



# God, Freedom and Nature



Proceedings of the 2008 Biennial Conference  
in Philosophy Religion and Culture

Edited by:  
Ronald S. Laura, Rachel A. Buchanan  
and Amy K. Chapman



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## **Proceedings of the 2008 Biennial Conference in Philosophy, Religion and Culture**

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## Foreword

### The Biennial Conference in Philosophy, Religion and Culture

Andrew Murray

The Biennial Conference in Philosophy, Religion and Culture took its current form in 1996, which makes the conference of these proceedings the seventh conference. Its roots, however, are much older, having begun with the 'Christianity and Platonism' conference at Melbourne University in 1977 organised by Eric Osborne and David Dockrill under the auspices of the Australian New Zealand Society for Theological Studies. A second conference on the theme, 'The *Via Negativa*' was held at the University of Sydney in 1981.

The success of these two conferences led to a larger project that was to be a series of conferences. Its organisational base was at Newcastle University with David Dockrill and Godfrey Tanner, and it was located at Catholic Institute of Sydney, firstly at Manly and after 1995 at Strathfield. Other convenors in the early years included Raoul Mortely, David Coffey, John Hill, Patrick Ryan and Gerald Gleeson. This set a pattern of cooperation between Newcastle University and Catholic Institute in organisational terms, but it also defined the dialogue as one between those academics in the universities and those in the theological colleges.

Following the move of Catholic Institute of Sydney to its current premises at Strathfield at the end of 1995, the conference took its current form and incorporated also the Sydney College of Divinity conference series that had been begun by Neil Ormerod and Gregory Moses. The Convenors throughout this period have been David Dockrill (Newcastle), Peter Forrest (UNE) and Andrew Murray (CIS). Andrew Murray has been conference organiser.

Although largely led by philosophers, the conference has from the beginning attempted to be broad both in its scope and in its participation. Each conference has had a theme designed to focus attention on a recognisable area of interest but also broad enough for scholars from diverse fields to participate. It has enabled philosophers, theologians and a diverse range of scholars from the arts and occasionally the sciences to contribute to the one conference. This has led to very interesting discussions, enabling connections of thought that may not otherwise have been achieved. Attendance has presumed only a serious interest in religion, good scholarship in a particular area and interest in some aspect of the theme of the current conference.

This conference took the theme 'God, Freedom and Nature'. The brief articulated in the call for papers was broad: 'Papers may treat one or more of these themes in a manner that contributes to a discussion of the three. Issues and questions that might be addressed include: science and religion; freedom and conscience in a religious context; political and religious notions of freedom and nature; talking about God in our contemporary culture; the compatibility of religious faith and authentic humanity; the validity of religious experience; the biblical understanding of God and human development in the 21st Century; human and divine creativity; climate change: divine providence and human responsibility.'

Discussion at the conference was vigorous and broad. The convenors are grateful to the editors of this book of proceedings for making the starting points of that discussion available to many more people than could attend the conference.

Further information about the conference can be found on the conference website:

[www.cis.catholic.edu.au/](http://www.cis.catholic.edu.au/)

## Past Conference Themes

- 1977 Christianity and Platonism
- 1981 The *Via Negativa*
- 1984 The Concept of Spirit
- 1984 Philosophy and Theology Conference
- 1986 The Idea of Salvation
- 1987 Second Philosophy and Theology Conference
- 1989 Humanity and the After Life (SCD)
- 1990 Tradition and Traditions
- 1991 Human Beings and Nature (SCD)
- 1993 Plato and Aristotle, Platonism and Aristotelianism
- 1995 The Doctrine of the Trinity, Past and Present
- 1996 Faith and Reason
- 1998 The Supernatural
- 2000 The Body in our Philosophical, Literary and Religious Traditions
- 2002 Talking about God in Contemporary Culture
- 2004 On the Good, Goods and the Good Life
- 2006 Truth & Truthfulness in Uncertain Times
- 2008 God, Freedom and Nature
- 2010 Creation, Nature and the Built Environment
- 2012 The Expressible and the Inexpressible

## INTRODUCTION: CHAPTER ONE

**God, Freedom and Nature: transdisciplinary reflections on the discourse of religion and theology**  
by  
Ronald Laura and Rachel Buchanan

The conference on God, Freedom and Nature affords its readers the opportunity to canvass in one volume a wide array of deeply engaging discussions of transdisciplinary approaches to some of the most challenging and seemingly intractable problems in philosophical theology, the history of religion, the philosophy and sociology of religion, and what we shall call 'feminist theocritical discourse'. What is novel about this Proceedings is the originality which results from the subtle way in which the diversity of its topics is skilfully enfolded in a tolerably coherent and insightful framework of transdisciplinary perspective, thus seeking insight from beyond the conceptual boundaries which define many of the more conventional considerations of these issues. The heuristic 'backdrop', so to say, against which much of the systematic elucidation and analysis within which the book unfolds is strongly influenced by the increasing emergence around the globe of multicultural societies. The way in which any particular society deals with the ramifications of multiculturalism will obviously vary, depending partly upon whether the 'host culture' and its socio-political disposition is democratic, communist, despotic or driven by fundamentalist religiosity. Because multicultural societies are populated by people, either through 'historical entwinement' or policies of welcoming immigration, who not infrequently possess radically different religions, moral and political beliefs, the harmonic balance of the society and the measure of its peaceful cohabitation can be seriously challenged, as was witnessed in the Sydney 2012 riots by Muslim extremists, to name just one level of many global examples. The complexity of the potential tensions which can arise from the amalgam of sociocultural conflict of this kind can be highly threatening to the state of social cohesion a multicultural society is capable of sustaining. Sadly, the often long history of conflict which existed among people of different religious traditions in their homeland countries prior to immigration can be imported as an 'unhealed heart' that lingers hauntingly in painful memories that might otherwise have diminished, were it not for the hatred preserved by the persistent intimations of worldwide religious fanaticism in the service of its own vested interests. This being so, the point and purposes of immigration are self-stultifying for some of those who undertake it, by inevitably disrupting the very conditions of social harmony and the dream of freedom and peace that prompted their immigrant journey in the first place. Moreover, it is clear that many of the fundamentalist beliefs expressed by diverse ethnic groups are not only in direct contradiction with each other, but can be antithetical to the religious claims made by another sect within the same religion. Multiculturalism aims to provide a social context for religious freedom, but depending upon how radically the beliefs of a religion depart from 'the law of the land', so to say, multiculturalism inevitably becomes politically problematic. Freedom of any kind does not come without responsibility. The freedom to worship is a fundamental right, but no person or religious group has the freedom, for example, to sequester, commandeer or otherwise violate a mosque, church or temple belonging to another group to exercise that right.

### **Basic Political Pluralism**

The political goal of achieving at least a minimum condition of harmony and cross-cultural cohesiveness within a multicultural society depends upon its endorsement of what we shall call an open policy of 'basic political pluralism'. Indeed, the very possibility of both political and religious freedom, our predominant concern in this introductory chapter, presupposes that basic political pluralism will provide the structural mechanisms by way of which different political and faith systems can empathetically be culturally integrated and also 'socially legitimated'. So the sense in which we are using the terminology 'basic political pluralism' suggests that there exists within a multicultural society a level of moral consciousness which underpins the foundational philosophy upon which different faiths, for example, build their social identity and experience their legal right to worship freely and without rapprochement. Many chapters from the Conference Proceedings of *God, Freedom and Nature* are sponsored on the assumption that basic political pluralism is a socio-cultural commitment of any political system which can be genuinely defined as multicultural. Basic political pluralism is not conceptually monolithic, however, and admits of elucidation in a number of different ways, some of which are far more challenging than others, one of which is 'religious pluralism'. The account one gives is a measure partly of the way in which 'value signifiers' or threads of heuristic depiction drawn from philosophy, comparative religion, sociology, anthropology, etc. are inextricably knit into a conceptual tapestry of cognitive insight which portrays the extent to which putatively conflicting

religious beliefs can freely and openly be expressed without seriously disrupting the established political cohesiveness and community harmony of a multicultural society. A peaceful protest, for example, represents a minor and acceptable disruption within a multicultural society, but a violent protest most definitely does not.

In its simplest rendition religious pluralism refers essentially to the fact that religious diversity does exist within a particular society. This definition is primarily reportive and simply provides an empirical description of one facet of the socio-structural dimensions of a society, but makes no judgement about its socio-political functionality. A more evaluative use of religious pluralism refers to the extent to which the state of amicable co-existence and working relations amongst adherents from different denominations of the same religion, say, Baptists, Anglicans and Adventists are maintained by the groups themselves. More challenging, of course, is the extent to which within a multicultural society the state of coexistence amongst adherents from completely religions, say, Islam and Judaism, also is harmoniously maintained. The term, 'harmonious' here could mean any of a number of things, some more philosophically substantive than others. Adherents of different religions could co-exist harmoniously for a number of quite different reasons. They may, for example, reside in the same city, but live and worship in places which are remote from each other. In this case their co-existence can be described as 'harmonious', but largely because they have no community contact. Another possible but somewhat vacuous rendition of 'harmonious' co-existence is one in which the adherents of different religions actually live and worship in the same section of their city and co-exist harmoniously, but never discuss or refer to any provocative differences in the nature of the religious beliefs they hold. In essence they just agree to differ and endeavour always to never mention the differences.

