifer is beyond all porosity, all permeability: fixed eternally in himself as himself—a parody of divine eternity."⁶⁰ Virgil and Dante climb down Satan's limbs and pass through a hole. Suddenly down has become up, a startling reminder to both Dante and the reader of the paradox of his journey. Now they climb quickly and emerge beneath the stars:

He first, I second, without thought of rest
 we climbed the dark until we reached the point
 where a round opening brought in sight the blest

 and beauteous shining of the Heavenly cars.
 And we walked out once more beneath the Stars.
 (xxxiv. 139-143)

The imagery suggests a rebirth for Dante, and the closing lines suggest a rebirth of astonished wonder at the "blest/and beauteous" stars. Guided by Virgil in his poem, Dante in turn acts as a guide for his readers as we join him on an inner journey that begins in and deepens *our* perplexity as we all as Dante's. It is a

⁵⁸ Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno*, trans. by John Ciardi (New York: Mentor, 1982).

⁵⁹ Kathleen Raine, "The Inner Journey of the Poet" in Raine, *That Wondrous Pattern: Essays on Poetry and Poets*, ed. by Brian Keeble (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2017), 99.

⁶⁰ Desmond, *The Gift of Beauty and the Passion of Being*, 97.

journey that feels like descent but is ultimately an ascent. We ascend out of the cave, and see the surface anew. If the journey begins in perplexity, it ends in renewed agapeic astonishment. "To come thus to the surface of things, after hell," writes Desmond, "we begin again to open to the marvel of things. We even begin to wonder if the saturated surface of things is the place of consecration where God gives himself for praise."⁶¹

Desmond's reflections on Dante suggest how the modern ethos of serviceable disposability may be challenged. The philosopher returning to the cave may not be strong enough alone, but a renewed porosity between philosophy, art, and religion may be.⁶² Obviously, there are marked differences between the theist Desmond and the atheists Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in this regard, but not absolute differences. Nietzsche, as a late Romantic, is preoccupied with the possibility of revivifying myth, with the possibility of art and philosophy pursuing this together. (Think of Wagner and Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*.) He is a key figure in the modern quest to find a substitute for religion in art. Crucially, though, he does not mean a modern conception of art. He excoriates "art for art's sake" in *Twilight of the Idols*. He means a primal art of myth and festive ritual, one in which we participate rather than simply observe. While they conceive of the festive differently, Nietzsche and Desmond both give it a preeminent place in their philosophy, and both associate it with affirmation. Desmond is closer to Schopenhauer, though, in bringing art, religion, and philosophy into relation. For Schopenhauer they are three means of gaining release from the will. Hegel also brings the three into relation, of course, but in at least one crucial way Desmond is closer to Schopenhauer than Hegel, since the latter obscures the mystery of being and focuses on the determinable while Schopenhauer is a philosopher of perplexity. Desmond sees art, religion, and philosophy as stewards of the mystery of being, as stewards of not just perplexity, but of astonishment as well. Art, religion, and philosophy can all betray that role, but together they offer some hope of rupturing the ethos of serviceable disposability.

⁶¹ Ibid., 98.

⁶² This is a major theme of Desmond's that spans his body of work. See especially *Art, Origins, Otherness*, 265-294.

BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY: Towards the Theological Implications of William Desmond's Thought *An Interview with John Milbank*

Philip Gonzales

PHILIP GONZALES [PG]: John, when and how, did you first encounter William Desmond's work?

JOHN MILBANK [JM]: Actually, it was first brought to my attention by David Bentley Hart who, in his inimitable way, said: 'You have never heard of Desmond? Read him at once'. I always do what David says, so I went away and read William, and I saw that he was, indeed, important.

PG: Would it be a safe to say that among the major living philosophers in Continental philosophy that William's work most resonates with the spirit of Radical Orthodoxy? And if so why?

JM: I think that is definitely the case. Really, for the quite simple reason that, I think, William Desmond has questioned the postmodern obsession with indeterminacy and difference. He has rightly said that's just another option, that's just another way of reading things. Whereas a lot of postmodern voices tend to suggest that the direction they're pointing in, is somehow the ultimate in terms of

critical suspicion. Not to see that they are, themselves, coating the world in terms of a certain preference and so on. In other words, what Desmond is pointing out is that to see everything in terms of difference is really just as rationalistic as to see everything in terms of some kind of rational unity. The idea that things are simply either the same, or their different, is also to remain confined within the idea that things are either universal or particular. The only Continental philosopher, I know of, who somewhat questions that is Agamben. Where he asks: Well isn't analogy the more radical possibility, where you go relationally from particular to particular? Or can a particular be also a universal and suggest the way to other particulars and can you can gather things together by combining particular with particular? But quite whether, those sorts of people—Agamben, Melandri, etc—in the end, stand for an analogical metaphysics is very unclear. I think, really, in the end, they don't. Whereas, Desmond obviously is standing for exactly that and this is very close to what Radical Orthodoxy has always been talking about. We have always been saying: yes, it's impossible to be dogmatic about things, everything is very fluid and very uncertain and so on. But, that doesn't necessarily point us in a nihilistic direction. It may more suggest that knowledge is always fragmentary, analogical, a sort of partial grasp of an always inaccessible plenitude of truth. And, in the wake of postmodernism, that's very much the way to try to recover a Catholic metaphysics. As you know so well, somebody like Przywara is already pointing in that direction. And I think Desmond is taking that project further. In a way, his category of the between is insisting on both analogy and participation and it is insisting both on sign and thing at the same time.

PG: Taking off on you mentioning Erich Przywara, one of the questions which I intended to ask is: If you look back upon the great towering figures of twentieth-century theology, which figure do you find that Desmond's thinking resonates with? I, personally, find it to be the work of Erich Przywara, namely, for the reason that both of them emphasize our suspended creatureliness, as well as both make use of dialectic in order to dynamize analogy into an open living real relationality, without thereby falling into dialectical closure. Likewise, both place great emphasis upon the asymmetry of the relationship between God and man. But an asymmetry which is there to make possible the *admirabile commercium*, or, a space

of living free exchange between God and man. My question, then, is would you agree with this assessment or do you see another theological figure in the twentieth-century that you think Desmond's thought has an elective affinity to?

JM: No, I would agree with you that, Philip. I think Przywara would be the most obvious person. But I further think there is a kinship with the thinkers of *Nouvelle Théologie* as well. Moreover, there is a profound connection between the stress on analogy, on the one hand, and the idea of a natural desire for the supernatural, on the other. It is in Przywara's phrase, a 'suspended middle' that best expresses this and that's what we are talking about. Because analogy is not simply a discourse on natural ontology, it covers both the natural and supernatural and, in a way, has to do with the dynamic between them. So, I exactly agree with you. The significance of Desmond's work is that he is dynamizing analogy. And that he is also bringing out what is always latent in analogy, that it is not a static thing or a measurable resemblance between two things. Rather, it is more about a tension between two things; that means you can only affirm analogy if the analogy is increased, if you like. If something is like God you have to make it more like God, that is, you have to make yourself more like God, for it to in any sense to work. And the crucial thing to see is that analogy understood that way is actually much more dynamic than dialectic. Dialectic is going to end in identity, or, in difference in the end and will, thus, not keep that play open. One of the things that we are needing to recognize, that again Agamben partially recognizes, but Desmond fully recognizes is this: That there is not really any mediation in Hegel. A lot of modern French thought has been about trying to escape from the dialectical because it is seen as mediatory and, therefore, on the side of identity. But what one needs rather to see is that Hegel is not really talking about mediation, but a progress towards identity, and that genuine mediation is no nearer identity than it is nearer to difference.

PG: We have just broached the importance of analogy as keeping an open relation or moving state between univocity and equivocity, as well as, analogy avoiding dialectic's urge towards closure. Likewise, we have also seen, as you rightly say, that analogy plays between the natural and supernatural and is about far more than, as you said, a 'natural ontology'. So following from what you said, I would

now like to turn to a very important question which is, to my view, central to your work and to the stance of Radical Orthodoxy. Namely, that Radical Orthodoxy draws heavily from *Nouvelle Théologie*, and especially, from the work of Maurice Blondel and Henri de Lubac. And, in doing so, Radical Orthodoxy emphasizes the integral, always already worked on relation between nature and grace and thus the revolutionary impact this relation has for theology and theology's relation to all other disciplines. How, then, do you see Desmond's work fitting into this very difficult question of the relation between nature and grace? Does he make a specific contribution to the nature/grace problematic, maybe insofar as he enacts this integral relation in his thinking much in the way the Augustine did: Your thoughts on this?

JM: That's quite a difficult question because I am not sure how far he explicitly talks about that relationship. But, I think, on the other hand, it's always implicit and that he is quite happy to introduce theological themes and sometimes to talk about the Trinity. Maybe his work could point more explicitly towards something like a Trinitarian ontology. But the dynamic aspect of analogy, the fact that we can only relate to God by becoming ever-more like God, by being raised above ourselves towards God must be always the work of grace in us. Then you could say, at that point, that our aspirations towards God are overtaken by God's advance towards us. And that, therefore, being is overtaken by event or we see that being is event. And, if we want to fully understand God as an action, as a living reality, as in Himself an occurrence, then that can only be revealed; which means that the full personality of God can only be revealed. Thus, in that way, you might say the *metaxu*, the in-between between us and God, finally, has to be God himself. It has to come from the divine side. I think with Desmond the further his work moves in more of a poetic vein, then the more it's not that he's merely illustrating something when he introduces a poetic epiphany, but rather that that epiphany is a necessary paradigm for what he's saying. In other words, only something very particular can alone convey the universal. And, in that way, he is building up towards a sense of revelatory disclosure that would be fully present in the Incarnation. Maybe, the questions of how you would have a metaphysics of the Incarnation as well as of the Trinity is a horizon for the work of Desmond.

PG: Would it be fair to quickly sum up the above question by saying that Desmond's move in his later work towards, as you rightly said, a poetics is necessitated by the between itself? And also that the primary 'between faculty', if one wants to say it that way, would be the imagination? So you find in Desmond that beauty is this kind of mediation between the truth of being and the self which could, also, be related to a Christian understanding of grace. And Desmond's work could, perhaps, open one up to and offer an entry point into a theological aesthetics. Would you agree with that summation?

JM: I would totally agree with that summation, Philip, because if you are talking about analogy and the between then you are talking about the way things hold together and that cannot be fully analyzed. That is, you cannot bring it either under empirical observation or *a priori* logical judgments, as Kant says, in relation to the judgment of beauty. So there's a sense here that although beauty is apparent, it has oddly to be affirmed; that in recognizing beauty you have to repeat it, if you like. And that your act of, even passively seeing it, is in some way active. This is because, in yourself, you are repeating something that is not completely given. It is an active judgment and a kind of performance. That's why, I think, the issue of beauty is very close to the issue of liturgy. In a liturgical act you are recognizing the numinous by doing it; it's both performative and esoteric. So beyond Kant these kinds of questions have become questions of aesthetic ontology. And the issue of the imagination is very central here because the imagination mediates between the understanding and the senses; the imagination is somehow recognizing a real realm, a real ontological realm. This is how Neo-Platonism would see it. Or, a lot of Islamic mystical thought would see it: that when you imagine something it's a genuine dimension that hovers between the material and the intellectual. And, maybe it's that realm which holds them together. And whatever bond it is which holds together the spiritual and material, is then very close to the bond that holds being together at all, or, that holds being together in relation to God. And, I suppose, that's the human access to the bond of the between because we are half-material and half-spiritual. And all the time, in what Coleridge called our 'primary imagination', we are having to cross that bridge of the imagination without noticing it; we are having to convert the sensible into the

intellectual and the other way around. Quite apart from imagining things that are not there ('secondary imagination') we are then having to imagine what we see in order to be able to see it. This is what Aquinas says when he talks about conversion to the phantasm—it is close to the meaning of Coleridge, though Coleridge goes further to see the work of the imagination as the prime work of thought and echo of the divine Logos within us.

PG: Switching the register a bit, we have seen in the foregoing questions some of the tremendous overlap between your work, in particular, and Radical Orthodoxy in general, with Desmond's work. I would now like to broach some of the differences between you and Desmond. In your essay on Desmond in a volume dedicated to his work entitled, *Between System and Poetics*, you say, "Since I agree with nearly everything that Desmond has to say, apart from some minor divergences or hesitations that are scarcely worth discussing in print, there seems little point in offering a critique of his philosophy."¹ However, in *The Monstrosity of Christ*,² you do voice some of these hesitations, namely, some interpretive differences in respect to Hegel as well as Desmond being a bit too Levinasian in his approach to *eros*. So even if you do not see these to be very great differences, what do you see to be the greatest difference between Desmond and yourself?

JM: First, I would like to reiterate the massive amount of common ground because, I think, that is, by far, the overwhelming factor. And recently I've been talking about a fourfold classification of being which very much corresponds to Desmond's in respect to talking about how modern thought seems to fall. It seems to fall either into an enchanted immanence, or, a disenchanted immanence, or, a disenchanted transcendence and an enchanted transcendence. I think, this is very near to Desmond's way of looking at things with the idea of the between being very close to the idea of an enchanted transcendence. And what is crucial is that that puts one in continuity with the Romantic project, essentially. I think—and

¹ John Milbank, "Glissando: Life, Gift, and the Between," in *Between System and Poetics: William Desmond and Philosophy after Dialectic*, ed. Thomas A. F. Kelly (Oxon and New York: Ashgate, 2007), 217–238 at 217.

² John Milbank and Slavoj Žižek, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 146–47.

Desmond often refers to these kind of things—that the early Romantics after Jacobi, Hamann, people like Novalis and Schlegel in Germany: in England, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Blake: in France people like Joseph Joubert, Maine de Biran and Chateaubriand: that what we have now understood is that these people are not idealists. They are realists who stress that the kind of poetic making they advocate is a making of real symbols in the outside world and that this is a kind of fragmentary approach to the divine in which they tend to invoke the Platonic, and often, in its theurgic mode. They also offer a richly populated cosmos. They speak much about gods and fairies but don't see these as competing with God himself. Whereas, I think, the opposite way to go here is to have a totally disenchanted transcendence where you insist on God's otherness because he's a sort of bolt from the blue into a symbolic desert. So you get a disenchanted nature and then, by contrast, grace and, perhaps, the sacraments. I always think that this, in the end, makes things like sacraments kitschy and unbelievable. Then it becomes the province of fantasy and fanatics, which is the extreme danger of a disenchanted transcendence. So what we need is an enchanted transcendence, and that is my profound common ground with Desmond.

If I have any hesitations at all, and I am never quite confident that I am reading things right, it is at the point where he tends to associate the dialectical with the erotic. And then to say that beyond the dialectical we need to insert more of a sense of distance which he associates that with the agapeic. And this is not to say that he wants to completely divide the agapeic and the erotic, but that my reading of dialectics might be slightly different. I agree that dialectics tends to lead to swallowing everything into an identity. However, it is a quite sterile identity that is not really erotic, except in the sense of complete possession. But I also think that Žižek is right that dialectics can go the other way (or the other way at the same time) of leaving a remainder of totally meaningless difference. In that sense Hegelian dialectics is very disenchanting indeed, in that it splits complete unity and difference in the very final instance of uniting them. And, therefore, it's quite important when one is thinking about going in the direction of the between and analogy not to suggest that there is a unification with the other, but then that we *also* allow for the absolute difference of the other. Rather one should say that the

more there is difference the more there is unity. And in that sense, the *agapeic* and the *erotic* coincide rather as they do for Dionysius the Areopagite. In other words, that one's absolute love of the other, as the other, is equally a profound sense of intimacy with the other. Just like the divine love for us is always a love for the absolute particular, and so, as Pope Benedict has said, in that sense it is a divine *eros*. It is a willing of the good for the sake of the other, but also as that particular other that you love as the other in unitive relation with her. But, of course, we are not capable of that love for everyone. Only God is capable of that. But it's just for that reason that Augustine and Aquinas insist so strongly on the so called *ordo amoris*—that you should love those closest to you and those with whom you are really conjoined. Because you cannot, as yourself, love the whole world. The Church may try to love the whole world but you can't do it. You have a particular world and responsibility, and we have some kind of affinity with the whole world and some kind of affinity with all other human beings. And, in some sense, we can love each and every human being in their particularity, but only to a limited degree can we do that with everyone. But any and every love involves a certain mutuality and affinity. So I would insist more on the absolute coincidence of *eros* and *agape* more than it, sometimes, sounds as that Desmond is doing. I would make fewer concessions to Levinas and stress the paradox that absolute distance is absolute proximity.

PG: When you gave the St. Thomas Aquinas lecture in Leuven back in 2002 William introduced you and in his introduction he remarked that, '...You must be included in spirit within the great tradition of philosophy where the efforts to think God found a hospitable home'. Would you be willing to say that it is time that we start to include Desmond within the spirit of the great theological reflection on God? Especially, given the publication of *God and the Between*³ which presents a kind of speculative theology which has not been seen amongst the ranks of the philosophers for quite some time. And, if so, would you agree or disagree with Christopher Ben Simpson's critique of Desmond in *Religion, Metaphysics, and the*

³ William Desmond, *God and the Between*, Illuminations: Theory & Religion (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2008).

Postmodern,⁴ in which he seems to encourage Desmond to come out of the closet as a theologian? So, in other words, my question to you, as a theologian who has a great respect for Desmond and finds his work nourishing for your own thought, how would you like to see Desmond's thought unfold in the future, in relation to theology?

JM: Well I am very honored if Desmond thinks that I've done even a tiny bit of philosophy. The older I get the more convinced I am that we've all got a very long way to go in retrieving, rethinking, and repairing the great tradition and I think we have only just begun. Maybe, the clue to all this is the Trinity. The Trinity, if you like, is the doctrine of the absolute coincidence of being and event. That, if God is being itself, He's the *actus purus* and the *actus purus* is not just some sort of praxis in opposition to *poesis*, it is somehow both at once. God is the *Perichoresis*, the Trinitarian dance, and that metaphor of dance is interesting because in a certain way dance is between *praxis* and *poesis*. Dance is an external art, but it doesn't leave you. And yet, it's you going outside yourself, tracing an ever-vanishing spiral mark, because there also is a *poesis*. That is, there is an art of the Father in the Son. So it is like a dance that after all leaves a recording of itself, in that sense, and yet the recording is the dance, if you will. It is somewhere halfway between a dance and an exteriorized, fixed work of art. And so, in a very radical sense, what we have in God is a complete act that goes beyond any contrast between *praxis* and *poesis*. It is a production of something, where God infinitely is that production, and God goes out of himself within himself. He is the production of the world as its Creator, and yet, he is only the production of a world in himself as his Son and that is unthinkable. One might say that, on the one hand, we have to grasp that activity in relation is, in the end, eternal and that, if you like, is the speculative task of philosophy. The task of philosophy is to grope its way towards seeing the reality of the Trinity. But, on the other hand, we have also to say that being can only be grasped as event and that has to occur. So we don't really know this outside divine revelation, we don't have a secure knowledge of anything outside of divine revelation. Its only when God appears in the flesh that our conjecture on the way

⁴ Christopher Ben Simpson, *Religion, Metaphysics, and the Postmodern: William Desmond and John D. Caputo* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009).

the world holds together analogically, our conjecture about the way words point to things, is confirmed. Because here we have the *Logos* Himself, here we see the full pattern of the way things look. And, again, it's a strange kind of confirmation. It is a confirmation that we can only judge and reenact, that we can only repeat differently. So it certainly remains an aesthetic kind of certainty, but it's the absolute paradigm. It's as if the confirmation of beauty would only be this entirely beautiful reality, this perfect instance. And that has to arrive as an event just as the repetitions of that event are sacramental and Eucharistic. Thus, as Catherine Pickstock has argued, the veracity of language is confirmed by transubstantiation when our words are alone fully effective. Because what we say of God is that he is eternally a Word that is effective, because reality itself, being as such is this effective word. You can know that speculatively, to some degree, but really it has to arrive and be enacted. It is in that sense—again this is what Catherine's book *After Writing* says—that philosophy builds up to liturgy.⁵

PG: If you allow me to interrupt: Is it safe to say that you are happy or satisfied with Desmond's work building up towards revelation and you would not like to see him take a more explicit theological turn?

JM: No, I am not saying that at all. Actually, I think in some sense he has already done enough. He doesn't need to do any more at all. But I also think it would be perfectly natural if he went on to articulate a theology. You know Philip I don't see any division between philosophy and theology. If you have this theory of being as act and event then you can't make an artificial divide at all. The theological task is also speculative and the philosophical task is finally to expound on the meaning of revelation. And, I think, historically that when there is some kind of sharp divide between philosophy and theology, it does not have any clear grounds at all. This is all something very modern.

PG: To conclude this interview and conversation together, which has been centered around the work of William Desmond, we have spoken about the importance and necessity for an analogical between, a metaxological between,

⁵ Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

which opens up a kind of space of freedom, of free-play and beauty which is fluid and moving and thus allows for real relation. This then, in turn, as we say, touches upon the age old problem of nature and grace and a natural desire for the supernatural and analogy's mediation between the natural and supernatural. Likewise, we have seen that because of this, a sharp divide between philosophy and theology is ungrounded. So my last question to you, while I have you here, is a bit of an expansive one which seeks to continually reflect on the important relation between philosophy and theology that has been attested to in this interview: In our twenty-first century secularized world of nihilistic global capitalism, what do you see to be the primary prejudices, challenges, and barriers which continue to prevent a genuine dialogue and integration of philosophy and theology on a cultural, ecclesial, as well as on an academic level? And the second part of my question, ending on a more existential note, is what sort of spirit would you say is necessary to try and encounter, counter, and resist these powerful barriers or prejudices?

JM: That's an extremely complicated question, Philip. I think what is perhaps above all important to realize is that antique philosophy was a kind of spiritual exercise. In a way Christianity had to read pagan philosophy as more rationalistic than it really was because it was suspicious of the pagan spiritual elements which continued in currents influenced by Arabic philosophy. And to some extent, I think, elements of the Renaissance are about trying to undo that mistake and allow once again the spirituality of pagan philosophy as a preparation for the gospel. But, then, I also think that once you have the mistake of the doctrine of a *natura pura*, the idea that there is a natural end that is totally self-contained and autonomous, then you've got the idea that it is complete in itself. And from there you get the kind of terrain of pure philosophy and the rather artificial idea that philosophy can know all there is to be known about the nature of the world. Then you almost inevitably have a very rationalistic and non-teleological view of the world where you lose sight of symbolic realism. By contrast, if one sees the world the way Middle Ages did, as a book of nature that points to God, then you can't make any artificial separations between the natural and supernatural. It is impossible. But once you get pure nature you lose that sense that the world is full

of symbols and signatures and it becomes something that we just banally represent, a series of facts and objects that we describe. Then philosophy comes to be like that and, in that way, the wrong kind of theology has helped to invent a dry, self-enclosed kind of philosophy that cannot really engage feelings and imagination. Because once you've engaged feelings and imagination people are not going to see the world as a series of facts. Rather, the world will be seen as pointing beyond itself as a puzzle, an enigma or a mystery that we can only know by resonating with it, a world that we try and decipher like an enigmatic book that leads beyond itself. Thus once you get on to the terrain of feelings and imagination you get on to an area that is going to mediate between reason, on one hand, and revelation on the other. If you have a Neo-Scholastic view of revelation then you are going to see revelation as just another set of facts and not as something which we can experience. So, somebody like Suárez drains the experience away from faith with an aridly rationalistic philosophy and theology. Revelation thus becomes a positivistic collection of facts that reason then represents. So, I think, there are those kinds of inherited theological barriers and those arid habits of mind that are used to tyrannize people, especially inadequate young men. There are few people who have a sense of imagination and affectivity and yet are speculatively good enough to face up to these rationalistic Neo-Scholastic thinkers and who can challenge their assumptions. The other problem that we face with philosophy is from a completely different quarter: from people who say, well, right from the outset, beginning with the pre-Socratics, philosophy was challenging a mythical worldview. That it was challenging the bond between *logos* and *nomos*, on the one hand, and *physis* on the other hand. Philosophy was sundering that bond, so you get a divorce between human words and natural reality. The issue then becomes whether that challenge is not a kind of proto-physics and an anticipation of a world divided between what the physicists say, on the one hand, and the sort of fantastic human production of completely meaningless signs that just belong to fashion and commerce, on the other. The world as we have it today is one very much divided between the pre-Socratic, as it were, Darwinians in one camp and the sophisticated masters of culture in the other camp. But you could argue instead, and in his own way Badiou does this, that philosophy is really invented when you get Socrates and Plato (maybe preceded by the Pythagoreans, who, on the

contrary, are wanting to insist that nature and culture belong together). And that humanity is a hybrid animal thus trying, in some way, to think together nature, love, the soul and art—all those things belonging together to one reality that inevitably goes beyond nature. So that—as Eric Voegelin argues—the Greeks are really already anticipating the supernatural, that there is something beyond the cosmic. And so, I think, Christian philosophy picks up that legacy and it's not an accident. Thus Plato is concerned with myth and ritual, he doesn't make a neat divide between religion and philosophy.

PG: In summary, then, would you agree that it is necessary for philosophy and theology to return to a sort of spiritual practice where both disciplines are seen in close unity with one another and a unity through which philosophy and theology are performed? They are then, one could say, certain practices and disciplines which thrive upon the spirit of wonder, and in doing so, they open themselves up to a certain metaphysical and theological vision of the world in which their desire is enraptured by the beautiful; so there is a necessity, and urgent need to reintegrate philosophy and poetics, philosophy and myth, and philosophy and revelation so that there can again be a unified vision of the world which is also tied to a very personal engagement and performance of the thinker himself.

JM: Well, Philip, I just couldn't put it better than you've just to put it. I think that is absolutely the case. Things like poetry and history, because they are exploring the contingency of the world opened up by the imagination, the contingency of the world in time are always mediating between being and the radically new event that is revelation: because it's the disclosure of God himself. And I think too that philosophy needs to be a spiritual engagement with the natural world and equally theology needs to be rooted in liturgy, the reading of the bible and in prayer. It is important to put it that way. They both need to be spiritual practices and they need to be conjoined to each other as both practice and theory. The best way of putting that is the medieval idea that there's a book of nature and the book of scripture (and the book of scripture as not separable from its liturgical performance). These two books constantly read each other, and for this reason we cannot possibly use theology to suppress the freedom of inquiry into nature. Then we would miss both what is revealed in creation and the full meaning of grace.

Just as we cannot constrain the freedom of human political practice in an explicit and ecclesially controlled way, because then you will lose the God-given ability of human beings to invent new and fruitful things. But, at the same time, you cannot inhibit the light that grace will cast on nature and society. There are infinitely new things that are going to emerge from this scriptural tradition that will enable us to have endlessly further perspectives on nature that will open up nature, including human political nature for us, in the light of grace. By contrast any sort of neutral approach to nature is a methodological atheism may allow you to see certain things but would surely block off other essential things. It would certainly block off the possibility that nature is richly and poetically meaningful in a way that Goethe, for instance, was trying to recover. So I completely believe that philosophy and theology have to be pursued in alliance. And, in the end, I think that the question we have to ask is about the entire nature of human existence. You could argue that human existence is a sort wager on language. We think that somehow language can disclose reality, or language can bind us by the promises we make, the words we give to do something, so that words can somehow secure in advance our action. Or that words can somehow disclose to us real things. It seems to me it's very hard, if you think of language that way, and yet clearly there is no objective way of confirming the truth of language. If you expect language to do more than pragmatically move about in the world, which is perhaps what animal language is, it seems to me it is very difficult to escape the idea that language is both a religious and a political project. Then, I think, at this point you either say, well we just need to get out of that. It's been a bad deal, as Agamben says, but this seems to be just a despair of the whole human project. But if we want to go on affirming the human project then, I think, we are bound to see it in terms of all our human religious traditions and also our philosophical traditions. I think that the Christian understanding is that God is, in himself, the Word and that God in himself as the Word has arrived in time and confirmed, through a transformation, our language through time and given us the Spirit by which we can trust our words and trust in infinite reality. If you like, it thus seems to me that you can say that Christianity is the most radical manifestation and occurrence of the religious spirit and that it is the truest representative of the human spirit as such.

IS LONERGAN'S METHOD THEOLOGICAL?

Peter John McGregor

In a 1970 commentary on Bernard Lonergan's "Functional Specialities," Karl Rahner was critical of Lonergan's theological methodology because, in Rahner's estimation, it disregarded the "completely peculiar and unique relatedness to the concrete person of Jesus, which is not only distinct to Christian faith and life but also, for that reason, distinct to Christian theology."¹ While regarding Lonergan's method as appropriate for non-theological sciences, he thought that it treated God as "some arbitrary object within the field of categorical objects" rather than "the incomprehensible mystery which can never be subsumed among the objects of the remaining sciences in a similar method."² More recently, Aidan Nichols has criticised Lonergan's theological methodology on the basis that "the distinctiveness of the Christian faith on his view is not a very interesting distinctiveness. It means in effect that Christianity has the key to what is going on

¹ Karl Rahner, "Kritische Bemerkungen zu B.J.F. Lonergan's Aufsatz: 'Functional Specialities in Theology'," *Gregorianum* 51 (1970): 537–40, at 538. Cf. Tracey Rowland, *Catholic Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 67.

² *Ibid.*, 538–39. Cf. Rowland, *Catholic Theology*, 67.

in other religions, and perhaps outside them too. It does not mean that something different is going on in Christianity.”³

Lonergan's response to these criticisms would be that what makes his method genuinely theological is the place of conversion, specifically, religious, intellectual, and moral conversion, in his methodology.⁴ Of these three conversions, religious conversion is foundational.⁵ So, the deciding factor in this argument will be whether or not Lonergan's concept of religious conversion is valid.

LONERGAN'S CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

Lonergan holds that the “dynamism of a knowing subject toward Infinite and Absolute Being (i.e. God) is . . . an a priori condition of knowledge. That is to say, God is in some ways always present as a horizon and necessarily co-affirmed with every act of human knowledge.”⁶ For him, “an a priori *desire* for knowledge of the Absolute Being of God is the transcendental condition of all acts of knowledge.”⁷ In every act of knowing we are seeking God. Lonergan calls this

the question of God . . . which cannot be ignored. The atheist may pronounce it empty. The agnostic may urge that he finds his investigation has been inconclusive. The contemporary humanist will refuse to allow the question to arise. But their negations presuppose the spark in our clod, our native orientation to the divine.⁸

³ Aidan Nichols, *Scribe of the Kingdom*, vol. 2 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1994), 63. Cf. Rowland, *Catholic Theology*, 67.

⁴ For how these conversions enable dialectic and the subsequent functional specialities of his method, see Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972), beginning from 235.

⁵ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 105.

⁶ Alan Vincelette, *Recent Catholic Philosophy: The Twentieth Century* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2011), 82. Cf. Rowland, *Catholic Theology*, 61.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 103.

Lonergan states that, “Man achieves authenticity in self-transcendence.”⁹ According to him, human beings have a capacity for self-transcendence, that is, one beyond the sensitivity that we share with the higher animals, and this capacity is constituted by “our questions for intelligence, for reflection, and for deliberation.”¹⁰ This capacity becomes actual when one falls in love, when “one’s being becomes being-in-love.”¹¹ From this “flows one’s desires and fears, one’s joys and sorrows, one’s discernment of values, one’s decisions and deeds.”¹² It is being-in-love with God that is the first principle of Lonergan’s theological method. It is what he means by religious conversion. “There is the love of God with one’s whole heart and whole soul, with all one’s mind and all one’s strength (Mk 12:30). It is God’s love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us (Rom 5:5).”¹³ This being in love with God “as experienced, is being in love in an unrestricted fashion . . . [a] being in love without limits or qualifications or conditions or reservations.”¹⁴

However, this being-in-love with God “is not the product of our knowledge and choice” but “a conscious dynamic state of love, joy, peace, that manifests itself in acts of kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22)” – the fruit of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

[This] dynamic state is conscious without being known, it is an experience of mystery. Because it is being in love, the mystery is not merely attractive but fascinating; to it one belongs; by it one is possessed. Because it is an unmeasured love, the mystery invokes awe. Of itself, then, inasmuch as it is conscious without being known, the gift of God’s love is an experience of the holy, of Rudolf Otto’s *mysterium fascinans et tremendum*. It is what Paul Tillich named as being grasped by ultimate concern. It corresponds to St. Ignatius Loyola’s

⁹ Ibid., 104.

¹⁰ Ibid., 105.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid. 106.

consolation that has no cause, as expounded by Karl Rahner.¹⁶

Lonergan holds that this state of being conscious of God without God being known, this experience of God's gift of his love flooding our hearts, is the major exception to the Latin tag: *Nihil amatum nisi praecognitum*: Knowledge proceeds love.¹⁷

According to Lonergan, what this religious conversion does is bring to fulfilment what he calls the fourth level of intentional consciousness. This is the consciousness "that deliberates, makes judgements of value, decides, acts responsibly and freely."¹⁸ The gift of God's love "occupies the ground and root of the fourth and highest level of man's intentional consciousness," enabling one to do all good because one is in love with God.¹⁹

Although he admits that there is no clear-cut evidence for it, Lonergan claims that this religious conversion, which he also calls religious experience, is not limited to Christians, but is common "to such world religions as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Zoroastrian Mazdaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism."²⁰ Theorizing beyond his data, he appeals to "the antecedent probability established by the fact that God is good and gives to all men sufficient grace for salvation."²¹ Following Friedrich Heiler, he identifies as common features

that there is a transcendent reality; that he is immanent in human hearts; that he is supreme beauty, truth, righteousness, goodness; that he is love, mercy, compassion; that the way to him is repentance, self-denial, prayer; that the way is love of one's neighbour, even of one's enemies; that

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 122.

¹⁸ Ibid., 107.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid. 109. See also 108 & 240–41.

²¹ Ibid.

the way is love of God, so that bliss is conceived as knowledge of God, union with him, or dissolution into him.²²

This religious conversion/experience is “interpreted differently in the context of different religious traditions. For Christians, it is God’s love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.”²³ Once a person undergoes a religious conversion, this conversion needs to develop. This development is presented as a movement to authenticity from inauthenticity, as in understanding from misunderstanding, truth from error, moral development from sin through repentance, and genuine religion from religious aberration.²⁴

According to Lonergan, it is from religious conversion that faith is born.²⁵ He sees this as a specific instance of knowledge born of love, claiming that it was of this kind of knowledge that Pascal wrote in saying that the heart has reasons that the reason does not know. Thus Lonergan says that:

By the heart’s reasons I would understand feelings that are intentional responses to values; and I would recall the two aspects of such responses, the absolute aspect that is a recognition of value, and the relative aspect that is a preference of one value for another.²⁶

Following his understanding of Pascal’s remark, Lonergan maintained that

besides factual knowledge reached by experiencing, understanding, and verifying, there is another kind of knowledge reached through the discernment of value and the judgments of value of a person in love.²⁷

²² Ibid. Cf. Friedrich Heiler, “The History of Religions as a Preparation for the Cooperation of Religions,” in *The History of Religions*, ed. Mircea Eliade & Joseph Mitsuo Kitagawa (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1959), 132–60, at 142–53.

²³ Ibid., 241.

²⁴ Ibid., 110.

²⁵ Ibid., 115.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

When it comes to the nature of the heart, Lonergan says that it is "the subject on the fourth, existential level of intentional consciousness and in the dynamic state of being in love."²⁸ Thus, "Faith. . . is such further knowledge when the love is God's love flooding our hearts."²⁹ This faith does not yet have any epistemological content with regard to what God's existence and nature might be. Rather,

it is an apprehension of transcendent value [which] consists in the experienced fulfilment of our unrestricted thrust to self-transcendence, in our actuated orientation towards the mystery of love and awe. . . . the experienced fulfilment of this thrust may be objectified as a clouded revelation of absolute intelligence and intelligibility, absolute truth and reality, absolute goodness and holiness.³⁰

This faith elicits "a question of decision. Will I love him in return, or will I refuse? Will I live out this gift of love, or will I hold back, turn away, withdraw?"³¹ A negative answer is possible.

Men are sinners. . . . They have to acknowledge their real guilt and amend their way. They have to learn with humility that religious development is dialectical, that the task of repentance and conversion is life-long.³²

For Lonergan, faith is generic to religion, while belief is specific to particular religions.³³ Faith comes from "the inner word that is God's gift of his love" while belief comes from "the outer word of the religious tradition."³⁴ The concrete beliefs of particular religions result from the judgments of value made in accordance with

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 115–16.

³¹ Ibid., 116.

³² Ibid., 117–18.

³³ Ibid., 118–19.

³⁴ Ibid., 119.

the faith which is their common patrimony, based as it is on the universal experience of God's love.

Lonergan does not derive his understanding of religious conversion from Sacred Scripture. Rather, he derives it from the claim that the human desire for authenticity in self-transcendence, the human spirit's unrestricted desire for meaning, is actually fulfilled in the religious experience of human beings.³⁵ Having done so, he appeals to biblical passages such as Mark 12:30, Romans 5:5, and Galatians 5:22 as witnesses to such religious experiences. The question is: Has Lonergan correctly understood what these and other biblical witnesses are testifying to? If not, then he should not call them as witnesses. Moreover, is his understanding of religious conversion commensurate with the way in which the issue is presented in Sacred Scripture? It is to these questions that we now turn. We must analyse how the biblical witnesses testify to the nature of repentance, conversion, and the heart. In particular, we must examine what Paul means when he says that "the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5).

THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament the term translated "to repent" is *metanoëō*, the literal meaning of which is "to change one's mind."³⁶ An analysis of how the terms *metanoia* (repentance) and *metanoëō* are used yields the following data. John the Baptist preaches a "baptism" of repentance (cf. Lk 3:8, Acts 13:24 & 19:4) which is "for the forgiveness of sins" (Lk 3:8) and it requires those hearing "to believe in the one who was to come after him" (Acts 19:4). This repentance requires "fruits"

³⁵ Ibid., 101–09. Cf. Neil Ormerod and Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, *Foundational Theology: A New Approach to Catholic Fundamental Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 52.

³⁶ See μετάνειά, μετάνοια, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, translated and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. IV: 975–1008 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965).

(Lk 3:8), which are the sharing of possessions and food (cf. Lk 3:11), and the just treatment of others (cf. Lk 3:12–14).

For Jesus, repentance is a “call” to “sinners” (cf. Lk 5:32). It also requires “fruits”—showing mercy to the poor (cf. Lk 16:30), and the exercise of justice, as in the seeking of forgiveness from a person whom one has wronged (cf. Lk 17:3–4). Other fruits of repentance are the putting on of sackcloth and ashes, fasting, begging God’s forgiveness, and turning from evil (cf. Lk 10:13 & 11:32; Jon 3:6–9). Death will be the fate of those who do not repent (cf. Lk 13:3–5), and those sinners who do repent will cause great joy in heaven (cf. Lk 15:7 & 10).

In the case of the apostles of Jesus, in the name of Jesus they are instructed to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Lk 24:47). One repents of, turns from, wickedness in order to be forgiven (cf. Acts 8:22 & 3:26). This repentance, along with baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, is not just a call from the apostles but also a gift from the exalted Jesus to Israel (cf. Acts 2:38 & 5:31). Furthermore, it is not limited to Israel, but is also a command of God to all people everywhere (cf. Acts 17:30). Not only is this repentance a command of God, but it is a blessing from him. It is God who turns people from their wickedness (cf. Acts 3:26). The immediate effect of this repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins is a further result which is variously called “life” (*zoe*), “times of refreshment from the presence of the Lord [God],” and “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 11:18, 3:19–20 & 2:38). This repentance is “toward God” and also “toward faith in [the] Lord Jesus” (Acts 20:21). It is also linked with conversion, that is, “turning again” to God “that sins may be wiped away” (Acts 3:19). The ultimate result of this repentance, forgiveness of sins, and times of refreshment from the Lord will be the sending by God of the fore-appointed Christ Jesus (cf. Acts 3:19–20). There is also a phenomenon mentioned that might be called an “anti-repentance,” of which Stephen speaks in his address to the Sanhedrin. After allowing Moses to lead them out of Egypt, and agreeing to obey the “living oracles” which he gave them from God, the Israelites “refused to obey him [Moses], but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt, saying to Aaron, ‘Make for us gods to go before us’” (Acts 7:38–40).