### **Theocritical Feminism**

The religious freedom provided by the basic political pluralism within which religious pluralism functions is generally confirmed in law and expressed in legal sanctions, though social attitudes and discrepancies in the levels of individual/community attitudes of tolerance towards different religious traditions do not necessarily reflect the guiding principles of moral entitlement by law. The section of the Conference Proceedings on what we have called 'theocritical feminist discourse' provides a slightly different but important case in point. Theoretical feminist reflections, for example, have brought to bold relief this same disparity in the disjunction between the provision of legal sanctions to ensure the rights of women on the one hand and the covert modalities of institutional discrimination against women which still exist on the other. Within some areas of the Church, for example, the general investment of religious freedom by law has not infrequently been severely proscribed in the case of women. In this context stereotypical and prejudicial attitudes about women which remain theologically embedded have been projected and reproduced in ritualistic reconstructions of institutional prejudice. Because basic pluralism is socially entrenched more as a policy decision than as a philosophical shift of enlightened moral sensibility, socio-political behaviour does not always instantiate the moral dimensions of legal sanction.

None the less, basic political pluralism finds a modicum of epistemological support in a conceptual variant popularly known as 'synchronic pluralism', namely, the view that ethnography, sociology, comparative religion, anthropology and philosophical analysis have each in their respective ways contributed to a transdisciplinary vision of religious freedom in which the foundations for religious pluralism could allegedly be built more securely. The presumption here is that if what we believe about the world, ie. how we 'see reality' is to a large extent culturally imprinted, then different cultures may understandably have divergent social constructions which condition how they define and interact with the world around them. Given the arrogance of some modalities of religious 'colonization' which claim a monopoly on religious truth, for example, it has been all too easy to misjudge and devalue indigenous cultures and their belief systems as 'primitive', (ie 'uncivilized'), 'superstitious' and 'underdeveloped'.

Synchronic pluralism provides, albeit at a rudimentary epistemic level, a salutary corrective to the cavalier dismissal of other belief systems as primitive and thus in need of development in every dimension of their culture. If as synchronic pluralism urges, all cultures rely upon organizing principles of experience which are themselves social constructions, then no one worldview or systems of religious belief can justifiably claim itself to be the sole and exclusive source of truth. From this it follows that no one culture, no matter how supreme it may allege itself to be, can stand back and justifiably criticize or devalue the religious beliefs of a different religious tradition. To do so by relying upon its own internal canons of authenticity would be epistemologically self-serving, for such criteria are themselves mediated through the epistemological lenses of their own cultural construction.

In his *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein afforded the opportunity for deeper reflection on the autonomy of religious belief systems by reconceptualizing them as distinct 'forms of life', each of

which is epistemically consolidated by the unique organizing principles of experience which characterize the purposiveness of the belief discourse. For him the meaning of religious belief is a function of the use to which it is put within the form of life in which it is enshrined. On this view the 'outsider' cannot even comprehend what is being said by an adherent of a different religious belief system without what we shall dub, 'epistemic immersion'. Epistemic immersion does not require that we relinquish our cultural criteria of truth, for that is not possible without ontological conversion. What is required is that we suspend the judgemental dimension of our epistemology sufficiently so that we can avoid crystallizing into a metaphysics the cultural lenses through which we construct our understanding of the foundations upon which the edifice of religious beliefs different from our own is built. In essence we shift our focus in this transition from an epistemology of power which seeks to preserve the vested interest of knowledge as 'power' to a version of empathetic epistemology which seeks to enhance understanding through 'participatory consciousness' and 'interempathetic connectivity' (see Laura & Cotton 2000; Laura, Marchant & Smith, 2010).

### **A Wittgensteinian Model of Religious Pluralism**

The question now is to determine the extent to which a religious pluralism which embraces the epistemological autonomy of different belief systems reduces to a version of religious relativism, and if so, what is lost, if anything, in the reduction. One of the problems to be sorted here is that the forms of life out of which religious beliefs emerge come with their own peculiar institutional history such that their 'theo-cultural heritage' assents to any of an array of religious beliefs which may stand in direct contradiction to truth claims central to other religions. One plausible interpretation of religious pluralism that represents a laudable way of trying to reconcile this potential epistemological tension has been to assert that no one religion can legitimately claim a monopoly on the veracity of its pronouncements. Extending Wittgenstein's language-game model to religious belief, the autonomy of framework-based truth allows an adherent to preserve the distinctiveness of truth adopted within the system, but by parity of reasoning would be obliged to admit that other religious traditions could equally enshrine the truth claims sustained by their own framework beliefs. This pluralist way of viewing the matter is not especially controversial as long as the candidate beliefs for truth status are not diametrically opposed. The presumption here is that there is little need to argue about the veracity of religious beliefs which are not in contradiction.

When such beliefs seem to be in contradiction, however, the discussion becomes more interesting. One way in which a Wittgensteinian might reply to this issue is to reconceptualise the putative contradiction as illusory. The response here is based on rejecting the conclusion that the two beliefs, allegedly contradictory actually conflict. For two beliefs to contradict one another presuppose that they have the same meaning such that the belief being asserted by one person is the same belief being denied by the other. On Wittgenstein's view they cannot have the same meaning, because although the words might be the same, the meaning attached to them is different by virtue of the different religious forms of life from which they take their semantic sense. They may thus appear to have the same meaning, when in fact they do not. Insofar as the two claims are embedded in language-games which represent different forms of religious life, that is to say, they cannot share the same meaning. Inasmuch as their meanings cannot be constructed as within an equivalent semantic modality, their conjoint affirmations cannot represent a contradiction, because they cannot be saying the same thing.

On this view the justification for religious pluralism reduces to a form of religious relativism, and there are several renditions of the latter position designed to dissipate the disposition of interfaith theological conflict. Religious relativism posits that given the logical autonomy of the forms of life which generate the unique language-games 'played out' by different religions, it follows that a claim to truth has no meaning independently of the network of interdependent 'narrative' which characterizes a particular claim to truth as important within the religious framework. In essence the truths any religion might claim are constructed out of its mythology which in turn reflects the way in which a people's experience of life, ie. their history is unfolded to give value and purpose to their lives. The search for and construction of truth is itself a part of that purpose and thus cannot be understood adequately apart from it.

Much of the scholarly elucidation and theo-philosophical analysis to be found within the Conference Proceedings is informed by a pragmatic expression of this new transdisciplinary consciousness of the socio-cultural and historical dimensions of mythological construction which defines religious narrative. Thus the uniqueness of a religion is inevitably woven inextricably to the uniqueness of the 'truths' it tells. The success of a multicultural society depends partly upon its capacity to foster social cohesiveness by articulating at every level of schooling a visionary account of pluralism within which every major religion is recognized respectfully as a dynamic process of unfolding narrative which expresses uniquely the socio-cultural story of its spiritual journey. Thus to speak of any one religion as

having a monopoly on religious truth evinces a misunderstanding of the nature both of religion and of truth. Religious truth is not something separate from the ‘form of life’ narrative that unfolds its purpose in moral edification. There can be no more final and independent set of religious truths sufficiently comprehensive to guarantee the sanctity of the epistemological claims that would have to be made about it to justify its universalizability. There are admittedly universal elements of religious truth, but they cannot be authentically understood without embracing the socio-cultural narrative and mythology out of which the discourse of their truth yields its purpose.

### **Ontological Pluralism and Realist Fallibilism**

With this concession comes an implicit commitment to what we shall here call ‘ontological pluralism’. Ontological pluralism, as we construe it, represents a particular form of what we call ‘realist fallibilism’. This is the idea that there may well be a world which ‘exists’ independently of what we say or think about it, but the epistemological access we have to it cannot be reduced to a monolithic body of homogenous foundational religious truths professing to describe with certainty ‘how the world really is’. Kant’s philosophically well-known distinction between the nature of ‘things in themselves’ (the noumena) on the one hand, and our cognitive symbolization of them as a representative discourse of perception (the phenomena) on the other, may help us here.

The way in which we process the informational stimuli presented to us through our senses clearly depends upon the nature of those senses and their limiting conditions. We see, hear, smell, taste, and feel what the receptor organs related to those cognitive faculties dictate. There is little doubt that there exists a ‘real world’ which we experience, but the interpretation we give of that experience is conditioned and informed by the cognitive faculties upon which we depend upon to interpret it. A considerable literature has accumulated, for example, to show that the human perception of three-dimensional vision is largely a matter of the neural processing of sundry wave lengths of light which are received initially by the retina and in turn mediated for cognitive reconstruction in the brain. There is thus no world out there in which the ‘facts’ are simply awaiting our discovery. We do not just ‘treasure hunt’ facts for science to catalogue, for there is no such thing as ‘passive enquiry’. Our panoply of perceptual experiences and the observational languages used to enunciate them are generated from a highly elaborate but epistemologically covert theory of observation. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the way in which we see the world is to a large extent not only physiologically and technologically determined (as is illustrated by the electron microscope and even eyeglasses), but it is also socio-culturally impacted. What we expect, hope, or want to find may make a significant difference to what we do find. Along with the views of the so-called ‘experts’ or authorities in the field, we are influenced also by media advertising and peer group pressure, all of which contribute to the ultimate interpretation we provide of the range of observational stimuli we constantly receive from the world around us.