What can be concluded from the foregoing analysis is that “repentance” refers to a particular aspect of a whole process. This aspect is that of accepting a double revelation—the truth about God and his Christ, and how one stands before God. In this process “repentance” is the acceptance that Jesus is the Christ of God who, through his death and resurrection, has reconciled us with God, and the acknowledgement of one’s sinfulness and a turning away from sin.

THE MEANING OF CONVERSION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament, the term translated “to convert” is *epistrephō*, the literal meaning of which is “to turn around” or “to turn toward.”³⁷ As a part of the whole process of turning from sin and turning to God, *epistrephō* and *epistrophē* (conversion), with regard to John the Baptist the angel of the Lord prophesises that “he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God” (Lk 1:16). In doing so, he will also turn them to their neighbours and to justice. John will “turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the understanding of the just” (Lk 1:17). This turning will prepare them for the coming of the Lord (cf. Lk 1:17).

In the Acts of the Apostles, it is initially only Jews who turn to the Lord (Acts 3:19). However, soon many Gentiles are turning to the Lord (cf. Acts 11:20–21, 15:3 & 15:19). Turning to the Lord is presented as part of one movement of re-orientation. “Repentance” emphasises what one is turning from, “conversion” what one is turning to. Paul tells the people of Lystra that the good news that he and Barnabas bring is that “you should turn from these vain things [their gods] to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and sea and all that is in them” (Acts 14:15). Turning to the Lord is a prerequisite for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 3:19). It can only occur if it is proceeded by believing in the Lord. In a subtle way, Luke connects believing and turning, showing both their unity and distinction. So, *all* the residents of Lydda and Sharon,

³⁷ See ἐπιστρεφῶ, ἐπιστροφῆ, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. VII: 722–29 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971).

upon *seeing* a paralytic named Aeneas, who had been healed by Peter, *turned* to the Lord (cf. Acts 9:33–35). Then *many* of the people of Joppa, upon *hearing* that Peter had raised Tabitha from the dead, *believed* in the Lord (cf. Acts 9:40–42, and also Acts 4:4 & 5:14). When disciples from Cyprus and Cyrene preach the Lord Jesus to Greeks in Antioch, “a great number that *believed turned* to the Lord” (Acts 11:21). Finally, in words reminiscent of John the Baptist, Paul tells Herod Agrippa that he told both Jews and Gentiles that repenting and turning to God must be followed by the performance of deeds worthy of repentance (cf. Acts 26:20).

Some scholars maintain that there is no need to distinguish between repentance and conversion, that the two can be treated as synonyms.³⁸ Certainly, it is correct that they can be seen as parts of one movement, or ways of looking at one movement from particular perspectives. Yet, in Mark's Gospel, Jesus makes a distinction between them, with the command to “repent [*metanoïete*] and believe in the Gospel” (Mk 1:15). This raises the possibility that one could try to do one without doing the other. In Acts, the account of Simon the magician shows that it is possible for a person to attempt to turn to the Lord without turning from evil, that is, to turn to God without repenting. When the Samaritans who hear Philip's proclamation of the good news and see his healings and exorcisms believe in Jesus Christ and are baptised, we are told that Simon also believed and was baptised. Yet when he attempts to buy the apostolic power to impart the gift of the Holy Spirit Peter says to him, “your heart is not straight (*euthia*) with God. Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of unrighteousness” (Acts 8:21–23). Simon has attempted to turn to the Lord without first turning from wickedness. His heart was still “crooked.” However, his position is not irretrievable. He can still turn to the Lord in prayer and have the wicked intention of his heart forgiven.

What can be concluded from the foregoing analysis is that “conversion,” “turning to” the Lord, refers to a particular aspect of a whole process. This aspect

³⁸ For example, see Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 89.

is in the nature of a re-orientation wherein one comes into the light and does what is right. One now lives for God. It depends on believing in the Lord Jesus and repentance for sins, and results in forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. To be authentic, it must produce deeds worthy of repentance.

REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION

The most complete, though not comprehensive, statement about repentance and conversion is to be found in Paul's explanation of his apostolic call to Herod Agrippa:

But rise and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles—to whom I send you to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me. “Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those at Damascus, then at Jerusalem and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and perform deeds worthy of their repentance.” (Acts 26:16–20)

We can see from this passage that Paul is sent to open eyes, to reveal something from God. This purpose of this revelation is to prompt a turning, which is not from anything “neutral,” but from darkness and the power of Satan to light and God. This turning to God includes being set free from an evil power and having faith in Jesus. The result of this turning is the gift of forgiveness of sins, a wiping away of sins, and deeds that are commensurate with this turning. Faith in Jesus makes a person holy, and includes one in the community of the holy ones. From other passages we can see that this incorporation in the sanctified takes place through baptism as well as faith, and that the gift of sanctification, from God, through his Christ, is *zoë*, refreshment, the Holy Spirit, the ultimate fulfilment of which is the return of the Christ.

THE *KARDIA* IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament we find that the term *kardia* is sometimes used in contradistinction to the mind, to the soul, to the soul and mind, and to the conscience.³⁹ However, it is more often used in the following senses. As the affective centre of the human person it is the locus of the passions. As the intellectual centre of the human person it is the locus of thought, understanding, doubt and questioning, deception, and belief. As the volitional centre of the human person it is the locus of intention and decision. The heart is also the locus of imagination and memory. As the moral centre of the human person it is the locus of virtue, including theological virtue. It is the locus of conscience. It is the locus of that holiness which is normally called singleness or purity of heart. It is the locus of relation with other human persons.⁴⁰

The heart thinks, chooses, feels, imagines, and remembers. If it does all these things it cannot simply be any one of these things, but must be the interrelatedness of all these things. It is also the locus of relation with God. It is the place which God searches and knows. It is the locus of revelation, as well as that refusal of revelation which is often called "hardness of heart." It is also the locus of God's indwelling, in Christ.⁴¹

³⁹ For *kardia* in contradistinction to the mind, cf. 2 Cor 3:14–15; Phil 4:7; Heb 8:10 & 10:16; Rev 2:23. To the soul, cf. 1 Pt 1:22. To the soul and mind, cf. Mt 22:37. To the conscience, cf. 1 Tm 1:5.

⁴⁰ For *kardia* as the locus of the passions, cf. Mt 5:28 & 6:21; Jn 14:1, 14:27, 16:6 & 16:22; Acts 2:26, 7:54, 14:17 & 21:13; Rom 1:24, 9:2 & 10:1; 2 Cor 2:4; Jas 3:14; 2 Pt 2:14. For thought, cf. Mt 9:4 & 24:48; Mk 7:21 & 11:23; Lk 2:35 & 9:47; Rom 10:6; Rev 18:7. For understanding, cf. Mt 13:15 & 24:48; Jn 12:40; Acts 28:27; Rom 1:21; 1 Cor 2:9; Heb 4:12. For doubt and questioning, cf. Mk 11:23; Lk 24:38; Rom 10:6. For deception and belief, cf. Lk 24:25; Heb 3:12; Jas 1:26. For intention and decision, cf. Lk 6:45 & 21:14; Acts 5:3–4, 7:39, 8:22, & 11:23; 1 Cor 4:5, 7:37 & 14:25; 2 Cor 9:7. For imagination and memory, cf. Lk 1:51 & 66, 2:19, & 2:51. For virtue, cf. Lk 8:15; Acts 2:46 & 15:9; Rom 6:17 & 10:9; 2 Thes 3:5. For conscience, cf. 1 Jn 3:20. For purity of heart, cf. Mt 5:8; Acts 15:9; Eph 6:5; Col 3:22; 1 Thes 3:13; 2 Tm 2:22; Heb 10:22. For relation with other human persons, cf. Mt 18:35; Acts 16:14; 2 Cor 6:11–13 & 7:2–3; Phil 1:7.

⁴¹ For *kardia* as the locus of which God searches and knows, cf. Lk 16:15; Rom 8:27; 1 Thes 2:4. Of revelation, cf. Lk 24:32; Acts 2:37; Rom 2:15; 2 Cor 3:3 & 4:6; Eph 1:18. Of the refusal

How is God revealed in the heart? The Acts of the Apostles consistently speaks of Christians being “filled with the Holy Spirit,” or being “full of the Spirit.” Christians become the dwelling place of the Spirit. Yet, although the Holy Spirit is presented as enlightening and renewing the minds of Christians, and inspiring peace and joy in Christians, neither the mind nor the passions are presented as the dwelling place of the Spirit.⁴² The place which is thus presented is the heart. God, who searches the hearts of Christians when they pray in the Spirit, “knows what is the mind of the Spirit” (Rom 8:27). Furthermore: “[God] has set his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Cor 1:22). This guarantee is the love of God which “has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). This love is an enlightening and empowering love: “God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Gal 4:6).

CONVERSION OF HEART AND HARDNESS OF HEART

Looking at conversion of heart, after Peter has accused the Jews gathered for Pentecost of crucifying the Messiah, who has now been raised from the dead, rather than stoning him and the other apostles, we are told that they were “cut to the heart,” and say to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). At least, “cut to the heart” is the translation given by the RSV. However, the Greek term which is used here is *katenugesan*. It comes from *nusso*, a verb which means “to pierce,” and *kata*, a prefix which intensifies the meaning of the verb. Thus *katenugesan* means more than “cut.” Rather, “pierced through” or “pierced deeply” would be more accurate translations.

of revelation, cf. Mk 3:5; 6:52 & 8:17; Mt 13:19; Jn 12:40; Acts 8:21; Rom 2:5; Eph 4:18. Of God’s indwelling, in Christ, cf. Gal 4:6; Eph 3:17; 2 Pt 1:19.

⁴² For Christians being filled with the Holy Spirit, cf. Acts 2:4, 6:3, 7:55, 9:17, 11:24, 13:9, & 13:52. For Christians as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, cf. Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 3:16 & 6:19; Eph 2:22; 2 Tm 1:14. For the Holy Spirit enlightening and renewing the minds of Christians, cf. Rom 8:5–6; 1 Cor 2:13; Eph 4:23. For the Holy Spirit inspiring peace and joy in Christians, cf. Rom 12:11 & 14:17; 1 Thes 1:6.

The result of this traumatic being “pierced through to the heart” was an acceptance of the truth of the apostolic words, dismay and remorse about what they have done, and the decision to seek the apostles’ counsel. They chose to accept this counsel. They repented, were baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and subsequently continued steadfast in the teaching of the apostles, the *koinonia*, the breaking of the bread, and the prayers (cf. Acts 2:37–42).

In contrast to the hearts that are pierced to the very centre on the day of Pentecost, we have the reaction of the members of the Sanhedrin to the speech of Stephen. In the RSV and ESV their reaction is translated as “they were enraged” (Acts 7:54), while many other versions give a similar translation. Certainly, they were enraged, but the KJV gives a more accurate translation—“they were cut to the heart” (*dieprionto tais kardiais*). This verb *diaprio* means “to divide with a saw” or “saw asunder.” Metaphorically, their hearts were sawn apart by the words of Stephen. “Enraged” or “became furious,” another common translation, are not bad translations. They were passionately “sawn asunder.” However, the metaphor is important for understanding what Luke is trying to tell us.

To grasp Luke’s intent, let us look at Stephen’s speech, and an earlier reaction on the part of the Sanhedrin to a speech by Peter and the other apostles. In his speech, Stephen reminds them how the people of Israel refused to obey Moses, even after he had led them out of Egypt and given them the living oracles of God at Mount Sinai. Rather, they “thrust him aside and in their hearts turned to Egypt” (Acts 7:39). He concludes his speech to them by saying, “Hard-necked and uncircumcised in hearts and ears, you always oppose the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7:51).

It is here maintained that this contrast of “pierced through” and “sawn asunder” hearts is deliberate. This is shown by an earlier use of the verb *diaprio* in Acts 5:33, one of only two uses of the verb in the New Testament. There we are told that when the high priest, and the Sanhedrin, and all the elders of Israel heard the answer of Peter and the apostles to the questioning of the high priest, an answer wherein they made the same accusation against them as they had made against the crowds at Pentecost, and later was made by Stephen against the Sanhedrin,

that of murdering the Messiah, *de akousantes dieprioto*, the ones hearing were sawn asunder, and intended to kill the apostles (cf. Acts 5:21 & 27–33). However, take note that here it does not say that their *hearts* were sawn asunder.

We know that they did not kill the apostles. Rather, they listened to the words of Gamaliel, who counselled them to leave the apostles alone. They were sawn asunder, but not to the degree that their rage rendered them irrational. They were still able to listen to reason (cf. Acts 5:34–40). However, when their *hearts* are sawn asunder, they gnash their teeth at Stephen, and when he prophesises in the power of the Holy Spirit about the glory of the Messiah, they refuse his prophecy by drowning him out with a loud voice and covering their ears (cf. Acts 7:54–57). Then they rush upon Stephen with one accord. Throwing to the wind almost all pretence of legality, they become a mob. They cast Stephen out of the city and stone him to death (cf. Acts 7:58). What happens in the hearts of the members of the Sanhedrin is an anthropological dis-integration. The affective trauma to their hearts, caused by the Holy Spirit, of the double truth presented to their intellects, that Jesus is the Messiah and that they have murdered him, leads them volitionally to harden their hearts, that is, wrathfully reject this truth, and murder Stephen.

THE MEANING OF ROMANS 5:5

The key text to which Loneragan appeals for support of his notion of religious conversion is Roman 5:5. So, it will be necessary to analyse this text, in itself and in its general and immediate contexts. Since “heart” is the key term in this text, it will also be necessary to see how Paul uses the term in order to arrive at a definition.

In the Pauline corpus, the term *kardia* is used 48 times, though if one includes the synonym *splagchnon* (bowels) the total would be increased to 54. Paul’s use of the term is commensurate with its use in the rest of the New Testament. It is the locus of the passions (cf. Rom 1:24, 9:2 & 10:1, 2 Cor 2:4 & 8:16, Eph 6:22, Col 2:2 & 4:8, 2 Thes 2:17) thought (cf. 1 Cor 14:25), understanding (cf. Rom 2:15 & 10:8, 1 Cor 2:9, 2 Cor 3:2–3), questioning (cf. Rom 10:6), self-deception (cf. Rom

16:18), belief (cf. Rom 10:9–10), intention (cf. 1 Cor 4:5), decision (cf. 1 Cor 7:37), singleness or purity of heart (cf. Rom 2:29, Eph 6:5, Col 3:22, 1 Thes 3:13, 1 Tm 1:5, 2 Tm 2:22), and relations with other human persons (cf. 2 Cor 6:11 & 7:3, Phil 1:7, 2 Thes 2:17). It is also the locus of relation with God—of thankfulness to God (cf. Eph 5:19, Col 3:16), obedience to God (cf. Rom 6:17, Col 3:15), revelation from God (cf. 2 Cor 4:6, Eph 1:18, 2 Thes 3:5), as well as the rejection of revelation (cf. Rom 2:5, Eph 4:18). It is the locus of God's searching (cf. Rom 8:27), testing (cf. 1 Thes 2:4), and peace (cf. Phil 4:7). It is also the locus of God's indwelling, in Christ (cf. Eph 3:17), and the place into which he pours his love (cf. Rom 5:5)

While other New Testament writers speak of the Holy Spirit filling or dwelling in us (cf. Lk 1:15 & 41, Jn 14:7, ten places in Acts, 1 Pt 1:11, 1 Jn 3:24 & 4:13), the presentation of the heart as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit is exclusively Pauline (cf. 2 Cor 1:22, Gal 4:6, and, by implication, Rom 5:5) – all in letters on which the general consensus is that they were written by Paul himself. In 2 Corinthians 1:21–22, Paul writes that it is God who makes us firm in Christ, and has anointed us, and sealed us, and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. A guarantee of what? Of what he has just told the Corinthians—that all the promises of God find their “Yes” in Christ (cf. 2 Cor 1:20). In Galatians 4:6–7, Paul writes that, “Because we are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying ‘Abba! Father!’ So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son an heir.” What he says here is further developed in Roman 8:14–16, though without using the term “heart”—“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” What the outpouring of the Holy Spirit into our hearts reveals is that God is our Father, we are his children.

For Paul, the Spirit of God, who is also the Spirit of Christ (cf. Rom 8:9–10) dwells in us. If the Holy Spirit dwells in us, Christ also dwells in us. “But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, our spirits are alive

because of righteousness” (Rom 8:9–10). So, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father, is also the Spirit of the Son, and causes the Son to dwell in us. We can see that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts has a Trinitarian character, and that it brings us into a relationship of sonship with God the Father, a relationship of which we are conscious, since we cry out “Abba! Father!”

Looking at the general context of Romans, we find that grace and peace come from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 1:7). Furthermore, we have faith in both the Son and the Father (cf. Rom 3:22 & 4:24). Grace and peace come from the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. They come through faith in Christ. This grace is God’s love, and it enables us to cry out “Abba! Father!” This grace, which is the first fruits of the Spirit, enables us to hope for its complete fulfilment in sharing the glory of God (cf. Rom 8:23).

Turning to the immediate context of Romans 5:5, we find that:

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to the grace [which is peace with God] in which we now stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom 5:1–5).

Here again we find that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit into our hearts has a Trinitarian character. The outpouring of the Spirit into our hearts by the Father is not separate from the peace with God which we have through our Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, we can see that this relationship involves the theological virtues of faith, hope, and by implication, charity, since charity would be the proper response to the love of God poured into our hearts. We can even rejoice in our sufferings because we know, in Christ, and through the outpouring of the Spirit, that the Father loves us as his children. We can see that the gift of the Holy Spirit means peace with God and rejoicing in hope of sharing the glory of God, and that it comes from God the Father, through faith in the Father (cf. Rom 4:24), faith in

Christ, and through our Lord Jesus Christ. For Paul, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit follows upon faith in the Father and his Christ, and brings us into an epistemologically rich relationship with both. This is the grace of justification. Through faith in Christ, God the Father pours his love into our hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit. He reveals himself and his love to us, enables us to experience it, and also enables us to love him in return. As St. Augustine says, "*Deus facit nos dilectores suos*"—God makes us his lovers.⁴³

LONERGAN'S PROOF-TEXTING

We can see that Lonergan's understanding of what he calls religious conversion is radically different from the way that repentance and conversion are presented in the New Testament, where they most definitely involve accepting a revelation of who Jesus is and what he has done, as well as who we are and what we have done. Moreover, Lonergan's religious experience/conversion is presented as occurring in isolation, directly from God to the human person. However, in the New Testament, conversion is never presented in this way without any other mediator. The conversion of a person is always "provoked" by some other person or persons who are not just divine—John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter and the other apostles, Stephen, Philip, Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Silas, an angel. It always involves some kind of tangible kerygma.

We can also see that Lonergan's understanding of the heart is substantially different from that presented in the New Testament, since he limits its activity to the affective dimension of the human person, and a particular level of what he calls consciousness, whereas in the New Testament the heart is where every aspect of the human person is interrelated, and where human beings relate to God and other human beings. Finally, we can see that the way in which he uses Romans 5:5 to illustrate his understanding of religious conversion is not commensurate with the meaning of the text. Rather than describing an experience without any concrete

⁴³ Augustine, *De spir. et let.* 32, 56.

epistemological content, it is overwhelmingly rich in such content. Lonergan uses Romans 5:5 to indicate the possibility of experiencing God's love in a non-cognitive way, whereas the text will not bear the weight of this interpretation. This does not mean that people who are not Christian and who have never heard the Gospel cannot experience the love of God in some way. However, such an experience will have a concrete epistemological content—the person will know that it is God whom they are experiencing. The Old Testament is replete with such examples. Even before Abraham, we have the examples of Enoch and Noah who both “walked with God” (cf. Gen 5:20–24 & 6:9). Of them, Sirach 44:16–17 says that, “Enoch pleased God and was taken up; he was an example of *repentance* to all generations. Noah was found perfect in *righteousness*.”

Why does Lonergan get texts like Romans 5:5 wrong? He does so because he does not do the necessary exegetical work. He has a thesis, and in support of that thesis he appeals to certain texts in Sacred Scripture. However, these proof-texts do not say what he thinks they say. They are hostile witnesses. This can be seen with particular clarity in his appeal to Romans 5:5. We have seen that being-in-love with God is the foundation of Lonergan's theological method. According to him, this being-in-love with God is the result of God's love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us (cf. Rom 5:5). Lonergan simply assumes that this text supports his thesis when in fact it does not.

This proof-texting goes beyond Sacred Scripture. He also does it in his appeals to Pascal on the nature of the heart, to Otto on the nature of the experience of the “holy,” and to Rahner's exposition of St. Ignatius Loyola's “consolation that has no cause.” To begin with, Lonergan appeals to Pascal as a witness to his understanding of the heart, which is that the heart's reasons are feelings that are intentional responses to values, and that these responses are instances of another kind of knowledge reached through the discernment of value and the judgments of value of a person in love. In fact, when Pascal says that “the heart has reasons that the reason does not know,” by “reason” he means Cartesian “reasoning” by scientific analysis and calculation, what Scholastic-Aristotelian logic called the third act of the mind, the discursive reasoning by which one proves one truth, the

conclusion, from another, the premise.⁴⁴ Pascal says that the heart has its *reasons*. These are first principles, self-evident truths. Thus he writes:

We know the truth not only through our reason but also through our heart. It is through the latter that we know first principles, and reason, which has nothing to do with it, tries in vain to refute them. . . . For knowledge of first principles, like space, time, motion, number, is as solid as any derived through reason, and it is on such knowledge, coming from the heart and instinct, that reason has to depend and base all its argument. . . . Principles are felt, propositions proved, and both with certainty by different means.⁴⁵

For Pascal, the first act of the mind, understanding the meaning of an essence, is carried out by the "heart." Furthermore, it is the heart which perceives God. This is Pascal's definition of faith. "It is the heart which perceives God and not the reason. That is what faith is: God perceived by the heart, not by the reason."⁴⁶ The heart "sees" God, it knows God. God gives faith to people by moving their hearts.⁴⁷ It is also the heart which chooses, which wills, to love God or self. "I say that it is natural for the heart to love the universal being or itself, according to its allegiance, and it hardens itself against either as it chooses."⁴⁸ Finally, for Pascal, the heart is "the unified center of inner life."⁴⁹

In Lonergan's reading of Otto on the *mysterium fascinans et tremendum*, he focuses almost exclusively on *fascinans* (fascinating) and almost entirely neglects *tremendum* (terrifying).⁵⁰ In fact, for Otto, *fascinans* is an aspect of *tremendum*.⁵¹ Otto

⁴⁴ Cf. René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and The Meditations*, translated by F. E. Sutcliffe (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 27–91. For Pascal's understanding of "reason" and "heart," see Peter Kreeft, *Christianity for Modern Pagans: Pascal's Pensées Edited, Outlined and Explained* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 228–34.

⁴⁵ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Léon Brunschvicg (Paris: Hachette, 1897), 110.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 424.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 423.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵⁰ For a passing exception to this, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 111.

⁵¹ Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 31–40.

thought that this mystery was presented most strongly in the Old and New Testaments, and when we look at the Old Testament in particular, the terrifying aspect of the mystery is constantly affirmed.⁵² For example, when God revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush, Moses was both fascinated—"I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt," and terrified—"And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God" (Ex 2:3 & 6). This revelation was no mere experience without knowledge, but involved an unequivocal revelation of who God was—"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," and what he intended to do—"I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians. . . (Ex 2:6–8)." Moses enters into a relationship with God whereby he knows God by name (cf. Ex 2:14), and God knows Moses by name (cf. Ex 33:17). If we look at another example, that of Isaiah's vision of God in the temple, when he sees the glory of the Lord he laments, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Is 6:5). This experience of God's holiness evokes in Isaiah not an experience of being-in-love, but an acute awareness of and grief over both his own sins and the sins of his people.

When it comes to Rahner's exposition of St. Ignatius' "consolation without cause," Lonergan ignores its context. Rahner is commenting upon the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits in the *Spiritual Exercises*.⁵³ According to Ignatius, the particular rule upon which Rahner comments is the second rule of those which "will serve for a greater discernment of spirits."⁵⁴ In full, this rule states:

⁵² See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, second ed., translated by John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 72–93. It should be noted that, in his investigation of human reactions to the "numinous," Otto devotes his initial and more extensive attention to the *mysterium tremendum* (12–24).

⁵³ Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, translated by W. J. O'Hara (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1964), 129–69.

⁵⁴ *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, translated by Anthony Mottola, (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1964), 132.

It belongs to God alone to give consolation to the soul without previous cause, for it belongs to the Creator to enter into the soul, to leave it, and to act upon it, drawing it wholly to the love of His Divine Majesty. I say without previous cause, that is, without any perception or knowledge of any object from which such consolation might come to the soul through its own acts of intellect and will.⁵⁵

This rule is suitable for someone in the second week of the *Exercises* who has already made an examination of conscience, a general confession, and has mediated upon sin and Hell. It is for someone who has turned from sin and is in the process of coming to a deeper, more radical conversion to the Lord.⁵⁶ In other words, in the usual understanding of the *Exercises*, the first week is purgative and the second week illuminative.⁵⁷ What this rule describes is not some initial experience of God's love without knowledge of God, but a way of discerning which consolations are from a God with whom one is already in relation and which come from "the evil one." In fact, according to Ignatius, both "the good angel" and "the evil one" may console the soul via a previous cause.⁵⁸ This is to say, the consolation which comes from a creature comes via perception or knowledge of some "object," that is, something which can be identified as a cause. As Rahner states, "So the object is something from which the understanding and will gradually draw their consolation."⁵⁹ But with regard to God, such a consolation can come "spontaneously," that is, without any discernible cause, without any "object," and this is how one knows that it comes from God.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 133.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 47–78.

⁵⁷ On this point, see Sylvie Robert, "Union with God in the Ignatian Election," *The Way Supplement* 103 (May 2002): 100–12, at 101.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 133.

⁵⁹ Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, 133.

WHY DOES LONERGAN GO WRONG?

For someone who places so much importance on the asking of questions it is ironic that Lonergan does not ask enough questions. He does not test his thesis thoroughly enough. Also ironic is that, for someone who recognises the importance of making a distinction between knowledge which is personally verified and knowledge which is second-hand, there is no indication that his method has been personally verified. Lonergan gives no account of his own falling-in-love with God. His accounts of this supposed falling-in-love are all second-hand, and this may be part of the reason why he misinterprets them. However, besides these general problems there are also specific problems with regard to Lonergan's understanding of religious conversion.

The Question of God versus the Problem of Evil

Lonergan's fundamental anthropological assumption is that human beings are driven by their intellects, by their "drive to know what, why, how, and in [their] ability to reach intellectually satisfying answers."⁶⁰ According to him, this necessarily leads to the question of God being asked by everyone. Two questions can be asked of Lonergan's position. First, do all people seek to answer the question of God? Second, are we driven initially by our desire to know or by some other desire?

With regard to the first question, the testimony of Sacred Scripture is that although people can answer the question of God in the affirmative, and although the Logos enlightens every person, many people go to great lengths to avoid the question, and many prefer the darkness to enlightenment which, by the way, implies an experience with epistemological content (cf. Rom 1:18–32, Jn 1:9 & 3:19). Lonergan himself admits this when he says that, "The atheist may pronounce it empty. The agnostic may urge that he finds his investigation has been inconclusive. The contemporary humanist will refuse to allow the question to arise. But their negations presuppose the spark in our clod, our native

⁶⁰ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 101.

orientation to the divine.”⁶¹ On the contrary, one could argue that our fallen orientation is away from the divine, and that we can only be reoriented by the grace of God. For many people in our post-Christian society, it would appear that their thinking about God does not even rise to the level of negation. They do not even “refuse to allow the question to arise.” There is no active refusal, but a passive immersion in temporal pursuits. Many contemporary people fit the description given by T. S. Eliot in “Burnt Norton”—they are “distracted from distraction by distraction.”⁶² Or their epitaph could be written by Albert Camus’s Jean-Baptiste Clamence—“A single sentence will suffice for modern man. He fornicated and read the papers.”⁶³ Although perhaps a more contemporary one would read, “He and she surfed the ’net, posted on facebook, tweeted, and downloaded porn.” It is this reality, which can be traced back to the deception of the Evil One, that should motivate the evangelical zeal of Christians, in order to rescue people from contemporary forms of idolatry or final despair.⁶⁴

With regard to the second question, although many people do not raise the question of God, or are successful in avoiding it, there is a question which no one can avoid—the problem of evil. Every “religion,” “philosophy,” and “ideology” is an attempt to cure the human disease, the disease of suffering. This is our initial desire. Questions come subsequently as to how to escape from suffering. Some of these attempts to overcome suffering raise the question of God.

Continuing the medical metaphor, according to Peter Kreeft, one can analyse each of these attempts in terms of observation of symptoms, diagnosis of disease, prognosis of cure, and prescription for treatment. By way of some examples, for the Buddha, all of life is suffering (*dukkha*), the cause is selfish desire (*tanha*), the way to the extinction (*nirvana*) of suffering is the extinction of selfish desire, through the *yoga* of the noble eightfold path of purification and ego reduction. For

⁶¹ Ibid., 103.

⁶² T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), 17.

⁶³ Albert Camus, *The Fall*, translated by Justin O’Brien (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 6–7.

⁶⁴ See *Lumen Gentium*, §16, in *The Documents of Vatican II with Notes and Index, Vatican Translation* (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls Publications, 2009).

Muhammad, we are at war with others and within ourselves because we follow our own wills, but peace is possible in this life and Paradise in the next through submission (*islam*) to the will of Allah as revealed in the Qu'ran and summarised in the five pillars of Islam. For Plato, we are full of vices, which are caused by ignorance, but attainment of virtue is possible, through knowledge of the good. For the Stoics, we are unhappy, anxious, and full of suffering, because of our passions, but we can attain peace of mind, through cultivating passionlessness (*apatheia*). For Marx, alienation of the worker from his or her work and of class from class is caused by the capitalist system of the bourgeoisie's exploitation of the proletariat, but a classless society of peace, plenty, and prosperity for all can be achieved by a communist revolution in which the bourgeoisie are eliminated. For Freud, neuroses and psychoses are caused by the conflict between the id and the superego, but a reasonable homeostasis can be achieved through psychoanalysis. For the materialistic hedonist, we are all going to die because we are nothing more than carnal, but some temporary relief can be obtained through carnal pleasures. For the Christian, the answer is summed up in Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." None of us can escape death. We die because of sin. However, God can give us eternal life, which we receive as a free gift through being "in Christ."⁶⁵

Lonergan's Faith versus the Theological Virtue of Faith

Lonergan holds that it is from the experience of religious love as described in Roman 5:5 that faith is born. This is in keeping with his conviction that, in the experience of God's love flooding one's heart, love proceeds knowledge. However, what this means is that one does not fall in love with God. Rather, one falls in love with an experience. It is loving the gift, not the giver. Furthermore, by "faith" he does not mean the theological virtue, but something which is supposedly possible in any religion. By faith he means a cognitive change in a person which consists

⁶⁵ For the relation of religions, philosophies, and ideologies to theodicy, and many of the examples given above, see Peter Kreeft, *Back to Virtue* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 37–45.

in "a clouded revelation of absolute intelligence and intelligibility, absolute truth and reality, absolute goodness and holiness."⁶⁶ However, Lonergan gives no concrete examples of this kind of faith.

In their *Foundational Theology*, Neil Ormerod and Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer attempt to remedy this lacuna by relating a religious experience of Thomas Merton. According to them, Merton's experience of an overwhelming love for the people who surrounded him on the street was an experience of faith, one that enabled him to see "his monastic life [no longer] as a separate or spiritually higher life in relation to the rest of the world."⁶⁷

However, if one reads Merton's account of his initial repentance and conversion, his coming to faith some twenty years earlier, one finds a classic, even Augustinian, conversion story, an explicit, not "clouded," revelation. Merton's conversion begins with his reading of Etienne Gilson's *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* which leads him to accept the truth that it is God's very nature to exist. This in turn leads him to "an immense respect for. . . the Catholic faith" and to a recognition that "faith was something that had a very definite meaning and a most cogent necessity." He desired to go to church and, upon hearing the Apostles' Creed in an Episcopalian church, hoped "within myself that God would give me the grace someday to believe it."⁶⁸ From an intellectual acceptance of the truth that God wishes us to be in union with him he moved to desiring this, but was held back by being "so completely chained and fettered by my sins and my attachments." Eventually, he gives in to a "strong, sweet, gentle, clean urge" to go to Mass. In the homily he hears and believes the truth about Jesus proclaimed—his

⁶⁶ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 115–16.

⁶⁷ Ormerod & Jacobs-Vandegeer, *Foundational Theology*, 47–48, where they refer to Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 156–57. Here Ormerod and Jacobs-Vandegeer also refer to a comparison between love for God and love for a human being given by St. Francis de Sales. However, both the experience of Merton and the analogy of Francis refer to what might be called the post-initial conversion situation of a Christian. This is not to say that a person's turning from sin and turning to Christ need occur in a single event or be especially dramatic.

⁶⁸ Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1948) 171, 172–74, 175 & 176.

humanity and divinity, his incarnation, and his suffering and death for us.⁶⁹ Leaving after the Mass of the Catechumens, he recounts how

my eyes looked about me at a new world. I could not understand what it was that had happened to make me so happy, which I was so much at peace, so content with life for I was not yet used to the savor that comes with an actual grace—indeed, there was no impossibility in a person’s hearing and believing such a sermon and being justified, that is, receiving sanctifying grace in his soul as a habit, and beginning, from that moment, to live the divine and supernatural life.⁷⁰

Though still “content to stand by and admire,” eventually he has a “*tolle, legge*” moment—“What are you waiting for?” it said. ‘Why are you sitting here? Why do you hesitate? You know what you ought to do? Why don’t you do it?’” He goes immediately to see a priest and tells him that he wants to become a Catholic. As his desire for baptism grows he “made a Mission with the men of the parish, listening twice a day to sermons . . . and hearing Mass and kneeling at Benediction before the Christ Who was gradually revealing Himself to me.”⁷¹ One of these sermons is on Hell, and he reacts to it with the “fear of the Lord”:

My reaction to the sermon on hell was . . . what spiritual writers call “confusion”—but it was not the hectic, emotional confusion that comes from passion and from self-love. It was a quiet sorrow and patient grief at the thought of these tremendous and terrible sufferings which I deserved and into which I stood a very good chance of entering, in my present condition: but at the same time, the magnitude of the punishment gave me a special and particular understanding of the greatness of the evil of sin. But the final result was a great deepening and awakening of my soul, a real increase in spiritual profundity and an advance in faith and love and confidence in God, to whom alone I could look to salvation

⁶⁹ Ibid., 205, 206 & 209–10.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 210–11.

⁷¹ Ibid., 212, 215 & 217.

from these things. And therefore I all the more earnestly desired Baptism.⁷²

Revelation or Salvation versus Revelation and Salvation

Lonergan holds that religious faith is generic to religion whereas belief is specific to each religion. Following Lonergan, Ormerod and Jacobs-Vandegeer explain this distinction and its implications thus:

Religious faith has a transcultural base in religious experience (heuristically defined), but religious beliefs of all kinds are tied to the history of the community within which they emerge. Hence, faith and belief are distinct, and this distinction marks a key commitment in our theological foundations. The distinction has a transcultural basis in religious experience and produces consequences for how theologians appropriate and communicate the meaning of a religion in a particular culture. The foundations of theology are presupposed in our systematic attempts at understanding the realities affirmed and described in doctrines. Scriptural references or allusions are not methodologically foundational within our approach. Nor are references to revelation. Rather, Scriptural meanings (interpretation) are appropriated (dialectic) within the life of the community (history) and affirmed as revelatory (doctrines) on the basis of theologians' foundational commitments (implied or explicit) in cognitional theory, epistemology, metaphysics, and religion.⁷³

What Ormerod and Jacobs-Vandegeer oppose is a supposed conflation of faith and belief which they see as defining faith in terms of revelation, and presenting theology as a science superior to secular sciences. Thus:

If faith unlocks the door of salvation and always entails belief, then theologians treat the unbelieving world with suspicion. It may make sense for them to resolutely oppose the world in principle. Or perhaps they simply dismiss viewpoints that

⁷² Ibid., 217–18.

⁷³ Ormerod & Jacobs-Vandegeer, *Foundational Theology*, 52.

occur outside the margins of salvation. They expunge or domesticate foreign (secular) influence in theology and reframe basic categories in Scriptural or ecclesial terms, which, in their way of thinking, are nearer to revelation. Identifying faith (*fides qua*) with religious belief (*fides quae*) then collapses religious experience into doctrines. Such a move can lead to the denial of the ontological integrity of the created world.⁷⁴

According to Ormerod and Jacobs-Vandegeer, this supposed collapsing of faith into belief causes a conflation of revelation and salvation. For them:

The distinction between faith and belief on the basis of religious experience allows us to maintain the objectivity of revelation without restricting God's offer of salvation to the Christian community. . . . The foundational reality of religious experience as prior to doctrines allows the churches and religions to meet on the (heuristically defined) common ground of reciprocity with the other as love and (potentially) loving. . . . a theology with a foundation in the universality of religious experience contextualises differences in religious beliefs with reference to the experienced gift that meets the inner desire for self-transcendence in each of us.⁷⁵

The assumptions here are that religious experience in various religions is essentially the same kind of experience, albeit interpreted differently, and that failing to make a distinction between faith and belief must lead to a conflation of salvation with revelation. One problem here is that of an incorrect taxonomy – the genus “religion.” First, “religions” are not the only attempts to solve the human dilemma. We could categorise these attempts in at least three comprehensive ways. First, physical (e.g. Materialistic Hedonism, Marxism, Freudism,) and metaphysical (e.g. Platonism, Islam, Shintoism). Second, theistic (e.g. Judaism, Christianity, Islam) and non-theistic (e.g. Hinduism, Taoism, Theosophy). Third, those that claim to be discovered (e.g. Buddhism, Marxism, Fascism) and those that claim to be revealed (e.g. Judaism, Islam, Christianity).

⁷⁴ Ibid., 52–53.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 54–55.

A second problem is that the supposed commonality of religious experience, as proposed by Lonergan—that there is a transcendent reality; that he is immanent in human hearts; that he is supreme beauty, truth, righteousness, goodness; that he is love, mercy, compassion; that the way to him is repentance, self-denial, prayer; that the way is love of one's neighbour, even of one's enemies; that the way is love of God, so that bliss is conceived as knowledge of God, union with him, or dissolution into him—is not borne out by the data. In following Heiler, Lonergan has followed the tendency of Heiler's time for Christians to engage in a kind of spiritual colonialism, reading specifically Christian beliefs into other religions, and theistic beliefs into non-theistic religions. The seven commonalities named by Heiler and Lonergan cannot be found in all the religions which Lonergan names—Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Zoroastrian Mazdaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Neither Judaism nor Islam teach that one must forgive one's enemies. Apart from Judaism, no other religion teaches that God is immanent in human hearts. Hinduism and Taoism are pantheistic, they do not teach that God is a "He," a transcendent reality distinct from all other reality. Buddhism, as taught by the Buddha, is, in fact, entirely agnostic about God or any other transcendent reality. One could go on multiplying differences. The one thing upon which all these religions and many others agree is the natural law, the Tao, love of neighbour, what one finds taught in commandments four to ten.