When truth claims from ‘competing’ frameworks of religious belief collide and appear to be in direct contradiction to each other and thus mutually exclusive, relativistic religious pluralism does, as we have seen, provide a coherent account of how seemingly contradictory truth claims when derived from different religious frameworks can co-exist. In accepting religious relativism, however, a peculiar paradox arises. With regard to religious diversity, the proponent of religious relativism implicitly gives logical licence to the claim, on the one hand, that every major religion represents an equally valid pathway to God, each of which is informed, conditioned and uniquely defined by the socio-cultural history out of which it arose and continues to develop. On the other hand, the concept of religious truth is reduced to validity attached to it within the religious form of life or religious *Weltbild* (worldview) within which it features as a truth in the unfolding narrative and mythology of the particular tradition. In the sense of *Weltbild* there exists no one world, but only an universe of experience which is filtered uniquely via the conceptual schemes which underpin the various forms of language by way of which we interpret and apprehend a particular view of the world. Religious relativism commits its advocates to the idea that in the final analysis what we have is an array of socially constructed worlds within which what we call ‘truth’ is itself a social construction. The concept of truth is thus relativised, psychologised and reduced to a subjective state of belief. Truth can also be deconstructed to mean ‘true’ only for an individual or a community of believers within a certain context. For example, the truth of the proposition, ‘she is standing exactly on the line’ will have one meaning and an uniquely corresponding signature of truth, depending upon whether the claim is made in the context of positioning an Olympic athlete in the starting blocks for a 100 metre dash, or in the context of a schoolgirl standing at a designated point in line waiting to be served her hot lunch.

From this it follows that although believers are free to proclaim the truth of their religion and to worship freely as they wish, the relativistic commitment to the notion that religious truth is ultimately a socio-

cultural construction may serve to emancipate humanity from the conceptual tyranny of religious fanaticism. In so far as religious relativism prohibits the introduction of independent criteria to which we could appeal to advance the frontiers of their system of religious belief, the adherents of any major framework of religious belief which is hermitically sealed, and doctrinally sanitized from within, prohibits them from looking outside the tradition to ascertain the extent to which other systems of religious belief may be able to provide new sources of religious insight and in turn emancipation for the tyranny of dogmatism. For multicultural societies to survive, the epistemic foundations for religious pluralism need to be clearly articulated, and it is to be hoped that the remainder of the present book can be seen by our readers a valuable contribution to the various ways in which this can be achieved.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### The Religious Foundations of Secular Hermeneutics and Epistemology: Debunking the Secularisation Myth.

by  
Susanna G. Rizzo

Once the world was filled with the sacred – in thought, practice, and institutional form. After the Reformation and the Renaissance, the forces of modernisation swept across the globe and secularisation, a corollary historical process, loosened the dominance of the sacred. In due course, the sacred shall disappear altogether except, possibly, in the private realm. (Mills 1959, 32-33)

Thus wrote the sociologist C.W. Mills in 1959, summarising, in the heyday of secularisation theory, the conventional understanding in social sciences regarding the role of religion in modern societies, an understanding that had its antecedents in the works of XIX century thinkers such as Marx, Comte, Freud, Weber, Durkheim and Spencer. However since the 1990s, the resurgence of religious thinking and spirituality in the world has induced scholars to question the validity of the theory. Today the world is “as furiously religious as it ever was”, as the sociologist Peter Berger claims in his *The De-Secularisation of the World* (1999, p.2).

Since the 1960s the statement “we live in a secular world” had become the soundtrack or leitmotiv of our age, with very few able to indicate what it *really* meant. The common assumption among social scientists was that secular was either the antonym of religious or a synonym of religious pluralism. In both cases they contended that the secular implied the exclusion of religion from the public sphere. It is evident that there was and still is a great misunderstanding, a *docta ignorantia* of what the secular, along with its cognate ideology and process, namely secularism and secularisation, *really* is. As Professor Charles Taylor states: “it is not entirely clear what is meant by secularism” (1998, p.31). The question, however, is an old one, but nevertheless still topical.

The recent resurgence of forms of and quest for spirituality at the turn of the new millennium cannot but induce to question the validity and veridicality of the old assumptions about the secular. There is an apparent need, not only to review the axioms and premises on which traditional theories of secularism /secularisation were founded, but also of the conceptualisation of religion itself. Scholars, such as Peter Berger (1967), who had been strenuous proponents of the secularisation theory, had to recently recant their position and admit that secularisation theory had failed and that levels of religiosity had not declined as forecast (Berger 1999; 2008). Other scholars, such as Mark Chaves (1994), still loyal to the Parsonian theory of societal and functional differentiation and engaging in a vain attempt to rescue secularisation theory from the graveyard of dead theories, introduce the theory of ‘neo-secularisation’, arguing that individuals, although persist in maintaining religious affiliations, still increasingly look outside the domain of religion for authoritative and normative positions. However, as Jose Casanova (1994, p.19) has recently pointed out, after the sudden eruption of religion into the public sphere in the 1980s, it is obvious that societal differentiation and the loss of societal function by religion in the public sphere does not necessarily mean that it has been ‘privatised’.

This paper will argue that the premises and postulates on which traditional theories of secularisation and secular ideologies were founded are inherently flawed and that secularism and secularisation are not a distinct ideology and process born outside the religious fold and in antithesis to it, but merely one of the many religious discourses, which came to dominate at one point in time and in one particular place, under the impulse of a transformation affecting the deep structures of the hermeneutical experience. The particular case of Western Christendom will be examined.

#### The Roots of the Secular.

Traditional theories of secularisation establish a nexus between processes of modernisation and secularisation arguing that as a society modernises it also secularises while religion ceases to play any relevant role in the public sphere. By focusing primarily on the structures of society, proponents of secularisation theories neglect the effects presumed processes of secularisation produce in the domains of ethics and epistemology. In other words, can a ‘secular ethics’ and a ‘secular epistemology’ be identified, which are based on non-religious beliefs, values and categories and structured and systemised by a secular hermeneutics? By failing to include or consider these aspects in their analysis and focusing merely on the socio-structural or institutional aspects of secularisation, they tend to become victims of an inherent self-defeating tautology.

That secularisation is a mere ‘discourse’, one of the many options available within a religious epistemology and that there is no exclusively ‘secular epistemology’ as such, appears to be demonstrated by the resurgence of religious fundamentalisms and orthodoxies and new forms of spirituality in both modern and modernising societies. These resurgences have been variously explained, from being forms of resistance or reactions to globalisation and/or modernisation (the latter synonymous of westernisation), namely a counter-discourse of modernity, an attempt to preserve community and individual identity as pointed out by Casanova (1994) or merely the expression of a need of belonging or believing (Davie 1994). All these explanations imply an inherent conflict between the religious and the secular, between the individual and community (*gemeinschaft*) or between the individual and/or community and the social (*gesellschaft*), between two antithetical and parallel epistemologies within a common social and historical context. The internal dialectics, postulated by secularisation theory, tends to associate specific structures and ideas with the secular, which comes to be identified with the (Christian) West, implicitly postulating that secularisation is a process which originated in the context of European Christianity or Christian Europe, and therefore is eminently a product of European historical developments. But if this is the case, how can we explain forms of secularism evident in the fold of Islam and Judaism? And if secularisation and modernisation is a Western *res* or process does this imply *ipso facto* that societies, which still uphold ‘traditional’ religious beliefs and values, are unable to democratise (another alias of secularism and modernity) and modernise?<sup>1</sup> Or are there different forms of secularism and secularisation and therefore a plurality of modernities?

An attentive analysis reveals the existence of a set of epistemological dichotomies, not only in the fold of Christian hermeneutics and epistemology but also in both Islamic and Jewish religions where the application of a particular exegesis at one point in time led to a ‘modern’<sup>2</sup> re-systemisation of beliefs and values parallel or in opposition to the existing tradition. An example is provided by the development of commentaries of the Quran in Islam such as the *Sunnah*, which became the source of *Fiqh* or (legal) ‘knowledge’ in opposition to *Kalam* or ‘theological knowledge’. This process during the Ottoman Empire allowed for the development of the *Kanun* law or the ‘secular law’ of the Sultan (Imber 1997, 2002), which stood alongside the *Shari’ah* and can assist in explaining how and why the Muslim Turks were able to adapt Islam to the conception of the modern state in the XX century. As to Judaism a secular form of thought, born out of religious exegesis, is evident in the development of the XVIII century *Haskalah* (Heb. ‘Enlightenment’) among the Jewish Diaspora. Spurred by the political conditions of the time in which the absolute monarchs of Europe deprived Jewish communities of their powers, the Jewish *Haskalah* brought about a new interpretation of the Diaspora, which was no longer considered as the product of divine punishment for Israel’s sins, but the result of a conjuncture produced by historical circumstances and geographical factors. The new exegesis entailed the questioning of the absolute claims of the *Halakah*, of the understanding of Judaism as the exclusive source of spiritual and moral values, and thus allowing for the incorporation of non-Jewish ideas and mores in Jewish culture. It is in this hermeneutical milieu, which prompted the rise of a reform movement within Judaism, that the origins of modern Zionism become possible.

It is evident that the hermeneutic shift, which led to the development of a ‘secular discourse’ is not a process exclusive to Christianity and hence to Western Civilisation. The process is intrinsic to all religions and can be found already before the advent of monotheism in various civilisations and to a certain extent can be regarded as one of the factors, which led to the development of monotheism itself. Scholars, such as Gauchet (1997) and Armstrong (2006), observe that religions at one point in time underwent a transformation in their conception of the divine moving from original immanent-naturalistic or animistic conceptions of the divinity to a transcendent form of the divine (theism). This transformation entailed a total re-systemisation of the existing *episteme* and hermeneutics of a community. Historically the period, in which such a transformation occurred, is that time span between 1600-200 BCE that Karl Jaspers refers to as the ‘Axial Age’, a definition clearly indicating that it brought about a complete change in the values of a society (in Greek *axiai*, values). It was in this period that the frontiers of human consciousness were pushed forward leading individuals and communities to the discovery of a transcendent dimension in the core of their being and which was not

<sup>1</sup> This theory has been recently disproven by Shafiq (2000) and Herper (1997,45).

<sup>2</sup> The word ‘modern’ derives from the Latin *modus*, ‘measure’ and in the context of time measurement meaning ‘just now’ or ‘recent’. From *modus* derived the Late Latin adjective *modernus*. The latter use is first documented in Cassiodorus (V A.D.). In this regard see: Gillespie M.A., *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008, pp.2-5.

regarded as exclusively 'supernatural' in character. In the Axial Age, namely the age of Buddha, Confucius, Jeremiah and Socrates, transcendence, by questioning a man's place in the world and his relation to God, did not only affect the conception of God but also the perception of the 'Self'. The Axial Age, to paraphrase Taylor's words, caused a shift in the place or *locus* of 'fullness', a place where the individual or collectivity traditionally re-oriented itself morally or spiritually (Taylor 2007, p. 5-6). Taylor argues, in fact, that the 'Axial Revolution' entailed a 'Great Disembedding', namely the "growth of a new self-understanding of (...) social existence, one which gave unprecedented primacy to the individual" (Taylor 2007, p. 146). Axial religions, compared to pre-Axial forms of religiousness, initiate a break in all the three dimension of 'embeddedness', namely social order, cosmos and morality (Taylor 2007, p. 152).

Significantly the Axial Age coincides with the time in which oral traditions are crystallised in the written text, an authoritative document. Historical records, both archaeological and literary, show that between the VIII and the VI centuries B.C. a series of structural changes were taking place in almost all the major civilisations of the time, civilisations which had attained a high level of structural complexity. Societal differentiation, caused by territorial expansion, along with the writing of religious texts might have prompted a critical reflection of existing values, beliefs and norms. As Goody (1968) has demonstrated, writing, when introduced into oral societies, tends to produce significant differences in psychological and social structures.

It is therefore obvious that the secular, intended as 'being in' and 'belonging to' the world, is a development common to all religions. Historically, the transition from the immanent to the transcendent is usually triggered by a negative event experienced by the community as a whole, which has the effect of upsetting existing balances, teleologies and aetiologies and thus prompting the rise of a new hermeneutics or exegesis. The 'transcendentalisation' of God leads to the development of a human space – the 'profane' or 'secular' – which is in relation with the divine, but at the same time independent, a possible *locus observationis* engendering a new perspective. The process whereby the concept of God's transcendence emerges usually coincides with the experience or idea of 'Revelation', a temporal theophany or manifestation of God in history, which takes place in historical time. Revelation marks the division between the World and God, between Time and Eternity, the Temporal and the Spiritual, between the 'self' (the private) and the world (the public). The three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all based on the idea of a 'historical' Revelation, which entailed the 'temporalisation' or 'secularisation' and spatial relocation of the divine, and all three have developed secular ideologies, which inherently tend to relegate religion and orthodoxy to the private sphere opening up a non-religious, secular, public space.

### **The Medieval Foundations of the 'Secular' in the West.**

The process of disengagement of the secular from the religious is however a gradual one and it entails a hermeneutical shift, which reorganised the existing system of knowledge.

In the context of Western civilisation sociologists and historians alike tend to identify the origins or beginnings of secularisation with the separation between the two institutions of the Church and the State, epitomised by the confiscation of ecclesiastical property during the Reformation and its transfer to the State and the rise of religious pluralism and tolerance, following the religious wars, which undermined and displaced the authority of the Catholic Church of Rome. This is what is usually referred to as 'institutional secularisation', which implies that the behaviour of people operating in or controlled by public institutions is no longer guided by religious norms, values and beliefs. This theory, however, is rather reductive and disregards previous historical and epistemological developments. The traditional thesis of institutional secularisation clearly tends to neglect the religious epistemological and hermeneutical milieu in which the notion of the 'secular' was rooted.

From the very beginning, Christian civilisation was founded on and shaped by the dialectics between God and the World, which manifested itself in the non-coincidence of the Church and the World. The division between the *saeculum* and the *ecclesia* was evident in the articulation of the clergy into a secular clergy operating in the material world, the Church in *praxis*, and the regular clergy whose concerns were mainly spiritual, the church in *theoria* or contemplation.

The non-coincidence of Church and World was a cause of concern to the early fathers of the Church since it produced a dichotomy, which inevitably would have dangerously led either to a Montanist type of mystic asceticism and therefore a refusal *tout court* of the world, or to an extreme form of agnosticism. The work of St. Augustine of Hippo, *De Civitate Dei*, represented the culmination of the attempt to reconcile the mundane and celestial worlds. Augustine argued that these two parallel cities are confused or interwind in history, the *Civitas Dei* representing the 'Pilgrim Church', characterised by a tension towards the divine and the *Eschaton*, and the *Civitas Mundi*, identified with the transient, temporal Empire. Augustine, however, did not dismiss *tout court* the validity of the temporal *Civitas*

arguing that the spiritual *Civitas* will use the peace guaranteed by the worldly State to fulfil its mission. The synthesis operated by Augustine led to a particular concept of temporal power and authority as ordained by God (*omnis potestas ab Deo*).

The dichotomy therefore between the religious and the secular, the latter embedded in the idea of a Divine Revelation, was fully developed by the V century AD, a process which had gained momentum after the promulgation of Theodosius' *Epistula* of January 381 AD. It was at this point that the Christian Church began to marginalise the eschatological and apocalyptic message of the Gospels, because of its socially and politically destabilising effect, a marginalisation already present in Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*<sup>3</sup> (Markus 1970, p. 20), while justifying its partnership with the earthly powers, thus sowing the seeds of future 'secular' developments.

It is obvious that Augustine's work was responding to an epistemological need to justify the inherent dichotomy, which endangered the very existence of the Church following the end of the persecutions and the failure of the eventuation of the apocalyptic-eschatological promise. Christian hermeneutics was in crisis. Augustine, availing himself of the Neo-Platonic tradition, had tried to bridge the two realities thus inaugurating a new exegesis and religious discourse, that of the 'secular' (Markus 1994, 2006).

The process of 'disembedding' inaugurated by transcendence had not ended with Augustine. The introduction of a new set of statements, enshrining a distinct method of inquiry, led to a revival of the *vexatae quaestiones* regarding the existence and nature of God and hence His relation with the world. The ontological debate was central to the development of a distinct notion of the secular. Most of the scholars who have dealt with this problem have disregarded the fact that, if theologians of the time needed to 'prove' the existence of God, it meant that such a belief was probably threatened by agnostic arguments or theories. An epistemological fracture clearly had developed under the impulse of the notion of divine transcendence whereby God came to be perceived as a distinctive *res* outside the world and disengaged from the Self. This explains why earlier Augustine had tried to prove God's existence as being presupposed in the 'doubt' about His existence. In this regard, in fact, Augustine stated that in the *momentum* or impulse of doubt "while not seeing what we believe, we see the belief in ourselves" and that, therefore, it follows that "the truth dwells in the interior of man, for a mind knows nothing except what is present to the mind. But nothing is present to the mind but the mind itself."<sup>4</sup> The question of doubt, which underlies and informs the Augustinian speculation, indicates that the underground of medieval Christian thought was inherently characterised by a deep-seated anxiety of scepticism and meaninglessness against which stood the unconditional acceptance of the soteriology of Revelation and of the authority of the *Ecclesia* (Tillich 1967, p. 144-149). The Medieval mind was a troubled one. It was a mind in search of 'correct opinions', of the safe haven of 'orthodoxy' which would have provided it with the certainty it agonised for.