A third problem is the understanding of *fides*. The assumption is that there is a generic subjective "religious faith" (*fides qua*) of which the Christian act of faith is a species. However, for a Christian, while *fides quae creditur* refers to that which is believed, call it "doctrine" or "content," this content is Trinitarian, as is the *fides qua creditur*, the act by which one believes. One believes God the Father in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ormerod and Jacobs-Vandegeer present us with an either/or proposition, a choice between what they identify as a Radical Orthodox approach which "critiques secular reason as a way of knowing independently of religious belief,"⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Ibid., 53. Whether or not Ormerod and Jacobs-Vandegeer are correct in their estimation of the Radical Orthodox approach is a question which shall not be addressed here.

as opposed to “a theology with a foundation in the universality of religious experience.”⁷⁷ However, *fides qua* and *fides quae* can be integrated without conflation, and without expunging or domesticating foreign (secular) influence in theology or denying the ontological integrity of the created world though following the lead of *Gaudium et Spes* 22, which affirms the intrinsic value of the created order. By his incarnation, human nature and, through this nature, the whole of the created order, has been assumed, not annulled, by Christ. This does not mean that, in Christ, new knowledge is revealed about the human person and the cosmos, and that this can merely be added to the knowledge that we have via philosophy and science, but that our new understanding of the human person and the cosmos which comes through Christ enables us to unify our natural knowledge of the human person and the cosmos into a coherent whole. As Paul O’Callaghan says, Christ “gives a unitary and harmonic intelligibility to everything that exists and that we know, in particular to human nature”.⁷⁸

From a Thomistic perspective, Matthew Levering explains this unitary and harmonic intelligibility thus:

In discussing *sacra doctrina* [theology] as wisdom, Aquinas makes reference to both the intellectual virtue and the gift of the Holy Spirit. He first distinguishes *sacra doctrina* as wisdom from the intellectual virtue of wisdom. It might seem that *sacra doctrina*, which is knowledge (*scientia*) of the things that have been divinely revealed. . . merely complements and extends the ordering achieved by the intellectual virtue of wisdom. On this view, *sacra doctrina* would be limited to adding knowledge inaccessible to natural reason, such as the teaching of the Trinity or of supernatural beatitude as humankind’s ultimate end. In fact, *sacra doctrina* both adds this supernatural knowledge and reorders all that can be known naturally in light of the triune God as our beginning and supernatural end.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Ibid., 55.

⁷⁸ Paul O’Callaghan, *Children of God in the World: An Introduction to Christian Anthropology* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 80–81.

⁷⁹ Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 31. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1, q.1,

Why does Lonergan separate what he calls “faith” and “belief”? Because it enables him to see the work of the Holy Spirit in people before the Incarnation and in those who even now have not heard the Gospel, and thus not conflate salvation with revelation. For him, “Religious experience spontaneously manifests itself in changed attitudes, in the harvest of the Spirit that is love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control.”⁸⁰ The question is: Is this the only way to account for such a work of the Holy Spirit?

According to John Paul II, it was the teaching of the Second Vatican Council “that the Spirit is at work in the heart of every person, through the ‘seeds of the Word,’ to be found in human initiatives—including religious ones—and in mankind’s efforts to attain truth, goodness and God himself.”⁸¹ Moreover, John Paul held “that Jesus has a unique relationship with every person, which enables us to see in every human face the face of Christ.”⁸² How can these two claims be united? In *Redemptoris Missio*, John Paul states:

The Spirit’s presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions. Indeed, the Spirit is at the origin of the noble ideals and undertakings which benefit humanity on its journey through history: “The Spirit of God with marvellous foresight directs the course of the ages and renews the face of the earth” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 26). The Risen Christ “is now at work in human hearts through the strength of his Spirit, not only in instilling a desire for the world to come but also thereby animating, purifying and reinforcing the noble aspirations which drive the human family to make its life one that is more human and to direct the whole earth to this end”

a.3. See also Brian J. Shanley, O.P., “*Sacra Doctrina* and the Theology of Disclosure,” *The Thomist* 61 (1997): 163–87.

⁸⁰ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 108.

⁸¹ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 28. He refers the reader to *Ad Gentes*, 3, 11, 15; and *Gaudium et Spes*, 10–11, 22, 26, 38, 41, 92–93. See also “It is precisely because he is ‘sent’ that the missionary experiences the consoling presence of Christ, who is with him at every moment of life—‘Do not be afraid . . . for I am with you’ (Acts 18:9–10)—and who awaits him in the heart of every person.” *Redemptoris Missio*, 88.

⁸² John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 81.

(*Gaudium et Spes*, 38; cf. 93). Again, it is the Spirit who sows the “seeds of the Word” present in various customs and cultures, preparing them for full maturity in Christ (*Lumen Gentium*, 17; *Ad Gentes* 3, 15). . . . This is the same Spirit who is at work in the Incarnation and in the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus, and who is at work in the Church. He is therefore not an alternative to Christ, nor does he fill a sort of void which is sometimes suggested as existing between Christ and the Logos. Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions serves as a preparation for the Gospel (*Lumen Gentium*, 16) and can only be understood in reference to Christ, the Word who took flesh by the power of the Spirit “so that as perfectly human he would save all human beings and sum up all things” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 45; cf. *Dei verbum*, 54).⁸³

Although this can account for the relationship between Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit outside the Body of Christ today, and present the work of the Holy Spirit prior to the Incarnation as something to be fulfilled in the Incarnation, how can the work of the Holy Spirit before the Incarnation be one with the saving work of the Word made flesh? In speaking of “our Lord Jesus Christ” (Col 1:3), St. Paul says that, “He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible (Col 1:15–16).” As Hans Urs von Balthasar tells us:

The New Testament hymns (John 1, Eph. 1, Col. 1) are agreed that the cosmos as a whole. . . was created by the Logos (together with God), but not by a *Logos asarkos*, but by the Son of God who from eternity was predestined to be made flesh. ‘Without Him was not anything made that was made’ (John 1.3). “In Him all things hold together” (Col 1.17). This One who at the beginning is Creator of all will also be, in the fullness of time, the Redeemer of all. It is God’s plan to guide and lead the course of history to the Incarnation

⁸³ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 28 & 29.

in order "to sum up all things under Christ as Head, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1.10).⁸⁴

How can the Incarnation be the beginning of creation and the means of creation? The key term here is "eternity." John Saward answers this question as follows:

If we are to understand how Christ as man, as Redeemer, can be the One in whom the cosmos was created, we must remember that the Blessed Trinity wills and effects the temporal world's creation, redemption, and consummation *eternally*. There are no "moments" in the everlasting Now of God. No moment of time is "outside His eternal embrace." In a single, simple, eternal act, the Triune God creates free creatures, angels and men, with the supernatural destiny of adoptive sonship, permits and sin of Lucifer and Adam, unites human nature to the person of the Son so that He can make satisfaction for human sin and destroy the works of the Devil, raises His human body from the tomb, and in Him, at the end of time, brings the whole universe to its fulfilment.⁸⁵

Our difficulty is that we cannot comprehend this reality. In order to have some understanding of it, we must think of it as God performing a series of chronologically discrete acts, beginning with "Let there be light."

This eternal perspective enables one to attempt an explanation of the teaching of *Gaudium et Spes* that, "For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man."⁸⁶ In his commentary on this teaching, Joseph Ratzinger states that in it, "The idea of the 'assumptio hominis' is first touched upon in its full ontological depth. The human nature of all men is one; Christ's taking to himself the one human nature of man is an event which affects every

⁸⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Epilog* (Einsiedeln-Trier: Johannes Verlag, 1987), 7. Cf. Saward, *Christ is the Answer*, 62.

⁸⁵ Saward, *Christ is the Answer*, 61. The internal quotation is from John Paul II's catechesis of 9 April 1985 on the eternity of God. Cf. Louis Bouyer, *Cosmos: Le Monde et la gloire de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1982), 305.

⁸⁶ *Gaudium et Spes*, §22, in *The Documents of Vatican II with Notes and Index, Vatican Translation*.

human being; consequently human nature in every human being is Christologically characterized.”⁸⁷

Ontologically, “divinity” and “humanity” are not “present” anywhere. Only persons are “present.” Since the one person in Christ is the Son of God, wherever he is present he is present in his divinity and in his humanity. Avoiding the Nestorian tendency to separate the two natures of Christ, this is why Christ can be humanly present not only in heaven, but also in the Eucharist. If every human being has been created through the Incarnation of the Word, then the Incarnate Word is the ground of their being, the one in whom they “live and move and have [their] being” (Acts 17:28).

In concrete terms, how can non-Christians be saved if they have never encountered Christ? A possible solution is raised by the presentation of the last judgment (cf. Mt 25:31–46). With St. Paul, we already know that anything done to a disciple of Christ is done to Christ (cf. Acts 9:4–5). We know that anyone who gives even a cup of cold water to someone because they are a disciple of Christ will not lack their reward (cf. Mt 10:42). Matthew’s last judgment, however, seems to introduce another perspective. Just who are the “righteous” of Christ who love their neighbours? Given that, according to Ratzinger and John Paul II, Christ is present in every human person, can we hold, as St. Teresa of Calcutta did, that someone who picks up a dying Hindu baby in the streets of Calcutta is picking up Christ, or agree with John Paul II, that “Jesus has a unique relationship with every person, which enables us to see in every human face the face of Christ”?⁸⁸ And just who are “the nations”? Is everyone included in this group, Christian and non-Christian, or are they “the gentiles,” those who do not belong to the New Israel? Could someone who is not a Christian, who has not encountered Christ in faith and baptism, encounter Christ in what St. Teresa of Calcutta called “Jesus in a distressing disguise”? Would that account for the surprise in their voices, “Lord,

⁸⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, Part I, “The Church and Man’s Calling,” Introductory Article and Chapter 1, “The Dignity of the Human Person,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. V, Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, translated by W. J. O’Hara (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), 115–63, at 160.

⁸⁸ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 81.

when did we see you" (Mt 25:37 & 44)? There may not be an anonymous Christianity, but there may be innumerable anonymous Christs, whom non-Christians have encountered without knowing it, and who have unknowingly established a relationship of self-giving love with him; a real encounter, but with Christ "in disguise."

Pelagian Confidence versus the Hope of Wounded Human Beings

Despite his insistence on the gratuity of God's love, there is something of a Pelagian flavour to Lonergan's method. It is not the "hard" variety of Pelagius and Julian of Eclanum, with its insistence that, because we are capable of not sinning, we are all the more in danger of damnation if we do sin, but a "soft" Pelagianism which does concern itself with sin very much. There is little effort to account for sin before or contemporary with conversion. Rather than using the terms sin and righteousness he speaks in terms of authenticity and inauthenticity. His treatment of the movement from inauthenticity to authenticity is post-conversional.⁸⁹ Moreover, sin and repentance are only one aspect of this movement, along with the movements from misunderstanding to understanding, error to truth, and religious aberration to genuine religion.⁹⁰ This is in stark contrast to the relationship between the intellectual and volitional aspects of the human person as portrayed by St. Paul. For him, the fundamental movement is from "authenticity" to "inauthenticity." Although people know the truth about who God is, their initial sin is their refusal to worship him. This choice leads to futility in their thinking and a darkening of their intellects. This in turn leads to the folly of false worship. Finally, they are handed over by God to moral depravity (cf. Rom 1:18–32). For Paul, sin is not just a particular kind of "inauthenticity," but the root cause of all "inauthenticity."

Because of Lonergan's assumption that one's initial experience of God is that of a non-cognitive being-in-love, he is unable to account for an experience of God

⁸⁹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 110.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

which leads to a rejection of God, that is, the sin against the Holy Spirit. If the experience of being-in-love with God means being in love with him with one's whole heart and soul and mind and strength, if in faith one experiences the fulfilment of one's unrestricted thrust to self-transcendence, how could one refuse? Or why is conversion not immediate and universal upon a person's reaching the ability to ask questions?

It is true that the Holy Spirit is at work in every human heart, and every human heart resists that work. It is true that the Word does enlighten every human being, and every human being tries to avoid that light. While subsequent experiences of God can be experiences of his love, and lead to deeper repentance and conversion, one's initial experience of God is not an experience of love, but an experience of light (cf. Jn 1:9), and some reject the light because their deeds are evil (cf. Jn 3:19–21). God's enlightenment is a loving act, but it is not experienced as love. Staying in the light is humiliating, since it involves a double revelation – who God is and who we are, his holiness and our sinfulness. Our hearts are restless because, while avoiding God, we are seeking a fulfilment that finite things cannot give, fulfilment on our own terms. God has made us for himself, but we can reject that destiny, and this is what causes the restlessness of our hearts, our refusal to admit our true destiny, and our constant search for substitutes.

Lonergan tells a comforting story, but not the true traumatic one. A good and surprisingly honest witness to the true story is Jean-Paul Sartre. In his *Les Mots*, he gives an account of his rejection of the light, caused by the humiliation of God seeing him sinning.

Raised in the Catholic faith, I learned that the Almighty had made me for His glory. That was more than I dared dream. But later, I did not recognize in the fashionable God in whom I was taught to believe, the one whom my soul was awaiting. I needed a Creator; I was given a Big Boss. The two were one and the same, but I didn't realize it. . . . I was led to disbelief. . . by my grandparents' indifference. Nevertheless, I believed. In my nightshirt, kneeling on the bed, with my hands together, I said my prayers every day, but I thought of God less and less often. . . . Only once did I have the feeling that He existed. I had been playing with matches and burned a small rug. I was in the process of covering up my crime when

suddenly God saw me. I felt His gaze inside my head and on my hands. I whirled about in the bathroom, horribly visible, a live target. Indignation saved me. I flew into a rage against so crude an indiscretion, I blasphemed. . . . He never looked at me again. I have just related the story of a missed vocation: I needed God, He was given to me, I received Him without realizing that I was seeking Him. Failing to take root in my heart, He vegetated in me for a while, then He died. Whenever anyone speaks to me about Him today, I say, with the easy amusement of an old beau who meets a former belle: "Fifty years ago, had it not been for that misunderstanding, that mistake, the accident that separated us, there might have been something between us."⁹¹

CONCLUSION – A THEISTIC VERSUS A CHRISTIC PREMISE

Referring back to Rahner's and Nichols's criticisms, we can see that they were on the right track. Lonergan fails to take into account what is unique to Christian conversion—Jesus Christ. Christian conversion is not a specific instance in a genus labelled "religious conversion" or "religious experience," but is *sui generis*. In other words, Christians do not undergo a "religious conversion." They undergo a conversion to Christ and thus enter into him. Perhaps it would be good for us if sometimes we avoided the term "conversion" and simply spoke in terms of "turning from sin" and "turning to God in Christ." *Pace* Lonergan and his followers, the foundational commitment of a Christian theologian is not to be found in cognitional theory, epistemology, metaphysics, and religion, but in faith in Christ. This faith has a Trinitarian foundation. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, God the Father, in his Word made flesh, reveals to us who he is and who we are. The essential reason Lonergan's method is not valid is because it is theistic rather than Christic. It is not a Trinitarian method. It is not sufficient for a theological method to be "theological." It must also be "Christological." Through faith in Christ who, by the gift of the Holy Spirit via his glorified humanity (cf. Jn 7:37–39 & 16:7), is

⁹¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, translated by Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964), 97 & 100–03.

renewing our minds in the image of his own human mind (cf. Rom 12:2), the Father enables us to apprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of the mystery of the Gospel, the wisdom of God (cf. 1 Cor 2:1–16, Eph 1:3–23 & 3:7–19). We have only one Teacher, one Theologian (cf. Mt 23:10). Having been incorporated into Christ, we can say, “I have been crucified with Christ and I theologise no more, but Christ theologises in me, and now I theologise in the flesh by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (cf. Gal 2:20).

Review Essay

WHY FAITH *MAKES* SENSE:
On Graham Ward's *Unbelievable*

Graham Ward. *Unbelievable: Why We Believe and Why We Don't*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013, x + 245pp.

We believe without belief, beyond belief
– Wallace Stevens¹

Khegan Delport

Credo ut *Intelligam*: this dictum of Augustine and Anselm could serve justly as a dilution of Graham Ward's central contention in this monograph. He himself summarizes his position in similar terms towards the end of the book: "I believe in order that I may know" (p. 219), a statement that encapsulates his contention that belief is necessary for any perception of reality. To be sure, his reading public are not assumed to be the theologically literate, or even the religiously devout, but one can nonetheless read the trajectory of his argument as cohering with the projects of other like-minded thinkers, who contend that

¹ "Flyer's Fall," in *Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p. 294.

without “religious” sentiments of some kind—however subliminal or nascent – the world of phenomena is rendered gnoseologically dubious. A sample of comparative projects would include Jean-Louis Chrétien’s blending of phenomenology and theological conjecture,² or Rowan Williams’ attempt to understand the creative instincts³ and language⁴ within the rubrics of grace and “givenness.” Additionally, one could mention John Milbank’s denial of any coherent notion of human sociality⁵ or the world of things⁶ without theological dimensionality, as well as Catherine Pickstock’s reflections on the relation between ritualized liturgy and the construction of sensibility.⁷ Ward does not explicitly place his argument within this developing tradition, but the inherent grammar of his argument makes substantial links to such styles of thought.

As can be seen, the given title of this review deliberately plays upon the double meaning inherent in the language of “making sense.”⁸ The idiomatic usage implies reference to the reasonable and the “commonsensical,” thereby invoking the often-unreflective, intuitive sensation of harmony within the realm of human communication and understanding (a tradition stemming from Shaftesbury, Reid, and Hume). In this register, “making sense” is equated with the order of rationality and the common good, as when we say, for example, that a certain idea “makes

² Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, trans. Anne Davenport (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).

³ Rowan Williams, *Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love* (London and Harrisburg: Continuum, 2005).

⁴ Rowan Williams, *The Edge of Words: God and the Habits of Language* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

⁵ John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

⁶ John Milbank, ‘The Thomistic Telescope: Truth and Identity.’ *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 80, no. 2 (2006): 193–226.

⁷ C. J. C. Pickstock, “The Ritual Birth of Sense,” *Telos* 162 (Spring 2013): 29–55.

⁸ For a philosophical genealogy of the various notions of “sense”, see Fabienne Brugère, “Common Sense”; Barbara Cassin, Sandra Laugier, Alain de Libera, Irène Rosier-Catach and Giacinta Spinoza, “Sense / Meaning”; Alain De Libera, “Sensus Communis,” in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, ed. Barbara Cassin (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 152–154; 949–967; 967–968 resp.

sense" or is "sensible." In Ward's argument, the outworking of this usage lies within his tacit apologetics for the general category of "belief" and "faith" against the claims of a "mythical" secularism which seeks to assert the public irrationality and decline of religious discourse and practice (pp. 161–186).⁹ However, a more radical interpretation of this phrase is given in the text, one that seems to be foundational for Ward's contention: namely, that it is precisely the category of belief as a perceptive *disposition*¹⁰ that *makes* possible "common sensation" (to use an Aristotelian phrase). It is the "dispositional space" of belief (to reference Antonio Damasio) that makes the human construction of any "meaning" fundamentally achievable (pp. 98–99, and *passim*). To see anything is always a determinate *seeing-as* (as Ward reiterates frequently) so that what is seen and sensed is never blandly neutral or "objective" but rather is disposed and perspectival. Such dispositional frameworks largely exist in inchoate form, and it takes conscious reflection to be aware that we are operating within the arena of such non-thematized beliefs.

And so it is Ward's task in this monograph to manifest how such processes of belief are embodied within human evolution and culture, a journey that takes us from the mysterious portals of Qafzeh, Chauvet and Shanidar, to the heights of Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*, reaching eventually the speculations of French phenomenology. Such a grounding makes this book Ward's most interdisciplinary work to date, and (much like Conor Cunningham's *Darwin's Pious Idea*¹¹) shows that there is a growing tendency within Radical Orthodoxy towards embracing this kind of work (further belying the contention of erstwhile critics that the movement displays a wanton insularity). Such interdisciplinarity, in a comparable

⁹ Also cf. Graham Ward, "The Myth of Secularism," *Telos* 167 (Summer 2014): 162–79.

¹⁰ Ward describes his understanding of belief as *disposition* in the following manner: "I am defining 'belief...as a disposition...and while belief can be conscious, even rationally justified through a degree of reflective critique, it is not solely conscious. Preconscious belief is then an implicit knowledge. I call it a 'disposition' because, as a form of behaviour, its orientation is 'eccentric' – it looks beyond the individual who believes toward some object or person or condition in the world. It is 'disposed towards' as basic evolution is disposed towards survival and reproduction" (*Unbelievable*, pp. 29–30).

¹¹ Conor Cunningham, *Darwin's Pious Idea: Why Ultra-Darwinists and Creationists Both Get It Wrong* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

manner to its position on the theology-philosophy kinship, seems to be based at once on a generously 'Catholic' idea of the *analogia entis* and a Thomistic notion of grace whereby the natural order is able to opaquely intuit and disclose, in a non-finalizable manner, the ontological truth of things. In this perspective, the super-addition of grace is seen to have a certain "fittingness" (*convenientia*) in relation to the economy of created being. This factor (as Ward's recent work shows) is basic to his practice of an "engaged systematics"¹² that seeks to relate the "porosity"¹³ of life to theological reasoning in general, overcoming the often presupposed 'dualisms' that falsely bifurcate the divisions of intellectual labour. One also suspects that the diffused theological culture of "incarnationalism" within Anglo-Catholic thinking has done its work here, a trend that manifests itself in Ward's previous orientations towards embodiedness and questions of gender, and appears now in his interactions with the realm of the neurosciences and evolutionary biology, as well as his recent emphasis on the psychology of affectivity.¹⁴ As Ward says towards the conclusion of the monograph: "belief incarnates and is always incarnational" (p. 220).

The subtitle of the book gestures towards the central question which Ward's argument aims to explore, namely the varying factors that contribute to the structures of belief. There are three questions which Ward seeks to answer: (i) What makes a *belief*? (i) What makes belief *believable*? (iii) What *makes* a belief believable? Regarding the first question, it should be said that belief is understood to have at least two levels of operation: (1) belief as the primordial disposition of *seeing-as* which operates as a mode of "liminal processing" that "thinks" and "reacts" more "instinctively than our conscious rational deliberation" (p. 12). Such beliefs are prior to and deeper than instrumental and causal notions of "reasons for" (p.

¹² Graham Ward, *How the Light Gets In: Ethical Life I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 115–144.

¹³ This language is drawn from Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 33–65.

¹⁴ Graham Ward, "Affect: Towards a Theology of Experience," *Radical Orthodoxy: Theology, Philosophy, Politics* 1, no. 1–2 (2012): 55–80; Ward, "Salvation: The Pedagogy of Affect," *Nederduits Gereformeerde Tydskrif* Supplement 1 (2014): 999–1013.

13). In addition to this notion, (2) belief can be understood as a conscious and "specific commitment" that manifests itself in varying forms of religious faith and choate forms of believing (p. 219).

The second question regards issue of believability, and relates to the realm of culture and history, and how these impact the spheres of "mental imaging, intention, perception, judgement, image-making, knowledge, sense of the self and others as agents, and relations of trust or distrust with respect to agency" which are "an integral part of numerous forms of symbolic action, but also the production and dissemination of ideology" (p. 15). The impact of cultural imagination in regard to belief's believability is pivotal for Ward's argument, and the reality of interpretation in all our evaluations hereby complicates the modern "hierarchical" distinction between "belief" and "knowledge," "interpretation," and "evidence." The importance of the 'the hermeneutical turn' is here clearly admitted by Ward, with critical theorists such as Anderson, Bourdieu, Castoriadis, and Certeau being commandeered for support in this regard (the last mentioned being particularly important).¹⁵ Ward also references Kant's famous distinction between phenomena and noumena with the aim of articulating the point that we cannot know things in themselves, since we only perceive something *as* something, and therefore can make an "*approach*" towards such knowledge, without necessarily ever "*having*" such knowledge (pp. 16–17; also cf. pp. 214–215).

(In passing, critical notice should be given here since this is by no means an uncontroversial contention, and when it is combined with Ward's broadly post-Husserlian framework¹⁶ one wonders if Ward is not giving sway to a certain

¹⁵ Also cf. Ward, *How the Light Gets In*, pp. 255–285 for a summary of his arguments on believability, and a more in-depth treatment of Certeau's notions of belief. Certeau's own positions can be found in Michel de Certeau *The Mystic Fable: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, vol. 1, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995) and Certeau, *The Possession of Loudun*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000).

¹⁶ To be sure, I am *not* saying that Ward position fully coheres with the Husserl's brand of phenomenology (as he makes clear, his own position is more in line with the projects of Chrétien and Merleau-Ponty). However, in light of the Kantian presuppositions of Husserl's model, Ward's invocation here of Kant is not surprising. Ward elsewhere has had some critical things to say regarding the practices of phenomenological reduction. On this point, one could consult Graham Ward, "The Logos, the Body and the World: On the Phenomenological

Kantian apophaticism whereby the *Ding-an-Sich* (or Husserlian *epoché*) is considered to operate with an analogous function to the Thomistic notion of *esse*.¹⁷ Such Kantian “negative theology” has been espoused by Donald MacKinnon¹⁸ and Paul Janz,¹⁹ but has been criticized as having ‘dogmatist’ assumptions regarding the surveillability of metaphysical limits.²⁰

The third question relates to “the conscious social production of belief” which is aligned with “the deployments of power” in the “social ‘imaginary’” (p. 18). In accordance with Bourdieu’s notion of belief as “symbolic capital,”²¹ Ward argues that

The social imaginary and the cultural competition for value are both founded upon making what might be believed believable by any number of other people. To make any set of ideas about the world believable means winning support, and therefore the social and cultural resources accorded such support (p. 20).

The sociological observation that the phenomena of varying beliefs is related to questions of power and cultural dynamics within human society is here a largely descriptive enterprise. As is clear, Ward is not making a claim for any particular

Border,” in *Transcending Boundaries in Philosophy and Theology*, eds. Kevin Vanhoozer and Martin Warner (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 105–126.

¹⁷ On Thomistic *esse*, see Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas: Three Essays* (London: Faber & Faber, 1957); John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001); Gilbert Narcisse, O.P. “Thomistic Realism?” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition 8, no. 4 (2010): 783–798.

¹⁸ Donald MacKinnon, “Kant’s Agnosticism,” in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty: A Donald MacKinnon Reader*, ed. John McDowell. (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2011), pp. 27–34; MacKinnon, “Kant’s Philosophy of Religion,” *Philosophy* 50, no. 192 (1975): 131–144.

¹⁹ Paul D. Janz, *God, the Mind’s Desire: Reference, Reason and Christian Thinking* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 123–167.

²⁰ John Milbank, “A Critique of the Theology of Right,” in *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell 1997), pp. 7–35; Michael Hanby, “Review: God, The Mind’s Desire: Reference, Reason and Christian Thinking by Paul D. Janz,” *Modern Theology* 22, no. 2 (2006): 307–309.

²¹ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods,” in *The Field of Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 74–111.

belief-system, but merely taking notice of the various requirements needed for any specific item of cultural capital to achieve wide-spread recognition. It is a question we shall turn to later, but there does seem to be a lack of clarity here regarding the criteria for *discernment* in adjudicating amongst competing belief-systems within this work. It will be argued later in this review that there *are* some potential criteria which can be so extracted from this work, but they are not systematically delineated. Clearly, Ward is attempting—in light of his potentially non-committed audience—to appeal to a broad base of intellectual consensus, without making his argument dependent upon one specific instauration of belief. However, by leaving questions of *judgement* and *truth* open-ended in this manner, there is a risk that the proliferations and productions of “belief” are merely associated with the flux of cultural influence, thereby leaving open the possibility of a rather cynical or Whiggish judgement being taken on the importance of any particular faith, or belief in general. Believability *could* be read here merely as the product of the will-to-power. This is certainly *not* Ward’s intention, as can be seen (for example) in his tirades on the incoherence of secularism, and on the importance of a committed, politicized Christian discipleship within the context of “postmaterialism.”²² However, without clearly announcing the criteria for discerning such a hierarchy of beliefs, there is the risk of such a conclusion being made by the reader.

Underlying Ward’s account of belief is Socrates’ famous allegory of the cave: as the sun casts shadows in the visible world, so the Good gives forth its own intelligible “images” within the realm of sense. To wit, these “images” are grasped via the exercise of “opinion” (*pistis*) and “reason” (*dianoia*), which involve us in the progressive unveiling of these invisibilities within the material spheres of life: “[O]ur living with and among the material objects of the visible world will always mean that we live in the realm of belief” (p. 24). This exercise of “reason” is processional and ever-deepening since it always remains “incomplete,” “intentional,” and thereby “directed somewhere”: “It is ‘about’ something” (p. 24) and participates in

²² Graham Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Postmaterial Citizens* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).

an “end-directed or teleological scheme of coming to know” (p. 25). Belief is therefore pervasive in our interaction with the world, and does not have to be overtly “religious”:

[B]elief itself, though perhaps orientated towards ... transcendence, has a reality and a function with respect to knowing, being and doing that need not be associated with religion. Believing would be an important and constitutive aspect in the process of coming to know, in the operation of reason and in the pursuit of intelligence (p. 27).

Important for Ward’s project here is to show how these processes of belief-formation are inscribed within the exigencies of evolution and biological development (since mind and matter here are *not* construed in a Cartesian fashion²³). The fact that we are forward-moving, forward-looking hominids who are able to survey our environments from an upright position, combined with our greater sensitivity regarding touch and hand-use is the basis for the elevated intelligence of *homo sapiens* (a point already intuited by Aristotle²⁴). This intelligence is not primarily manifest in the choate and explicit formulations of one’s world-relation, but can be seen in the more subtle and implicit movements of “proprioception” (Raymond Tallis) in which “sensing, evaluating and making sense” are “earlier than cognitive perception as such” (p. 31). This is linked to the use of the hand as a “somatic tool” (and tool-making in general), which assists in the gradual modulation towards what has been called “prefontalization” (Terrence Deacon) in the neocortical lobes of the brain (a process also known as “encephalization”). This progress in brain-development leads eventually to the emergence of the *Homo symbolicus*, the advent of the linguistic animal (pp. 33–36). Here the concept of “intentionality” comes to the fore, an idea of fundamental importance for palaeoanthropology, as can be seen, for example, in Ward’s

²³ For more on this point, one could consult the excellent summary contained in Thomas Fuchs, “Overcoming Dualism,” *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 12, no. 2: 115–117.

²⁴ On this point, see ‘Body and Touch’ in Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*. One could also consult John Milbank, “The Soul of Reciprocity, Part Two: Reciprocity Granted,” *Modern Theology* 17, no. 4 (2001): 485–507. Ward himself has also made some contributions on this point in “The Logos, the Body and the World: On the Phenomenological Border”.

reference to the discovery of ancient burial sites in Shanidar, Qafzeh, and Atapuerca. (These are not isolated occurrences, since the construction of hand-axes, arrow-heads, cave paintings, and sign-making in general are inexplicable without some notion intentionality amongst early hominids.) These practices and rituals, as intentional activities, display the presence of “creative consciousness, forward planning, instrumental reasoning and shared understanding” (p. 44). But beyond mere archaeological interest, Ward’s usage of the concept of “intention” has a deeper philosophical place in his thinking, since, as is well-known, it has been an important doctrine for post-Brentanian accounts of phenomenology.²⁵ Ward particularly wants to emphasize how notions of anticipation (in hominids) are inextricably bound with notions of projection and perception, and therefore are tied to the realms of imagination and memory

Anticipation and projection require both cognitive abstraction from a set of changing conditions, rules for how things work in the world (based on how those things have worked in the past) and also the instrumental application of these abstractions to construct multiple, coexisting representations of ‘what could happen’. Belief is evident not only in these projected possibilities—the belief of their possibility based on previous occurrences which are not simply recalled in order to predict. It also determines how what is seen is seen. Furthermore, belief also resides in the abstraction process itself—the construction of how things work in the world (pp. 48–49).

Other apes might be able to anticipate and interact intelligently with their environment, or make associations through repetitive training and habituation, but it is only hominids who can “*freely* associate” by making “inferential” judgements and associations between disparate items in their given milieu (p. 49). This ability to make intuitive connections is also tied to our ability to communicate and socialize, to engage in “recognition” whereby “from a consciousness of myself I

²⁵ On Husserl’s account of intentionality and its intellectual genealogy, see André De Muralt, “The ‘Founded Act’ and The Apperception of Others: The Actual Scholastic Sources of Husserlian Intentionality. An Essay in Structural Analysis Of Doctrines,” in *Analecta Husserliana: The Yearbook Of Phenomenological Research*, vol. VI, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Springer, 1977), pp. 123–141.

come to an understanding of the other, myself *and* the relation of meaning binding both other and self” (p. 53), which forms the basis for a “sharing” and “trust” in “a process of knowing” that is “emotional and relational before it is rational.” Thus, Ward argues that, fundamentally, “Belief is a relational category” (p. 55).

Such capacity to make connections and inferences from seemingly discrete items in our world – what one could call our “poetic” capacity²⁶—combined with our aptitude to form relational and epistemic ties to such realities, is the entrance into religious and metaphysical speculation, in which we make “an inner association between the interiority of belief, the wonder, the love, the investment of oneself in the meaningfulness of what is other and exterior, the dwelling and sense that one belongs, and religion.” These capacities establish the basis for the experiences of “transcendence” and “primordial givenness,” opening us to the receptive qualities of “discovery,” “disclosure,” and “creation” (p. 57). For Ward,

Religion, and therefore religious faith, emphasises the discovery and the disclosure: it is the world that is meaningful, ordered, and structured as accommodating to human apprehension. Belief makes no such semantic claim: it allows for the creation of what is meaningful, it informs the way we see the world *as*, but the world may not be intrinsically meaningful. There may not be meaning ‘out there’—nevertheless, because of belief, we who dwell within the world and respond to it will *make* it meaningful *for us* (p. 58).

This prompts Ward to engage with some of the neuroscientific and archaeological research done in relation the birth of religious imagination and consciousness. Here Ward relies strongly on the work of Steven Mithen and David Lewis-Williams, particularly as it relates to altered states of consciousness. In these states, one encounters “the uncanny” in which “believing is accentuated because the

²⁶ See John Milbank, “On the Diagonal: Metaphysical Landscapes,” in *The Legend of Death: Two Poetic Sequences* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2008), pp. 2–7. Also, cf. Rowan Williams, “Poetic and Religious Imagination,” *Theology* 80 (1977): 178–187; J. H. Prynne, *Stars, Tigers and the Shape of Words* (London: Birkbeck, 1993), and Prynne, “Poetic Thought,” *Textual Practice* 24, no. 4 (2010): 595–606.

stability of what is perceived—which is stable only because it is in accord with what is familiar, the recognition of which has become habitual—is disturbed” (p. 61). The consciousness is disturbed because its tendency is towards “holism” in the sense that it works “to cut, paste, edit and delete in order to present a single stream” (p. 66). Important for Ward here is the analysis of consciousness that lies behind the practice and rituals of cave paintings in which our Palaeolithic ancestors habitually immersed themselves. These investigations show that religion lies at the genesis of human consciousness and its interaction with the world, though we cannot speak for certain of an exact coincidence of these realities. Ward is critical here of Lewis-Williams since he attempts to understand (in tension with some of Lewis-Williams’ stated presuppositions against Western forms of rationalism) the archive of religiously-oriented states of consciousness in a scientifically “reductive” manner. He seeks to explain the mythopoeic, metaphysically textured drama of Palaeolithic art to be nothing more than “the electrochemical functioning of the brain” in which the “magic” described therein is subordinated to “the researches of cognitive—and neuroscience.” For Ward, the assumed procedure of Lewis-Williams leads to the “triumph” of *logos* over *mythos* (p. 71) and so is simply one more attempt to banish the “sacred” from the “secular.” Instead, Ward suggests, firstly, that ‘nature does not give rise unilaterally to culture. There is co-evolution: Put simply: believing moulds the neural networks of the brain *for belief*... We don’t just biologically adapt to our landscapes, we shape and impact upon those landscapes in ways which require us to readapt” (p. 72). This leads Ward to his second point (here echoing the language of the philosopher Wilfrid Sellars²⁷):

[I]n co-evolution the world is not simply the given to our senses such that our bodies become organic receptors of information. The objective and external nature of the given as such is a myth. The world is given, created, discloses itself to and affects us. It is through this impossible-to-divorce association of the inner workings of the body, the

²⁷ Regarding “the myth of the given”, see Wilfrid Sellars, “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” in *The Foundations of Science and the Concepts of Psychology and Psychoanalysis*. Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, vol. I, eds. Herbert Feigl and Michael Scriven (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), pp. 253–329.

productions of the mind and the external environment that a certain fittingness or accommodation comes about (p. 73).

The above mentioned triumph of *logos* over *mythos* is part and parcel with certain tendencies in Western thinking to privilege a certain kind of brain “lateralisation,” namely left-hemisphere over right-hemisphere forms of thinking, as this relates respectively to the left and right lobes of the prefrontal cortex. Drawing upon the investigations of Iain McGilchrist, Ward attempts to show how the overemphasis on left-lateralisation has led to a suppression of the “creative,” “intuitive,” “emotional,” “imaginative,” “relational,” and “big-picture” modes of thinking that are intrinsic to human awareness. Right brain thinking, rather than emphasising what is clear and analytically certain, aims towards more hazy and preconscious modes of world-relating. In this regard, McGilchrist mentions how the category of “belief” has also suffered under this regime since it is often considered to be merely a weaker version of “knowing,” and therefore can be supplanted by more choate modes of rationality (p. 74–78).

Ward is thoroughly appreciative of McGilchrist’s rejection of “binarism” in relation to our study of the brain, but is critical of his characterisation of belief as an *as if*, in the sense that belief operates when we act *as if* certain realities were true for us. For Ward, this description of belief is “condescending” (p. 79) since it implies that one can be placed on metaphysical pedestal, thereby given the power to determine the verity of whether someone was acting *as if* what they believe were true. It also presupposes a certain “Cartesian” (and Kantian) schema wherein belief is understood to be merely a matter of the monadic and voluntaristic “choice” to act *as if* such-and-such an element were a truthful description of the world (pp. 79–80). However, despite these qualms, Ward continues to hold to the importance of McGilchrist’s work, for the following reasons:

First, believing is not a weak form of knowing but a faithfulness to one’s intuitions that will always remain somewhat inchoate, even if resonant with meaning, a right-hemisphere cognitive and affective activity. It is faithfulness to pursuing those intuitions, seeking to understand them; it makes religious faith possible (but not necessary). Secondly, modernity is driven by the need for true and certain knowledge discovered, measured and evaluated through

instrumental reasoning that requires faster and increasingly more efficient forms of technology, bureaucracy and surveillance to filter our untruth and illusion...Thirdly, by cutting itself off from experiential grounding, concern for context and time, and caring and empathetic attentiveness of right-hemisphere activity, modernity increasingly generates an image of itself (upon which it increasingly reflects), convinced that what it views in the mirror of its representations is the truth about all that is. Hence in the staggering overproduction of simulacra and virtual realities, another form of believing emerges from this left-hemisphere tyranny that is not the same as the believing that issues from right-hemisphere activity (p. 83).

These discussions of “lateralisation,” “intentionality” and the birth of various forms of “imagination” (particularly “religious” imagination) presuppose the datum of consciousness. In adherence to his rejection of dualistic accounts, Ward would want to emphasise that “Consciousness emerges in some way from neural activity”; but moreover, he would want to stress that “The important point...is that consciousness is not just a product of the neo-or cerebral cortex, but of the whole of the brain” (p. 87). Here, Ward has to acknowledge the current scientific limits regarding the origins of consciousness or mind generally. (He rejects however the purely “materialist” biases of figures such as Daniel Dennett since they often seem to presuppose the reality that they seek to explain.²⁸) However, for Ward’s purposes regarding belief and dispositions, the reality of consciousness is important since (to quote Dennett), “Seeing *is* believing,” meaning that perception itself involves intentional and dispositional characteristics which are

²⁸ “The accounts of mental processes as electrochemical transmissions of information rely upon metaphors often drawn from computing circuitry. The metaphorical nature of the discourses reveals the gap between physicality of the processing and the mental account whereby we come to an understanding of this processing. Such accounts then already go beyond the physical properties of the things they are defining. They involve ideas divorced in some ways from the processing; divorced because otherwise we would have to admit to mind, ideas, beliefs, causally effecting these processes—processes that, on these accounts, give rise to and are therefore the cause of mind, ideas, representations, etc...The irreducibility of belief to the physics and chemistry of the brain draws our attention to a lacuna that cannot be disassociated from the lacuna consciousness itself. We cannot fully account for belief, and belief cannot fully account for itself. We don’t always (possibly most the time) know believing’s secret operations, its secret selections among our memories, emotions and understandings” (*Unbelievable*, p. 112).

irreducible: “belief goes all the way down. All reality is virtual” (p. 89). Such intentionality is not an isolated phenomenon but is repeated, for example, within the “teleodynamic tendencies” of cells (p. 91), which could even be called “teleosemantic” since “intention” is “manifest” in a “purpose-driven meaningfulness” in which “intention becomes a “semantic” phenomenon (p. 92). Such an intention towards “meaningfulness” (which occurs even at the cellular level) makes the human drive towards characterising and interpreting lived experience—the whole reality of “mind”—less rhapsodic since it is placed within a physical context that has certain “teleological” tendencies, within a wider network of signs and intentions that enact themselves within the seemingly “mindless” or “non-conscious” forms of material existence (a pattern that seems to buttress certain *avant-garde* attempts, philosophical and otherwise, to understand all of reality panpsychically—but more on that later).