The debate regarding the *Universalis* is nothing but a symptom of the ontological tension between God and the World, between the temporal and the spiritual, the sacred and the profane. Until the XII century Platonism had been able, thanks to the Augustinian synthesis, to overcome any perceived fracture between the Creator and the Created, but the introduction of Aristotle's works through the activity of translation of Arab scholars changed all this. Until then Aristotle's *Organon* was known only through the incomplete 'Latinised' version of Boethius (V A.D.) and had been regarded with suspicion since it provided a method to read the Scriptures, which could have easily become an independent set of propositions and hence an 'ideology' in its own right. It was stated that Aristotelian logic was a vassal of the *Sapientia Christiana*. However in medieval feudal arrangements a vassal is also a 'lord'. The introduction of Aristotelian logic, as a hermeneutical tool or method of inquiry, would have led inevitably to the questioning of the Augustinian-Platonic tradition. At the turn of the XIII century, in fact, a new shift in the epistemological paradigm began to emerge.

The introduction of Aristotelian logic led to the need to review the Augustinian solution to the *vexatae quaestiones* of the relation between God and the World, while safeguarding the omnipotence and absoluteness of the Creator *vis-à-vis* the created, along with the existence and knowledge of God. The former had been so far protected by postulating the ontological transcendence of God, with all the epistemological problems such an assumption entailed. This position, in fact, impeded knowledge of God to a point that speaking and thinking of God had become impossible as demonstrated by the rise of an apophatic theology. The debate was therefore both ontological and epistemological.

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<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XX, 7 & 9.

<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book XII.

The use of Aristotelian logic as a hermeneutical tool in the West coincided with a time of social, political and economic change brought about by the re-emergence of the city as the fulcrum of human life and activity. The city re-formulated human relations: traditional communities and loyalties were gradually being obliterated by a highly structured society. To use Tönnies' sociological categories, the solidarity and loyalties of the *Gemeinschaft* had been replaced by the self-interest and individualism of the *Gesselschaft*. The new way of life, prompted by the rise of the city and by the questioning of traditional definitions and concepts of power and authority reflected in the emergence of the bureaucratic state and the investiture controversies, had the effect of shattering the early medieval equilibrium, putting an end to the Augustinian 'impenetration' of *ecclesia* and *mundus* (Cantor 1993, p. 395). Already in the 1060s Cardinal Peter Damiani had sensed the dangerous implications of Aristotelian logic which would have led to an uncontrolled and uncontrollable inquiry into the reality of the *universalia*<sup>5</sup> and to the eventual dichotomy between the world of reason and the world of faith. In the early XII century, however, Anselm of Canterbury maintained that it was possible for faith "to seek understanding" through rational philosophy and science and had demonstrated how realism could have been used to prove the existence of God.<sup>6</sup> His ontological argument for the existence of God echoed that of St. Augustine.

Aristotelian logic prompted the rise of a new conceptualisation of the *universalia* as *nomina*, that is 'names' which had no independent existence outside the human mind and which could not be known by reason if not through revelation. The potential extremes, which could be produced by the debate, namely rationalism and fideism, were visible from the very beginning. Notwithstanding the attempt of Abelard, an individualist *ante-diem*, to find a middle way between *res* and *nomina* to define the *universalia*, the diatribe could not but lead to that split foreseen by Damiani. Nominalism was to become the locus in which a secular discourse gradually emerged. As the Protestant theologian Paul Tillich (1967, p. 198) states, "it was the conflict between nominalism and realism that destroyed the Middle Ages and is still today the destiny of our time".

It was to overcome the gnoseological impasse, caused by the introduction of the idea of ontological transcendence, and the agnosticism and ineffability of apophatic theology - the 'darkness that is beyond understanding' to use the words of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite - that induced the Scholastics to begin postulating a possible form of immanence of God in His Universe (panentheism<sup>7</sup>). It was not by chance that this solution was purported by a Franciscan<sup>8</sup>, Johannes Duns Scotus, who formulated the theory in an attempt to overcome the epistemological-ontological deadlock caused by transcendentalist postulates about God. Scotus was strongly influenced by Averroes, who argued in his *Talafut al-Talafut* ('The Incoherence of the Incoherence') that the world and God, namely the world's *Principium Primum*, were rational by nature (*naturaliter*) so that human attempts to know both God and the World were keys to the most complete knowledge and happiness available to human beings. Scotus, of course, was unaware of the profound repercussions that his Averroistic-flavoured statements would have had in the long term. In the *Philosophical Writings* Scotus stated:

"Deus non est cognoscibilis a nobis *naturaliter* nisi ens sit univocum creato et increato."<sup>9</sup>

And that:

"...quaecumque convenient enti ut indifferens ad finitum et infinitum, vel ut est proprium enti infinito, convenient sibi not ut determinatur ad genus sed ut prius, et per consequens ut est transcendens et est extra omne genus."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> A *universale* is something shared by different particular objects.

<sup>6</sup> St. Anselm of Canterbury, *Prosologion*, Chapters II-IV.

<sup>7</sup> Panentheism argues that the world exists in God, is part of the being of God, but God is not exhausted in the world since he is both transcendent and immanent. Pantheism will reach its highest development during XVII century mysticism. By contrast Pantheism, which argues that God and the World are identical and God is totally immanent, will be at the basis of the theology of Spinoza (1632-1677) and summarised by the expression *Deus sive Natura*.

<sup>8</sup> The Franciscan ethos was founded on a deep love of the natural world as a manifestation of God. This appreciation of the natural environment is well expressed by St. Francis of Assisi's *Cantico delle Creature* (Canticle of the Created or Creatures) erroneously translated into English as the 'Canticle of the Sun'. The 'Symbolic Theology' of the Franciscan St. Bonaventure of Bagnoreggio (1221-1245) stresses the importance of the senses and the empirical world as the first stage towards the attainment of the vision of God.

<sup>9</sup> "God is not knowable naturally by us, unless being univocal to the created and uncreated."

<sup>10</sup> "Whatever pertains to being, as indifferent to finite and infinite, or as proper to the infinite Being, does not belong to it as determined to a genus, but prior to any such determination and therefore as transcendental and outside any genus."

It is clear that here Scotus abolished the ontological difference between God and the World with implications not only for theism, but also for epistemology. Duns Scotus, in fact, overrode Aquinas's doctrine of analogy inaugurating a shift towards 'univocity', providing God not only with a 'substance' (*substantia*), but also with a 'place' (*locus*) within the natural world although distinct from it. In fact the world in Scotus's doctrine was no longer perceived as a distinctive *res* 'participating' (*methexis*) in and not in 'communion' (*koinonia*) with a higher ontological level, but as self-explanatory and self-sufficient. God was not present or immanent in nature and therefore His transcendence was *ipso facto* guaranteed. Consequently, since the world participated in the Being of God, it could have been known and enjoyed for it was not morally corrupt, being an extension of Augustine's *civitas dei*. The rehabilitation of the world led disciplines such as logic, rhetoric and grammar (the disciplines of the *trivium*) to become epistemologically less important, while the empirical sciences and their methodology (some of which were included in the *quadrivium*) were regarded as epistemologically fundamental, if not foundational to any possible knowledge. Some scholars, such as Gavin Hyman (2007, p. 42), have argued that Scotus's philosophy led to the rise of modern atheism since it reified 'God', albeit He still was regarded as a supreme being. However I believe that it also entailed another possibility, namely the rise of that dichotomy which we refer to today as the religious and the secular or knowledge by faith and knowledge by reason. The discovery of a self-explanatory and self-sufficient world associated with the rise of a new theism allowed for the rise of scientific inquiry, with reason turning to the empirical world to discover the 'imprint' of God.

It is obvious at this stage that this epistemological transition occurred within the fold of a purely religious hermeneutics. It was here that the category of the 'secular' began to gradually emerge as a distinct concept or category. Scotus implicitly argued that in order to understand anything one must have found himself in the world along with that which was to be understood, an epistemological stance bearing strong similarities with Heidegger's 'hermeneutical situatedness' or *Dasein*. Scotus's hermeneutics was in fact making explicit the structure of such 'situatedness', as being prior to any understanding. This process of understanding or *verstehen*, namely the process of inferring something internal from external things, is evidently linguistically mediated and therefore is inherently a matter of conceptual articulation.

It was another Franciscan, William Ockham, regarded as the father of nominalism that, by engaging in a critique of Scotus's theory, brought Scotus's stance of hermeneutical situatedness to its extreme development. Ockham, in fact, rejected *in primis* Scotus's doctrine of individuation, according to which each individual participates in a common nature and contracts 'singularity' by an individuating difference. Ockham, instead, argued that every existent is 'individual' *in se et per se* and therefore does not need a *principium individuationis*. Ockham strongly criticised the position of the realists as an absurdity since they tended to complicate a very simple matter, propending instead for a 'frugal ontology'. He rejected any form of innatism by stating that the *universalia* are simply identical with the 'act of knowing': by appearing in our minds they compel us to use them otherwise we could not speak. The *universalia* are therefore *naturalia* beyond which are words, namely a set of universals established by convention and consequently susceptible to change. The word *in se et per se*, because connected with a *universale* by convention, was also 'universal' since it could not be said of different things, and thus contained a *ratio propria*. It followed that only individual things had a reality and nothing else.