The tendency towards meaningfulness, intelligibility and teleological ordering in the natural realm—a pattern already seen by figures such as Aristotle²⁹—can be further supported by the reality of “mirror-neurons” which Ward describes as “neurons involved in imitative behaviour such that when I perceive and experience an external action my body and brain mimic, to some extent, that same activity.” For Ward, the activity of mirror-neurons are important for the “biology of belief” since “They write the ‘as if’³⁰ of belief into our physiologies because they invoke

²⁹ Cf. Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

³⁰ There does seem to be a distinction here between Ward’s use of “as-if feeling states” and his earlier criticism of McGilchrist regarding belief as a conscious, *as if*-formulation of reality. The former refers to our more unconscious attempts to mimetically absorb external realities and to create intelligible patterns from them, while the latter does seem to exhibit a certain externalised perspective on belief *as such* since it presupposes, or seems to introduce, the idea of unreality into the notion of belief itself. One reads the world in a certain way even though one knows that such a reading is potentially wrong or dubious—one simply “chooses” to see the world *as if* a certain reality were true, thereby suspending one’s disbelief. It is this perspective which Ward describes as “condescending” and “sodomasochistic,” invoking the example of Cypher in the Wachowski’s sci-fi classic *The Matrix* (1999), in which Cypher willingly chooses to betray Zion (the revolutionary movement) in exchange for amnesiastically re-entering “the Matrix,” a virtual world created by machines to trick human beings into believing that they are living normally, while in reality their bodies are being harvested for energy production. In his meeting with the Agent (who represents a software version of the *Gestapo* or *Stasi*, designed to repress

the 'simulation, in the brain's body maps, of a body state that is not actually taking place in the organism" (Ward is here referencing the work of Giacomo Rizzolatti and Antonio Damasio). Mirror-neurons show us that "belief is not only embodied but inseparable from the capacity to imagine. The critical contents of the conscious mind are thereby organised" (p. 96). This propensity to organize and create analogous connections between experiences and memories is expounded by Ward in the following way:

The act of trying to 'absorb' the experiences and the time is [takes] for this 'absorption'...are products of higher-order thoughts and perceptions. The brain records the manifold consequences of the body's interaction with stimuli and the emerging sensimotor patterns seek associations with previous memories of comparative and analogous situations. Higher-order consciousness can only emerge from this activity, and the associating processes are highly selective since our 'memories are *prejudiced*, in the full sense of the term, by our previous history and beliefs'³¹ (p. 97).

From this point, Ward moves on to a particularly good part of this monograph in his chapter entitled "Sense and Sensibility: The Unbearable Lightness of Certainty" (which forms the first chapter in the second part of the book entitled "Believability"). He speaks of how from early on

Human beings began living with the invisible while adapting themselves to a hundred different material landscapes. They accommodated themselves to the material in and through the immaterial. And this immateriality concerned not just gods, mythic animals, magic forces and inscrutable cosmic powers, but also the immateriality of ideas, stories, images and icons, some of which now were being stored and transmitted through symbolic representation. Our believing is now inseparable from this symbolic activity in which the

dissent and to keep the system functioning), Cypher sits down for a meal and expresses his knowledge that the steak he is eating is not real, but nonetheless this manufactured reality was better than the alternative of living in the real world of struggle against the Matrix. It is this choice for "unreality" over "reality," this willful suspension of disbelief (or knowledge) which Ward considers to be "sodomasochistic."

³¹ The quote is taken from Antonio Damasio.

natural and cultural drive forward our evolution, our civilization (p. 104).

These beliefs cannot be reduced to the “purely” rational since they are laden with emotion and affect, and this is because they are self-involving realities and not merely the product of cold and deliberating ratiocination. And this embeddedness of beliefs in physical states, the permeation and confusion of the invisible within the orders of materiality leads Ward to the question of the *convenientia* between mind and matter, particularly as this focuses on “the subjective experience of the world and the mind with respect to the world” (p. 107). It is here that Ward discusses the proposal of “panpsychism” or “neutral monism”³² which Ward explicitly thinks is a form of philosophical and biological “metaphysics,” one that argues for the presence of “the protomental” within all levels of the physical world (p. 107). Such a proposal is thoroughly teleological and intentional in its description of material processes, while stopping short of a full-blown Aristotelian notion of “completion” or “perfection.” This proposal is tied to teleonomic ideas regarding “emergence,” which advocate a biological proclivity and “direction” towards “higher forms of value” while remaining agnostic regarding what such a “direction” is or means (pp. 108–109). Nonetheless, Ward does think that it is not clear how one can separate such postulations of inherent direction from “stronger notions of intentionality” and further thinks that “panpsychic explanations of consciousness” cannot explain *how* consciousness emerges from matter (p. 109). However, neither does “creationism” which, so to speak, “puts the full stop somewhere in the cosmic sentence,” exemplifying a kind of “dualism” which Ward is at pains to exorcize (p. 111), since he is reticent to fill the “gaps” in our knowledge too hastily with ideas of “the soul” or “God.”³³ Though Ward does not

³² Cf. Galen Strawson, “Realistic Monism: Why Physicalism Entails Panpsychism,” in *Real Materialism and Other Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2008), pp. 53–74.

³³ Milbank makes the point however that it is the idea of “the soul” (combined with a robust, metaphysical account of “the protophysic” within the physical) that helps to avoid “dualism” as such. Milbank thinks that the phraseology and debates surrounding the “mind-matter” question are influenced by certain voluntaristic notions of divine causality. His arguments in this regard are found in John Milbank, “The Psychology of Cosmopolitics,” in *The Resounding Soul: Reflections on the Metaphysics and Vivacity of the Human Person*, eds. Eric Austin Lee and Samuel Kimbriel (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2015), pp. 78–90.

mention it here, this sentiment seems to stem (at least partially) from his theological commitments regarding creation in which God and finite being are not considered to be competitive or conflictual since Divine Being is not a “thing” which can be fitted into some temporalized, causal explanation but is rather infinite Being itself. “Creationism,” besides being pseudo-scientific, would then also presuppose unorthodox assumptions regarding divine action that are tacitly voluntarist, ontotheological and secularizing since it exemplifies an arbitrary model of divine “intervention” (along the lines of a late Scholastic model of *concursus*³⁴), and because it reduces God to a mere ontic participant in the network of creaturely action (albeit “larger” in influence and power) and conceives finite being as existing “extraneously” to God and divine grace.³⁵

Returning to the theme of “believability,” Ward wants to ask the question how “beliefs become believable such that we forget they are beliefs—and credit them as truth, as the way things are, as even self-evident and scientific in way that denies (or at least downplays) their association of belief?” (p. 113). It is this drive towards certainty as a non-mediated, sheerly diaphanous account of reality that Ward aims to discredit, an account that stems from a refusal to acknowledge the inherently perspectival and value-laden quality of any truth-assertion. It is in this section of Ward’s book that we begin to sense some of kind of nascent criteria for judging between varying beliefs as such (as was mentioned earlier). Adopting the language of structuralism, Ward reads the dynamics of believability according to “synchronic” and “diachronic” axis of cultural transformation. Ward describes the “synchronic axis” as relating to the questions of “authority” and “authoring” (p. 118) exemplified as “the normative conditions operating in any culture that support and reinforce the believability of belief” (p. 116). Ward however does not

³⁴ Jacob Schmutz, “The Medieval Doctrine of Causality and the Theology of Pure Nature (13th to 17th Century),” in *Surnatural: A Controversy at the Heart of Twentieth-Century Thomistic Thought*, ed. Serge Thomas-Bonino (Florida: Sapienta Press of Ave Maria University, 2009), pp. 203–250.

³⁵ Cf. John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); Conor Cunningham, “*Natura Pura*, The Invention of the Anti-Christ: A Week With No Sabbath,” *Communio* 37 (Summer 2010): 243–254.

want to create a binary between these two axes, since in any process of cultural capital “The transformation of believing becomes appreciable when we consider the diachronic axis...it is often in the transformations of believability within the particularities of any given culture that we have access to the synchronic grid that makes believing (and disbelieving) possible (p. 117). Nonetheless, the “synchronic” can be distinguished as “the models of knowledge” and “the epistemological conditions that prevail within any given culture” (p. 121). He goes on to say

The epistemological conditions both determine and are determined by a prevailing anthropology. A conception of what it is to be human involves judgements concerning agency, choice, freedom, judgements related to evaluations of human willing, desiring and the ability to reason. In a culture in which human beings are valued as being rational above being emotional or imaginative; conceived as being free individuals with a will to choose between various options; recognised as moral agents to the degree that they discipline desire for the sake of duty; respected for their abilities to consider any number of arguments and arrive at a considered judgement of what is the case—then belief is viewed as a weaker form of knowledge, mere opinion. And the patina of the scientific is lent to such knowledge that reasons according to a mathematical calculus concerning the probable. But there are many indications that this anthropology and the epistemological conditions it reinforced—or these epistemological conditions and the anthropology it reinforced—are currently undergoing a major transformation (p. 122).

The “diachronic axis” points to the fact that “the objects and expressions of belief change over time” (p. 122) and it is because of these changing objects that “any synchronic structure that articulates conditional norms for believability has to be supplemented by a diachronic of the temporal contexts which those conditional norms are evident.” These conditional norms are “abstracted” from their “temporal contexts” only for “heuristic” purposes so that they can be modelled. But these objects, however “abstracted,” cannot be immune from the “cognitive dissonance” that comes as a result in “the cultural shifts in belief” (p. 123) in which “the intelligibility of the world is thrown into profound doubt” (p. 125). The idea of objects “out there” that exist apart from intelligible perception and construction is

tied, as Ward says elsewhere, to an "atomistic" ontology³⁶ and a representationalist epistemology which Ward sees as exemplified by John Locke.³⁷ Such a modernist epistemology aspires to a form of knowledge "altogether clear and bright" that is orientated towards "certainty, transparency, daylight forever; a realised eschatology (without God and without judgement) in which there is no shadow of belief and opinion," aspiring towards what he calls "angelic truth." Such knowledge is incarnated in various modernisms, whether it be "the panopticon" of Bentham, the architecture of Le Corbusier, or the surge of various kinds of religious fundamentalism (p. 130).

In recent critical theory, these forms of knowledge have been deconstructed; however, drawing again on McGilchrist's work, Ward argues that two forms of believing seem to predominate in the (post)-modern period: the one is a kind of "acceptance of unknowing or half-knowing and creative ambiguity" (dubbed again as "right-hemisphere" thinking) and the other is deemed as a thorough-going skepticism in which there is ultimately nothing to know and reality is viewed to be nothing but "a broken hall of mirrors" (this is believed to a strongly "left-hemisphere" form of knowing). For Ward, the first form of knowing is open to "transcending truth", "empathy" and "belonging," while the latter tends towards "fragmentation," "lack of trust" and "an over-reliance on the convictions of an isolated subject float upon a world where certainty is no longer possible." The

³⁶ Graham Ward, "Transcorporality: The Ontological Scandal," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 80, no. 3 (1998): 239–241.

³⁷ For Locke, "All cognitive activity takes place in the receiving and receptive mind. The world is 'out there' and the senses deliver it to us such that the mind becomes a theatre of intellectual representations or ideas of what is out there. The mind 'entertains', and sometimes its ideas connect to what is out there immediately and sometimes they don't. Either way, the epistemological problem is based on the dualism of world and subject (a subject who is like a homunculus operator). Because knowledge is organized in and around this 'problem' of how what goes on in the head hooks up to what is out there in the world, then belief is related to: a) a calculation based on likelihood, itself based on a series of pre-established certainties with which we are familiar; b) the reception of a persuasive argument (and therefore, implicitly, trust in the authority of the supplier of the argument); c) the absence of certain knowledge based upon the immediate relation between idea and thing; d) the absence of 'steps' that might make the 'connexion' between intuition of the thing and certainty; and e) the separation between the object of belief and that 'which makes me believe'" (*Unbelievable*, pp. 127–28).

former is a “believing *in*—an object, a relation, and an active commitment—but it cannot be grasped, only lived and participated in” while the latter “lacks an object, relation or commitment” (pp. 131–132).³⁸

There are several points worth mentioning here: as has been hinted at already, there does seem to be some tacit criterion in this discussion regarding questions of discernment regarding the viability of any particular beliefs. It was earlier remarked that Ward’s aim in this book was to expound the idea of belief and believing *as such* rather than explicitly advocating any particular belief-system. Nonetheless, as Ward will suggest in a later chapter of the book, beliefs can manifest themselves as “Myths, Lies and Ideology” (pp. 161–186). There he speaks of how myth can be an “aesthetic” as well as an “anaesthetic” (p. 162), an ultimately unquestioning immersion in “false consciousness” (p. 165). Since human beings tend towards “homeostasis” and a minimum amount of “cognitive dissonance” for the sake of “survival”, our proclivity is toward maintaining the status quo. Consequently, our mode of “seeing *as*” can “become a *seeing as we want to see it*” (pp. 168–169), in the hope of avoiding the crisis that such a reality-check can provoke. Quoting Roland Barthes, Ward says that mythology can be a way of giving “historical intention a natural justification, making contingency appear eternal” (p. 174). And when these sentiments are tied to Ward’s critique of the secularization thesis (pp. 174–186), it can be seen that Ward’s investigation of belief is not blandly neutral but politically charged.

But what are the criteria for making such an adjudication? If any underlying criteria can be gleaned, it would seem that more veridical beliefs are those that express an openness towards *otherness* and *transcendence* beyond the reductions of the ego, towards a certain “resistance” and “thereness” in reality that is not merely the product of an isolated or collective will. Such a presupposition implies a theory of truthful disclosure in which persons are taken beyond the parochialism of rigid

³⁸ One could slightly qualify this statement by saying that nihilism as a form of belief *does* have an object, albeit nothingness *itself*, understood as a form of *presence* (Catherine Pickstock) or a meontological construal of *nothing-as-something* (Conor Cunningham). One also wonders here whether Ward’s implicit preference for “right-hemisphere” forms of believing leans a bit too much on the left-right hemisphere “binarism” that he has earlier disavowed.

(and sinful?) perspectives towards something like divine “grace” or “givenness” (to adopt an explicitly theological frame of reference). In addition to the question of transcendence, there is also the question of *time* in relation to the processes of belief: those symbolic systems which claim to be “objective”, “certain,” and “clear”, and are thereby “abstracted” from the historical flux of meaning, loose viability and “integrity” since what they claim to be asserting (namely, the ultimate truthfulness of their beliefs) is held in tension with the fact that such absolute claims are inextricably tied to political gambits for control and power.³⁹ Even though Ward does not put it quite this way, the substance and logic of his arguments imply that any truthful witness involves a vulnerability to change, since we cannot escape the limitations of materiality, and therefore any febrile claim of unchangeability is concerned *de facto* not with the appearance of truth but with ideological capitulation. Furthermore, as Ward himself argues, the equivalence of “knowledge” and “certainty” is by no means a “necessary” occurrence, but can rather be genealogically traced to certain contingent turns in the intellectual heritage of Western thought, thereby relativizing more strident claims to uphold such equalization. And finally, it seems that Ward is advocating the notion that more truthful beliefs are ones that open us to relations of *trust*, whether it is between differing symbolic communities, or the individuals which can be found within such communities (religious or otherwise). Implied within this perspective, is the notion that a less fear-based system of belief enhances a certain embrace of risk in our encounters with the human and cultural other because it is less concerned with egoistic games of rigid identity-formation. Fear drives us towards self-protection, and can therefore (potentially) hinder us from truthful exposure and the transformation that can occur from such an encounter.

What follows in the remainder of the book is a more substantive filling-in of what Ward actually understands belief to be. Here he uses the example of literature as a mode of “making believable” which implies a “*making present* what is absent” (p. 134). He adduces the Coleridgean notion of “poetic faith” (pp. 134–137) to

³⁹ Cf. Rowan Williams, “Theological Integrity,” in *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 3–15.

show how believing requires a process of imaginative fabrication and “creation” in order for reality to appear (hereby avowing the representationalist “objectivism” that he has earlier castigated). Belief is therefore not mere “expression” but is also “created” (p. 136). But this creation is not voluntaristic or even necessarily the “the act of the deliberate will”⁴⁰ because to believe or to “suspend disbelief” is be lured by “the erotic solicitations of the poetic” (p. 136). To believe is “to be ‘engrossed’,” “to be absorbed into the world presented” in which “its world co-evolves with our participation” (p. 139). To be sure this can be a “morally ambiguous” procedure (p. 136) and Ward is also wants to stress the difference between “the fictional” and “the real” (pp. 144–145), and would emphasise strongly that “poetic faith” is concerned with “apprehending the irreducibility of the real” (p. 157).⁴¹ Nonetheless, “the fictional” should not be reduced to “falsehood” or mere “fantasy” (p. 208)⁴² since it bears an “ontological weight” in the relation to the beneficial effect it has on our cultural evolution (p. 145). (As is known already, such a point was recognized even by Aquinas, despite his suspicion regarding the language of

⁴⁰ Ward is influenced here (at least partially) by Giorgio Agamben’s excavations regarding the language of *poiesis*. Agamben makes the point that the link between “truth” and “disclosure” (*aletheia*) and “making” (*poesis*) was held from early on in philosophical thinking. This is however to be distinguished from another mode of reasoning which, under the influence of certain post-Aristotelian traditions, sought to relate *poiesis* to ideas regarding the will, a trajectory which reached its apogee in Nietzsche’s *Wille zur Macht*. For these arguments, see Giorgio Agamben, “Poiesis and Praxis,” in *The Man Without Content*, trans. Georgia Albert (Stanford; Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 63–93.

⁴¹ Ward clarifies this later in the book: “Perceptions arise because there is a real world of objects out there, and the scenarios we construct are not mere fantasies. We are social animals so the worlds we construct are shared worlds. We continually modify the world-patterns we make in association with other human beings engaged in the same activity. Our world-making is always in negotiation with other world-making; we are continually undergoing a form of persuasion that this is the true, the real, the way things are. If we remain unpersuaded, then we experience anxiety and become hesitant and undecided. The mental patterns do not form, or form only incoherently” (*Unbelievable*, p. 206).

⁴² “Fantasy is not self-transcending. It is a form of self-idolatry, for it begins and ends with projection: the screening of a narrative in which the ego is always at the centre of the plot. Such fantasies, like evil and sin, have no ontological weight – they are acts of decreation or non-being” (*Unbelievable*, p. 208).

human "creation"⁴³ since he seems to have allowed a certain mediate actuality to the realm of "the fictional."⁴⁴ Moreover, the realm of "imagination" can lead us to an "expansion" of our "material limitations" and "belief structures" (p. 147), thereby potentially opening us to "the critique and transformation of the social status quo" (p. 151), since this tapestry of projection and desire is inextricably woven together with "the practice of hope" (pp. 152–155), in which we are able to go "beyond what is available" towards an as-of-yet invisible "horizon" of imagined anticipation (p. 152)—a concept Ward will later summarize as a form "transcendental freedom" (p. 199).