The nominalist approach was also applied to God, the *Ens Singularissimum*, the most singular entity. God was individualised and separated from other individuals, an individual among and in relation to other individuals. God was no longer conceived and perceived as the centre of everything as in Augustine, but came to be displaced and transferred onto a different ontological and cognitive level. The individual entities became independent and knowledge of them could be attained only empirically. Ockham's statement that in the deity relative terms did not signify relative entities but absolute entities connoting certain propositions about them inevitably foreshadowed the fragmentation of the unity of God and the World since it became apparent that they did not participate in each other in virtue of their common participation as stated in the Augustinian and Thomistic traditions. Thus the community, the organic solidarity, was replaced by a set of systemic relations, the society, where participation lost its original meaning and was replaced by co-operation, competition and individual pursuits (Tillich 1967, p.200). Ockham's logic informs his political writings which were prompted by his controversy with Pope John XXII regarding the nature of private property and in which he anticipated some of Hobbes and Locke's ideas.

Ockham's political ideas were rooted in a particular understanding or interpretation of the *annosa quaestio* regarding the relation of human *Liberum Arbitrium* and *Charitas Dei*, free will and divine Grace. The question had given rise to a debate in the V century A.D. between Pelagius, who believed in human free will and human capacity for goodness, and St. Augustine, who emphasised

predestination and the necessity of God's Grace for human salvation. The debate is central to the rise of the notion of the secular and its disengagement from the religious.

Ockham, who has been regarded by some as a semi-Pelagian (Adams 1987p. 1297; cfr. Woods, 1999, p. 358-361), introduced in his theory the notion of 'human merit' alongside that of 'human will' and consequently argued that salvation required the necessity of human cooperation. As Adams points out, Ockham argues that by definition "nothing is meritorious unless it is elicited or produced freely and voluntarily" (Adams 1987 p. 1295). This meant that the 'Grace of God' came to be restricted since Grace intervened only when man became meritorious in the eyes of God to be rewarded by Grace. It is evident that such a thesis endangered the foresight and omniscience of God. Ockham, as expressly indicated in the *In Libros Sententiarum* (Sent. III.9,p. 281), managed to save God's foresight along with the idea of predestination by arguing that the necessity of infused Grace was merely *de potentia Dei ordinata* (by the 'ordained' power of God) and not *de potentia Dei absoluta* (by the 'absolute' power of God). As observed by Wood (1999), in *Sententia* IV.3-5 Ockham claimed that God could inflict 'suffering' without sin, although no one can be punished without deserving 'punishment'. Although Woods rejects Adams' hypothesis regarding Ockham's semi-Pelagianism and reads the passage as a statement supporting God's *potentia absoluta*, it is undeniable that the idea of merit foreshadowed in Ockham's statement contributed to envisage a space for human will and action outside God's dominion. On the other hand, Christianity had inherited the Jewish tradition incorporated in the *Book of Job*, a product of Middle Judaism, which dealt with the problem of the suffering of the just and in which the question of human merit loomed large in the background. Ockham was therefore working within the traditional episteme. What he was doing was merely rearranging its structural components thus purporting a new exegesis.

This exegesis, as stated earlier, informs Ockham's stance on political issues of the time in particular that of private property in his dispute with Pope John XXII, in which he developed a utilitarian view of property<sup>11</sup>, and his criticism's of Marsilius of Padua's theory of the absolute power of the ruler against which he argued that power should have resided in the will of the people who had the right to remove a ruler acting as a tyrant. Ockham, in fact, never accepted Marsilius's legitimization of the state by its efficient cause,<sup>12</sup> which denied a final cause for its existence, since it would have had the effect of subtracting the state from papal jurisdiction. His theory of the separation of State and Church was still founded on the reading of the Gospels and the Pauline tradition.

Ockham's thought paved the way to empiricism whereby knowledge is obtained through senses and to 'positive' thought: towards the end of the XIV century the French priest John Buridan (1300-1361), departing from a critique of Ockham's nominalism, elaborated a new concept of scientific methodology based on observation eschewing teleological explanations which paved the way to the so-called 'Copernican Revolution'.

Nominalism, by denying the possibility of rational metaphysics, led to the separation of *scientia*, intended as knowledge of the world, and *fides*, or knowledge of God, as two independent epistemological realms endowed with a distinctive hermeneutics, although stemming from a common source. Ockham's school of thought, in fact, came to be known as the *via moderna*, while the school of thought, which embraced the Thomist tradition, was referred to as the *via antiqua*. The nominalist speculation allowed for the rise of individualism and personal freedom since it disconnected the 'Self' from the divinity and opened up an independent space for its manifestation. This accounts for the rise of new forms of 'personal' piety, the so-called *Devotio Moderna* ('updated devotion'), in the XIV century, outside institutionalised Christianity such as Geert Groote's *Brethren of the Common Life*, an informal association of lay men and women, known as the *Beghards* and the *Beguines*, usually of middle class urban background "who devoted themselves to social improvements and the support of popular preachers" (Cantor 1993, p.499; McDonnell, 1954). The emphasis of this modern devotion or piety was on spiritual 'exercise' or practice (Gr. *askesis*)<sup>13</sup> and, by criticising the corruption of the Church, they stressed the possibility of a direct, non-mediated, private relation with God.

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<sup>11</sup> Ockham argued that in order to use things justly a legal right under human law was not required since a moral right was sufficient. The argument was based on the distinction between *iura fori* and *iura poli*, namely rights under human law and rights under moral or natural law. See: William Ockham, *Dialogue between Master and Student concerning matters disputed among Christians*, III. 2 in Ockham W., *Opera Politica*, Mancunii: E typis Universitatis; New York: Harper & Row, Barnes & Nobles Import Division, 1974-Editio Altera.

<sup>12</sup> Marsilius in *Defensor Pacis* legitimates the existence of the state on the basis of its efficient cause. The efficient cause was that cause which led to the imposition of coercive law in order to guarantee the peace necessary for a stable polity and hence human existence. See: Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor Pacis*, Discourse I, Chap. XV [English edition: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005].

<sup>13</sup> Only late in Lucian (II A.D.) will the word be used to denote asceticism.

## Conclusions

This paper has argued that the ‘secular’ represents a distinctive discourse about religion, which emerges within the fold of institutionalised religions, which have developed a textual tradition, at a particular point of their historical development. In the particular case of Western-Christian civilisation this paper has shown that the secular discourse produced by nominalism during the Middle Ages occurred within the fold of religious hermeneutics where a paradigm shift had taken place following the introduction of Aristotelian logic. Since language represents the universal horizon and medium of hermeneutic experience (Gadamer 2004), it is within the ‘language of religion’ that ‘secular instances’ are produced so that the secular becomes meaningful only in its syntagmatic<sup>14</sup> and paradigmatic relation with religion. It is evident from this brief analysis that the ontic<sup>15</sup> commitments of the secular, generated by the deep structures of its linguistic competence, as indicated by the question of the *universalia*, are born within the fold of a religious epistemology, which inevitably continues to condition its performative acts: the theory appears to be validated by the failure of religion to disappear completely from the scene and its constant resurgence over time.

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<sup>14</sup> I am here using analogically concepts derived from Saussurian linguistics: by ‘syntagmatic’ I mean any chain of concepts in a system of knowledge and by ‘paradigmatic’ the relationship of the components of such a concept with associated, structurally interchangeable, absent ones. De Saussure referred syntagmatic and paradigmatic as the distinction between the relationship of the combination of words in a chain of speech and the relationship of any particular associated and structurally interchangeable absent terms.

<sup>15</sup> I intend here ‘ontic’ in the Heidegger’s sense of ‘entities’ or ‘apparently real things’ as opposed to ‘ontology’ or ‘authentic being’. Heidegger argues that the ultimate signified to which all the signifiers refer, is the ‘transcendental signified’, namely ‘Being’.

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## CHAPTER Three

### Spirit, Spiritedness and Spirituality

by

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People are constantly claiming to be spiritual, to possess a spirituality. Their claim is plainly intended as the report of an advantage: they have something others lack, and can discern something real, important and very valuable. The claim cannot be accepted on their say-so. They may well have something, but it might be morally or intellectually defective, and if it has to be assessed pejoratively it will not play the role it is assigned in these claims.

But before such criticisms can be considered, we need to have a working conception of what it is to have a spirituality. Gary Bouma speaks of a dramatic rise between the Australian censuses of 1996 and 2001 in the number of those identifying themselves as spiritual rather than religious (Bouma 2006, p. 61). This is not, of course, a purely local phenomenon. To take just one example, an anthology of papers on Marxism and Spirituality appeared in the 1990s (Page 1993). That anthology is a microcosm of the general conceptual shift. There are disputes about the appropriateness of language such as the editor uses: 'the inner dimension...the deepest center of the person [where] the person experiences ultimate reality' (Page 1993, pp.ix-x). One of the contributors objects to talk of a transcendent dimension, and the use of expressions like 'inner', 'deepest', 'ultimate' (Bancroft 1993, pp.84-5). Another classifies different schools of Marxism as God-builders and God-seekers (Rosenthal B.G 1993).

My first aim is to offer an account of spirituality that allows room for a variety of spiritualities, religious and secular. Secondly, having offered a broad account of spirituality I want to say something about defective spiritualities. Finally, in continuing the enquiry into defective spiritualities, I will focus on two critiques of what was formerly the core case, religious spirituality. The desire to break the nexus between spirituality and religion often arises from a desire to sideline religion altogether and this aim would be achieved if either of the critiques I consider could be established. The first critique is the claim that anything like Aristotelian contemplation is defective, and the second the Freudian claim, recently re-stated by Tam Pataki, that religious belief is essentially narcissistic.

#### What is spirituality?

I start with a real case of a patient of a psychiatric clinic. He was a middle-aged man who lived alone, had no friends and no job. He was physically inactive, a heavy drinker, and his diet consisted largely of junk food. He spent his days at home with the blinds drawn, going out only at night on brief solitary journeys. He had some psychiatric problems that were treated successfully, but he professed to be content with his way of life and resisted all attempts to deal with his alcohol problem and improve his physical health. He died of advanced cardio-vascular disease at an early age. And psychiatrists involved in his care raised the question of whether psychiatry had failed him.

We could say of him that he made a choice of a shorter and more limited life than he might have achieved, in exchange for other goods such as security. To be a person involves having a certain picture or map of the world and one's place in it. As we scan *his* maps we declare that they are unworthy of a human being, that someone who steers by them is a poor example of a human being. Perhaps we refrain from trying to enforce our ideas, but if we think we can help it is natural to try to do so. The help might not be primarily psychiatric. What I want to say about this man is that some of his profound problems are adjacent to psychiatry but not squarely within it. I think of these problems as **spiritual**. He lacks spirit for the struggle, like a dispirited broken-down old horse incapable of work. We can get an insight into his spiritual malaise through Plato's account of human nature.

#### Plato's contribution

In Plato's ruminations about what he called the soul, one of his models was of a three-part structure, **mind**, **appetite**, and a third named by the Greek word *thumos* (Plato 1997 443e1ff, 543a1ff). He thought of these three as correlated with parts of the body: mind with the head, appetite with the regions south of the diaphragm, and *thumos* with the chest. In addition, he thought that each of the three could be dominant – mind in the philosopher-king, for example, appetite in the slave, *thumos* in the warrior. Finally he offers a parallel of types of societies based on the psychological type dominant in each.

Our psychiatric patient, Plato would say, lacks *thumos*. The psychological type dominated by *thumos* is labelled *thumoeides*, defined by Liddell and Scott as 'I: high-spirited, courageous; II: hot-tempered,

passionate; of horses, restive, wild.' Some of the English equivalents proposed by translators of Plato for the root word *thumos* have been: spirited element, anger, indignation, spirit, passionate element, temper. Adam Smith preferred 'ambition' (Smith 1776 VII.ii 1, 2-4, 267-8). The Greek word and its cognates covers an even wider field. *Homothumadon*, for example, means 'being of one mind', and *enthumethentos* means 'thinking over. This linguistic plasticity, I suggest, is precisely what one would expect if the concept of spirituality is essentially wide in its scope.

### Varieties of *thumos*

We know that Plato thought it was dominant in, and most at home in, a *timarchy*, government by those whose primary value is **honour**. They are energized by their commitment to a picture of human excellence that is encapsulated in a code of honour. Honour is a culturally relative notion, but in Plato's case the paradigm is the society exemplified by Sparta and Crete. If this piece of psychology is to be worthy of the name it must weaken the link with the idiosyncratic case that interested Plato. Can we, as a first step, apply the structure to a more recent military man? Here is a literary example, somewhat resembling the Spartan: a John Buchan character on hearing artillery (Buchan 1992, p. 288):

It was a sound I had not heard for five months, and it fairly crazed me. I remembered how I had first heard it on the ridge before Laventie. Then I had been half-afraid, half-solemnized, but every nerve had been quickened. Then it had been the new thing in my life that held me breathless with anticipation; now it was the old thing, the thing I had shared with so many good fellows, my proper work, and the only task for a man. At the sound of the guns I felt I was moving in natural air once more. I felt that I was coming home.

Hannay, Buchan's protagonist, is an odd character and not all soldiers are like him. But is the *thumos* type in any case, essentially a military type? Dashiell Hammett provides a modest departure from the military paradigm. A gangster refuses to acknowledge his suffering and imminent death (Hammett 1972, p. 197):

He stopped, pretending interest in the shape the red puddle was taking. I knew pain had stopped him, but I knew he would go on talking as soon as he got himself in hand. He meant to die as he had lived, inside the same tough shell. Talking could be torture, but he wouldn't stop on that account, not while anybody was there to see him. He was Reno Starkey who could take anything the world had without batting an eye, and he would play it out that way to the end.

Starkey seeks invulnerability through a show of insensitivity and indifference, by not caring about things he should care about. He displays the essentially superficial character of *machismo*. And yet there is room for sympathy. *Thumos* produces a sense of the limits beyond which I must not go; if I did my integrity would be compromised. The conception of integrity and the identification of the limits could be at fault, as they are in the Starkey and Hannay cases, without the general critical structure being compromised.

But there are darker cases. James Lee Burke describes the psyche of one of the unpleasant characters abounding in his novels (Burke 2006, pp.205-6).

... I couldn't get Bellerophon Lujan, and the primitive, violent mind-set he represented out of my thoughts.

He was a creature out of the past, but one that every southerner of my generation recognizes and instinctively avoids if possible. It's facile to call him racist. In fact race is almost a cosmetic issue when it comes to understanding the Bello Lujans of the world. They're often fond of black people individually but they resent if not despise them as a group. Their anger lives like a benign form of clap in their blood. Instead of destroying them, it energizes them, defines who they are, and allows them to use social outrage to intimidate other whites.

Their ignorance is a given. In fact they take pride in it and use it as a weapon. The threat of violence is implicit in all their rhetoric and in the bold stare of their eyes. Their greatest fear as well as their greatest enemy is knowledge of themselves. Like Plato's prisoners in 'The Allegory of the Cave', they will perpetrate any hateful act, including murder, on the individual who tries to set them free from their chains.

Lujan is energized by the conviction that he is a member of a strikingly superior group. His conviction of his superiority is strong in one sense, but in another it is fragile, hence his fear of those who would criticize it, and his preference for violent action to defend it – he has no other effective means.

As we generalize away from the rather specialized military case, some of the translations of *thumos* become less plausible. A substitute that is as good as any, and well adapted to a permissive approach, is

simply spirit in the sense of what you lack if you are dispirited and what a spirited horse has in abundance. Without some such source we will be disabled in the face of the need to be active. Considering the crippling effects of dispiritedness, it may seem that there had better be a bit of fight in every dog, no matter what its source and character might be. But the cases considered indicate that *thumos* can be morally and intellectually defective, even if energizing. If just anything that fills the functional role will do there was no need or credible basis for the criticisms of the Spartan and the other three cases. Nor could we reject the advice of Charles Baudelaire (Baudelaire 1991, p. 92) in his poem 'Get Drunk', which begins thus:

One should always be drunk. That's the one thing that matters. In order not to feel the horrible burden of Time, which breaks your shoulders, and crushes you to the ground, one should be drunk without ceasing. But on what? On wine, on poetry or on virtue, as it suits you. But get drunk

Poetry and virtue are not negligible contenders, but the claim made for literal drunkenness is nonsense – that's where we came in with the dispirited alcoholic. Some options that might energize us and make sense of the world for an individual cannot plausibly be characterized as spiritualities because the concept has associations of seriousness, comprehensiveness and a fit with our nature and circumstances. Hitler was energized by his vision of himself in the world, but if that is a spirituality it is a demonic one. The honorific element cannot be stripped out of the concept without changing it radically. Hitler's 'spirituality' harmed him, to say nothing of the harm it did to millions of others. This is not a way of insisting on one's own favoured solution. It is a matter of ruling out grossly defective solutions, and that leaves a wide range. For example, you don't have to be a Marxist to see that the following answers are worthy of consideration. First Marx, as represented by Page (1993, p. x): ...the defining characteristic of the human is creativity, the capacity for "free, creative labor", labor undertaken for the joy of it or its product rather than for exchange, money, or any other extrinsic value.'

And one of his contributors (Gornick p. 20):

There was so much ignorance and misery everywhere, and among the people I knew, swollen-belly starvation. But no matter how poor or filthy things were, for me they were good. I was organizing for the C.P. Inside I felt light and clear. You see, I *understood things*. I knew what was happening. That saved me. Not only that. I was working for the revolution. I could take anything, knowing that I was working for the revolution. Anything.