The theme of "invisibility" that is present throughout the study indicated comes to the fore especially in the final chapter, in which Ward evokes the language of "faith" in a manner that explicitly ties his account to Judeo-Christianity, a tradition in which we are exhorted (in particular reference Romans 1 and Hebrews 11) to "live from what is unseen to what is unseen" (p. 186). In accord with his more general thesis, "religious faith" is "a specific orientation of a more primordial disposition to believe" (p. 219). Ward reiterates again that "belief" as a "dispositional" reality is universal, but our more primordial dispositions and beliefs are further thematised as "a confession of an unseen above and beyond the unseen that pertains to the practices of everyday life" (p. 189). The latter move implies a particular response and construal of the "invisible in the visible" since "The invisible is a property of the visible" (p. 190) and all readings of such invisibility inescapably imply some mode of "interpretation" (p. 192) and a "special commitment," which while not resulting in "a different type of believing"⁴⁵ are nonetheless enframened within the particular "perception" of religious practice (p. 220). Ward dubs this unescapability of value-laden "interpretation" (religious or

⁴³ Cf. Robert C. Miner, *Truth in the Making: Creative Knowledge in Theology and Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1–18.

⁴⁴ John Milbank, "On 'Thomistic Kabbalah,'" *Modern Theology* 27, no. 1 (2011): 147–185. Milbank is drawing heavily here from the work of Olivier-Thomas Venard.

⁴⁵ One wonders whether this phraseology helps Ward bring across the real differences between the orders of believing. Analogous as they may be, the deeper intensity of religious commitment is a *sine qua non*. More clarity would have been desirable here.

otherwise) as “perspectival invisibility,” a phrase that aims to condense that “There is no view from nowhere,” that “there is always an invisibility that pertains to the visible and partial that we do see” (p. 192). Ward is inspired here by Merleau-Ponty’s idea of “*la foi perspective*” (p. 196) by which he sought to account for the value-laden quality of perceptual experience as an invisibility-within-the-visible, a meaningfulness that inheres within the world of things. Because the world of objects cannot be separated from such invisibility but (on the contrary) is “saturated” with it, Ward probes Merleau-Ponty further regarding the directionality of this saturation, with the purpose of showing that this unfolding invisibility and ever-deepening unrepresentability “cannot be divorced from or pitted against a construal of an absolute transcendent” (p. 197). Ward’s apparent intention here is to push Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology towards a theological form of transfinite disclosure, an “intentional transcendentalism” (p. 199) in which the physical realm is orientated towards an ontological “givenness” that exceeds the merely “given”, in the direction of a “grace” that moves beyond and perfects the natural order. One could further describe this reality as a divine invisibility (pp. 200–201) that is “operative *within* what is materially visible” (p. 221), a transcendent “exteriority”⁴⁶ that is intelligible and open to the free “recognition” of finite and sensible human beings (pp. 214–217). All this sounds like an account of revelation (albeit non-dualistic, and post-Barthian), and, furthermore, this vision of truthful perception of the transcendent within the finite seemingly cannot avoid reference to the “analogical” and the irreducible apophasis that remains between “human *scientia* and divine knowledge”; a “gap” that ultimately remains “unbridgeable *for us*” but at the same time “opens up the greatest of all space of possibles” in which “we point ahead of ourselves, into what is hidden in the invisibility, into the heart of believing itself” (p. 221).

At the end of Ward’s ambitious and multidisciplinary work, one feels enlightened regarding the workings of “belief” within the myriadic interconnections of reality. Whether it be the “teleosemantics” of cellular minutiae:

⁴⁶ Ward distinguishes this “exteriority” from “pure” or “objective” exteriority since, as he has repeated numerously, we only ever perceive *as* something, and therefore cannot speak of “things in themselves” (*Unbelievable*, p. 214). The Kantian references here are again explicit.

the exigencies of human evolution; the emergence of consciousness and religious ritual; the play of imagination and perception; the poetic genesis of literary form and structuration; or, the quotidian relations of trust and communication that are happening in all instances of human society; or in the explicit commitments of religious adherence, one feels the range to be quite extraordinary. After digesting this volume (which is the first in a projected series of books), there is a sense of having one's vision expanded to see the phenomenon of "belief" within an intricate panoply of ever-expanding participation between differing levels of reality. Hereby Ward has grounded his phenomenology of belief in an ontological depth-structure that tries to avoid the asseveration of culture from the material orders, rendering lucid the entwinement of belief with the biological. As has been mentioned throughout, this is part of Ward's attempt to counteract philosophical dualism; and yet, this move appears also to be a manifestation (more surreptitiously) of his beliefs regarding theological "integralism," and a constitutes a subtle plea (within largely non-theological language) for an analogical participation of the visible within the invisible, in a trans-dimensional actuality that both transcends and includes the transcended within its alluring opacity.

In conclusion, one would have liked to see a bit more detail regarding the ontological import of the different levels of believing, namely (1) belief as a generalized disposition and (2) belief as an explicitly religious practice. Ward's focus is largely is on the former, a move which could lead (incorrectly) to the impression that Ward is basically a liberal at heart, advocating a nebulous ocean of believing, with particular faiths being merely wild rivulets, finally streaming us to same, univocal source. That such an impression is possible can be gleaned from the fact that Ward has to defend himself against such a claim at the end of the book where (apropos Tillich's notion of "ultimate concern") he says that Tillich failed to account for the complexity of experience and "religious experience" specifically (p. 220). Nonetheless, beyond his reflection on the synchronic and the diachronic in regard to symbolic systems, beyond his grounding of "belief" in the fundamental, quotidian realities of life, it would have been fascinating to tease out the deeper foundations for *tradition* and *ritual* within human culture, realities which would have further strengthened his argument regarding the embeddedness

of belief-systems, and would have also rendered limpid the profound bases for religious specificity⁴⁷ and the “strangeness” of custom⁴⁸ within the very stuff of material interaction. Here the category of “habit”⁴⁹ as “non-identical repetition”⁵⁰ might have been useful, and commandeering the tradition of philosophical “spiritualism” and “vitalism” that inspired French phenomenological thinking (De Biran, Ravaisson, Bergson, etc.) would have segued nicely with overall subtext and tenor of the book (in this reader’s opinion).

And finally, it would be good for Ward to clarify his appropriation of Kantian philosophy. Clearly (as in his discussion of Locke) he has problems with representationalist and “objectivizing” epistemologies, and he also bemoans the Cartesian and Kantian biases of modern neuroscience (cf. p. 207). He also is clearly critical of post-Kantian modes of “phenomenological reduction” in which the immanent is bracketed apart from transcendent meaning, as well as Kant’s separation of faith and knowledge.⁵¹ But in his positive appropriation of Kant’s agnosticism regarding the *Ding-an-Sich*, is Ward reading Kant’s theory of knowledge apart from its inherent ontological consequences? To be sure, Kant understood his own project to be the “humble” substitution of “ontology” for a “transcendental analytic” of “pure understanding,” with the *noumenon* being effectively “nothing for us” part from the confines of ‘sensibility.’⁵² But does this assumption not leave out of account the recent criticisms of such “correlationist”

⁴⁷ Cf. Pickstock, “The Ritual Birth of Sense.”

⁴⁸ “Custom is strange.../ not least in its familiar power of estrangement,” in Geoffrey Hill, “*The Triumph of Love*, CXXV,” in *Broken Hierarchies: Poems 1952–2012*, ed. Kenneth Haynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 276.

⁴⁹ Cf. John Milbank, “The Mystery of Reason,” in *The Grandeur of Reason: Religion, Tradition and Universalism*, in eds. Conor Cunningham and Peter M. Candler Jr (Great Britain: SCM, 2010), pp. 102–115.

⁵⁰ Catherine Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity*. The Literary Agenda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁵¹ Cf. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Bxxx.

⁵² Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, A235–259; B294–315.

thinking,⁵³ or the post-Hegelian critiques of such “humility” in which “[pure] reason so unambiguously (and dubiously)” is “able to specify its own limits [and] in this way transgresses them in doing so, simultaneously both by speciously separating the empirical from the abstract and by predetermining the limits of the transcendence it has foresworn.”⁵⁴ Based on these points, it can be suggested that while Kant does not seem to be determinative for Ward’s approach, it would be helpful for him to clarify his own reception of the Kantian tradition in his future work.

And so at the end of this work, and emerging from Plato’s cave so to speak, we have been lured again by the play of shadowy forms upon the hardened skin of the world, a world in which “surfaces need not be superficial”⁵⁵—towards a “horizon” where “the whole prevails over its parts, and things become beings again.”⁵⁶

⁵³ Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London and New York: Continuum, 2008).

⁵⁴ Hanby, “Review: *God, The Mind’s Desire*,” 308–309. Also, cf. Conor Cunningham, *Genealogy of Nihilism: Philosophies of Nothing and the Difference of Theology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 74–99.

⁵⁵ W. H. Auden, “Good-Bye to Mezzogiorno (For Carlo Izzo),” in *Collected Shorter Poems: 1927–1957* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 340.

⁵⁶ Yves Bonnefoy, “Remarks on the Horizon,” in *Second Simplicity: New Poetry and Prose, 1991–2011*, trans. Hoyt Rogers (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 219.

Reviews

David C. Schindler, *Plato's Critique of Impure Reason: On Goodness and Truth in the Republic*, Catholic University of America Press, 2008, 358+ pp.

When it comes to the really great thinkers of the Western intellectual tradition, often times it is friends and supporters who do more damage than enemies. I am not sure whether Karl Marx counts as a truly great thinker (Jacques Ellul thought him an important Christian heretic), but I am sure that he spoke for the greats when he commented that whatever he was, he was not a Marxist. For Plato certainly was not an early medieval Platonist just as Aristotle was not a late medieval Aristotelian, and Augustine was not a Cartesian Augustinian just as Aquinas was not a Kantian Thomist.

Plato, in the seventh letter—where he outlines his commitment to never write in his own voice—sought to forestall Platonism from the beginning, but in vain. Plato seems to have understood that once we admire a teacher of wisdom we – the followers—have to construct a containable intellectual system in the master's name and in doing so we have to tie up the ends he left untied and straighten out the bits we can't understand. Against the sage's sage advice, Platonisms have been with us for a very long time now. It is not surprising then that different Platonisms all suffer from at least one glaring fault: we are all lesser philosophers than Plato and thus our intellectual systems built in his name inevitably betray their ostensible master. But Schindler's text, casting aside small Platonisms of all colours and

revelling in the subtlety and power of Plato's dialogues, is like a child facing the wrong way (not looking at the cave wall) amongst Plato scholars.

The central problem any Platonism faces concerns adequately upholding the genuine transcendence of the meaning and quality of true reality without degrading or misreading the realm of tangible and historical particularity in which we live. The rush to theorize about Ideal Forms, extracted from the dialogic, the performative, the dramatic mode in which Plato carefully delivers them to us, produces many fatal caricatures of Plato's work. Thus small 'Platonist' doctrines, idealizations, analytical trivializations, systematized reductions and straw effigies litter the West's intellectual history. These Schindler deftly bypasses. By giving particular attention to the care Plato takes in showing us the double relation of The Good to both transcendence and immanence, and by taking careful note of the dramatic structure of the dialogues and the performative role Socrates plays in elaborating Plato's deepest philosophical insights, Schindler rescues Plato from many of his admirers and shows us the towering thinker that Plato is. Further this Plato is of no mere academic interest (historical irony intended) to Schindler but speaks powerfully to the great philosophical and political needs of our own times.

Schindler demonstrates a wondrous and abundant proficiency with the intricacies and technicalities of scholarly argument, but, delightfully, scholarly dexterity never takes centre stage in Schindler's work. For all the way through this remarkable text, one is in hot pursuit of those things that Plato himself most ardently pursues. And this—far more than its thrilling scholarship – is what one finds most unusual and vital about Schindler's text. For Plato abhors the violent moral relativism of misology and upholds right love for the divine as the core of the very 'this world concerned' philosophical way. Schindler is very much walking along side Plato in these concerns, even though such an abhorrence and such a love are now almost inconceivable to us in real life (though 'academic' scholarship *about* Plato on these matters is not uncommon).

In our times we are formed by the widespread cultural acceptance of modern secular liberalism where beliefs about ultimate concerns are matters of private preference and personal feeling and can only enter the public arena as banal

‘motherhood statements’, if at all. We are committed to ‘tolerance’ and we are committed to the morality of *not* bringing any serious substantively normative discussion of the common good into the political arena. For we must protect the inner sanctum of personal moral and religious freedom and we must uphold the public freedoms of the value free market and the merely legal regulation of public life at all cost—which is actually a very high cost to the moral health of the polis. Functionally (whatever we might say about religious freedom) we fictionalize all religious concerns and make them silent and subservient to the *real* public concerns of economics, trade, technology, the culture industry, “politics”, entertainment and military power. No, contra Plato, we are dedicated to private moral relativism and an amoral public arena where due reverence to divinity is strictly excluded. In fact, the deeply entrenched culturo-political way of being in which modern liberal secularism is embedded puts us squarely on Thrasymachus’ side of *The Republic* and should we hear Plato’s voice at all, we cannot help feeling that Plato is an envious anti-libertarian fascist.

But, as Schindler well points out, Plato is not a fascist, and it is in fact we who are committed to the Hobbesian violence of mere power in upholding the ‘right order’ of an inherently competitive and atomistic society. It is we who are functional amorlists, functional atheists and functional epistemological nihilists in relation to transcendence: we *are* Thrasymachus, and we are structurally committed to violence, egotism and public immorality. It takes little perception to see that the political outworking of modern liberal secularism is the barbaric global exploitation of the peoples and resources of the earth for the inherently irrational ‘ends’ of the perpetuation of the power and luxury of those of us who benefit most from the prevailing status quo (for as long as the current conditions of exploitation can be perpetuated). Plato, if not read as an exercise in contemporary scholastic refinement, profoundly challenges how we live, what we believe and even who we are. This Schindler sees, and sees deeply.

Platonisms of other-worldly indifference to the lived political realities of life – be they dry Platonisms of analytical logical purity or wet Platonisms of romantic transcendental escapism – do not understand what is most pressing on the heart and mind of their master. But Schindler understands Plato. And with this

understanding he can see Plato's point in *The Republic*; Schindler sees the forest, he understands the trees in relation to the forest, and he does not lose the forest for the trees. It is quite remarkable to read a text on Plato where one can recognise the same pressing concerns that one hears in Plato's dialogues.

I do not really want to say much about Schindler's hermeneutics, other than that it is brilliant. But you should read it for yourself. I feel like I would be ruining a fabulous Chesterton detective story by telling you how Schindler effectively solves so many interpretive difficulties in scholarship around *The Republic*. But what this hermeneutic solution gives to us is more exciting than the hermeneutic tools he so skilfully fashions. Plato points us in a direction where we really *can*, in some measure, have transcendence in immanence. That way has been closed to us at least since William Ockham. If we can open that door again (though it would lead us to a new country and not back in time) then the deep philosophical aporia of modernity may be overcome at last. This is very exciting. You must read this book.

Paul Tyson

Balázs M. Mezei, *Radical Revelation: A Philosophical Approach*, London and Oxford, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017, xxvi + 384pp.

Following the book *Religion and Revelation after Auschwitz*,¹ Balázs M. Mezei—Professor of Philosophy of Religion, Phenomenology and Philosophical Theology at Pázmány Péter Catholic University Budapest, Hungary—in this latest volume explores revelation as an all-pervasive phenomenon and a key to a theistic (and essentially Trinitarian) understanding of reality. The author characterises his innovative approach as “nonstandard radical philosophical theology.” It is nonstandard inasmuch as it treats traditionally theological themes from a fundamentally philosophical perspective, and so it is neither theological nor philosophical in the conventional sense: the theological dimension consists in the consideration of a central theological fact (revelation), while the philosophical dimension is realised as the consideration of this fact from the perspective of its natural and cognitive conditions. It is “radical” because it investigates the roots, the original and comprehensive fact of revelation.

Philosophy and theology are viewed here as mutually enriching parallel discourses with common features and a common subject matter: the revelation of God as Trinity. As Mezei argues, what such nonstandard philosophy may offer to theological discourse is the rethinking of the latter’s axiomatic presuppositions in a spirit of open questioning and in an all-encompassing way. To do this, one needs to look for a complex account which transcends the continental–analytical divide in philosophy and integrates insights and methods from both traditions into a new comprehensive approach where cultural history and the arts have an equal role to

¹ Balázs M. Mezei, *Religion and Revelation after Auschwitz* (New York & London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

play as free human products and interpreters of divine revelation. In this vein, Mezei's encyclopaedic treatment addresses the issue of revelation from all the possible angles.

Chapter One situates the project both within the philosophical tradition and with regard to theology and traces the semantics, the historical and cognitive origins and development of the notion of revelation with special attention to its fact character and sources. It also proposes a novel ontological argument for the fact of revelation in the context of "weak conditionalism" where the existence of the notion of revelation as revelation entails the existence of the reality captured in it.

Chapter Two gives a panoramic and historical survey and a critical evaluation of existing types, forms and models of revelation through the analyses of Gerardus van der Leeuw's, Friedrich Heiler's, and René Latourelle's classifications of the forms and Avery Dulles's models of revelation. The underlying central questions of the chapter concern the relationship between forms of revelation and revelation itself on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the relationship between the various forms themselves. Mezei integrates elements from former models into an open, dynamic and concentric structure and reveals the essential correlation of fact and cognition overlooked by earlier one-factor models.

In the third chapter, the author investigates the notion of self-revelation (its linguistic and historical background and manifold meaning) and outlines key elements of his own overarching, complex and unified model which hinges on the distinction between direct and indirect self-revelation: self-revelation revealing itself as revelation and as revelatory of a subject, a self. All this leads to questions of selfhood, personhood, and freedom and the idea of kenotic radical personhood both with regard to human persons and God. Mezei's model of self-revelation is kenotic self-donation expressed as radical (constituting the core of) personhood. For him, the dynamism of self-revelation equally characterises intra-Trinitarian life and economic action, resulting in the challenging claim that God is the unity of selfhood (the divine nature) freely and wholly expressed in three persons.

The fourth chapter develops a further model: radical revelation, which concerns the special mode, the unique revelational quality of self-revelation in absolute freedom and self-negating love and in the dynamism of at once revealing and hiding what is being revealed. Eight gestures (free disclosures of divine Trinitarian personhood) are discerned in the gospels, all of which inspiringly illustrate the reality of radical revelation and show its all-pervasive character: birth, growth, entry, healing, radiance, transfiguration, kenosis, and overcoming.

Chapter Five revolves around problems of what Mezei terms “apocalyptic personhood” as the eschatological fulfilment of radical personhood and the tensile unity of kenotic passion and ultimate glory. The biblical themes of the kingdom of God, the Son of Man, resurrection, Pentecost, conversion, stoning, and their artistic portrayals are shown to highlight the integration of suffering and glorification.

The sixth, in many ways central, chapter develops an “apocalyptic phenomenology” which regards openness as a fundamental “rich” fact, one that is more original than the notion of being. As Mezei convincingly argues, what is ontological, epistemological, or anthropological already presupposes an *ur-fact* of opening. The rich and insightful phenomenological analyses of this chapter demonstrate the relationship between openness, freedom, newness, personhood, and their essentially threefold Trinitarian structures. The author’s novel principle of “*refusivum sui*” as an explanation for the possibility of evil in a good creation (an intricate balance of self-withdrawal and compensation/reparation) is also thought-provoking. Finally, examples taken from philosophy, literature, and music (Augustine, Pascal, Goethe’s Faust, Lévinas, Liszt, Beethoven, Wagner) illustrate exemplifications of apocalyptic personhood and its constant presence in European culture.

The last chapter considers the catholicity of revelation in terms of its dynamic and open structure and in relation to the traditional triad of faith, hope and love. Beyond a wealth of illuminating detail, Mezei’s comprehensive work aspires to establish a new discipline coined “apocalypitics” (in contradistinction to

metaphysics): the study of things belonging to disclosure. The overall framework and methodology are laid down here for further investigation.

The book is an inspiring read for a theologian, who discovers in Mezei's nonstandard philosophical account a curious and challenging "other" to traditional Trinitarian theology, which, however, takes visible inspiration from Hans Urs von Balthasar's and Karl Rahner's projects. The ideas of intra-Trinitarian kenotic revelation, the two-way relation between *ad intra* and *ad extra* revelations, the connection between divine and human personhood, the divine unity of nature understood as self-revealed in three personal forms will certainly provoke fruitful debate in the future and help theology creatively re-articulate—what Mezei terms—its unquestioned axiomatic formulations.

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