### **Aristotelian contemplation**

Plato is criticized as viciously other-worldly. Aristotle continued the tradition and is criticized in the same terms. Religious spirituality, typically, is similarly focussed on higher things, or on things considered to be higher. All, according to a widespread conception, are engaged in an irresponsible flight from reality. Indeed the second objection I will consider, the narcissism claim, can be developed in this way.

After giving us a naturalistic account of human happiness, in Book X of his *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle (1984 1179a22-32) introduces the idea that the highest good for us is to resemble the gods in cultivating that part of our nature in which we resemble them, namely theoretical intellect.

Now he who exercises his intellect and cultivates it seems to be both in the best state and most dear to the gods. For if the gods have any care for human affairs, as they are thought to have, it would be reasonable both that they should delight in that which was best and most akin to them (i.e. intellect) and that they should reward those who love and honour this most, as caring for the things that are dear to them and acting both rightly and nobly. And that all these attributes belong most of all to the wise man is manifest. He, therefore, is dearest to the gods. And he who is that will presumably be the happiest, so that in this way too the wise man will more than any other be happy.

What we make of this advice will depend in part on what we take the gods to be like. Bertrand Russell (1961, p. 180) quotes a passage from the *Metaphysics* and lightly indicates how arcane and repellent it is:

It is clear then...that there is a substance which is eternal and unmovable and separate from sensible things. It has been shown that this substance cannot have any magnitude, but is without parts and indivisible...but it has also been shown that it is impassive and unalterable; for all the other changes are posterior to change of place (1073a).

God does not have the attributes of a Christian Providence, for it would derogate from his perfection to think about anything except what is perfect, i.e. Himself.' It must be of itself that the divine thought thinks (since it is the most excellent of things), and its thinking is a thinking on thinking (1074b).

The trouble is that this conception of the gods is not the one we find in *Nicomachean Ethics*, nor even always in the *Metaphysics* as the passage quoted just prior to Russell's shows. Thomas Nagel (1980, p. 12) states another item from the charge sheet:

The imperfection of applications of reason to practical matters is that these applications make human life the primary object of rational attention, whereas with reason man has become the only creature capable of concentrating on what is higher than himself and thereby sharing in it to some extent. His time is, so to speak, too valuable to waste on anything so insignificant as human life.

Simon Blackburn's dictionary of philosophy entry (Blackburn 1994) repeats it as the only comment s.v. *contemplation*:

A curious view common to Indian Ethics, Plato, Aristotle, and much of the Western tradition, holds that the *summum bonum* or supremely valuable state of mind (sic) lies in the right kind of contemplation: contemplation of the form of the good, or reflection on the virtues...Less mystical philosophies point out that contemplation is apt to decay into emptiness without the continual stimulus of desires, fresh action, and fresh problems.

Cicero (1927, V iii.8) tells a story about Pythagoras explaining what it is to be a philosopher, in terms of the different sorts of people who attend the Olympic Games:

...at this festival some men whose bodies had been trained sought to win the glorious distinction of a crown, others were attracted by the prospect of making gain by buying or selling, whilst there was on the other hand a certain class, and that quite the best type of free-born men, who looked neither for applause nor gain, but came for the sake of the spectacle and closely watched what was done and how it was done. So also we, as though we had come from some city to a kind of crowded festival...entered upon this life, and some were slaves of ambition, some of money; there were a special few who, counting all as nothing, gave themselves the name of lovers of wisdom (for that is the meaning of the word philosopher); and just as at the games the men of the truest breeding looked on without any self-seeking, so in life the contemplation and discovery of nature far surpassed all other pursuits.

This suggests an effete aristocrat living a life that would be impossible were it not for the unremitting efforts of his slaves, too lofty to take any notice of the demands of practical life, and, inasmuch as the project involved trying to imitate the god of the *Metaphysics*, uninterested in life altogether. This is not quite right even here however. The Cicero passage portrays the aristocrat as concerned with the contemplation and discovery of nature. Just so, Aristotle's life involved pioneering work in empirical studies and his will reveals a concern for well-being of members of his household, including slaves. Was he living in bad faith or are his critics wrong?

There is a voluminous literature on how the Aristotelian text should be understood. My interest is not to try to give a definitive reading of Aristotle's writings but to show that a more humane conception of contemplation consistent with Aristotle's revealed interests and values.

In another passage from *Metaphysics* he insists on the ordered character of the whole world: 'All things are ordered together somehow, but not alike, - both fishes and fowls and plants,' and the integration of the practical and the theoretical into a comprehensive totality permeates the *ethics*. (Aristotle 1984 1075a11-23; cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a18-19, 1097a15ff, 1102a5-10, 1144b30ff) In that spirit, consider someone who has the leisure and the capacity to contemplate the world. The contemplator is an intelligent embodied social being. Could matters like the beginning and the end of life and the conditions for living escape attention? If they could, how could it be said that he was contemplating the world?

Here is a specific mundane case: the advertising industry skews the salience relations of things in the world. Mundane items like toilet paper and dog food are given centre stage, which is clearly absurd. But what if the Aristotelian contemplator were blind to such things? This would be to skew the salience relations in another way, failing by deficiency in a manner corresponding to the advertiser's failure by excess. Such a contemplator would be a buffoon, like the comical judge asking for explanations of words like 'supermarket' and 'casino'.

If contemplation does not deliver a comprehensive vision it fails. If one's spirituality is focussed on the ephemeral, the partial, the perverted, it fails. The world map of one's spirituality requires comprehensiveness and an accurate estimation of the salience of various features. So does any contemplation worth engaging in.

## Narcissism

As I mentioned, one could develop the critique of Aristotle in terms of a narcissistic self-indulgence, a refusal to acknowledge good fortune and the contributions of parents, friends and slaves without which none of the higher activities would be possible. One could also say that to claim insights into what is 'higher' is a narcissistic exaggeration of one's own capacities.

To accuse people of narcissism is to invoke the Greek myth of Narcissus, who found nothing to match his own wondrous excellence and cruelly rejected all his many admirers. This life policy, initially harmful to the admirers, eventually led to his suicide.

To be compared to such a repellent character is seriously insulting. While it would be unreasonable to hold Freud to every minute detail of the myth, the pejorative element is essential. See, for example, contemporary discussion of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (Bloch and Singh 2000, p. 258).

Freud speaks of narcissism as 'the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct for self-preservation, a measure of which can be attributed to every living creature...a primary and normal narcissism' (Freud 1957, pp. 74-5). This suggests that the insulting character of the charge of narcissism is defused by its use as a term of art, but not for long. He goes on to say that in our observations of the mental life of primitive peoples 'we find characteristics which, if they occurred singly might be put down to megalomania: an over-estimation of the power of their wishes and mental acts' (Freud 195, p.75). This, it turns out, is the prototype of religious thinking. He says, of the origin of religious ideas:

These, which profess to be dogmas, are not the residue of experience or the final result of reflection; they are illusions, fulfilments of the oldest, strongest and most insistent wishes of mankind; the secret of their strength is the strength of these wishes (Freud n.d., p 51).

There is a good chance that any possible defect will be found to be actual somewhere in the infinite variety of religious communities and individuals. It is probably true, for example, that some people appeal to mutually inconsistent grounds for religious belief (Freud, n.d., pp 43-4). That, of course, proves nothing about religious faith as such. This is not the only unjustified move from some to all in the narcissism discussion. He says of parental love:

... the attitude of affectionate parents towards their children ... is a revival of their own narcissism, which they have long since abandoned. The trustworthy pointer constituted by overvaluation, which we have already recognized as a narcissistic stigma in the case of object-choice dominates, as we all know, their emotional attitude (Freud 1957, pp. 90-1).

Parents, then, are not accurate judges. Children could not be as good, as their parents think, and this is not an occasionally occurring defect but is of the essence of the contract.

There is no need to list more forms of narcissism since Freud discerns it as a characteristic of culture as such (Freud n.d., p. 18). If he were right about that, naturally religion and parenting would be included but so would psychoanalysis, including his then necessarily narcissistic attack on religion and parenting as narcissistic. The thesis is too strong to be polemically effective against its chosen targets. It is more like a re-statement of the doctrine of Original Sin .

Tam Pataki (2007, p.16) repudiates such global judgments: 'It is not my contention that *all* who are religious are motivated by such psychological forces, nor that such motivation is *all* there is to the psychology of (all) religions, nor that psychological explanation accounts for the totality of religion.' Even if not the consistent message of his book, this is a marked improvement on Freud. The proper attitude to the narcissism thesis, and all similar universal diagnoses is to cast a critical eye on the *prima facie* plausible cases.

For example, in the case of parenting. But whether or not parental love is primarily a ranking exercise, it may be that careful attention to the infant reveals value that cannot be discerned without such attention. In that case the parents are uniquely well placed to make an accurate assessment. In the case of religious belief, the supposed exaggeration involved in confidence in divine providence may be the result of careful and loving attention. The enterprise of trying to prove that world-view is based on an intuition about the way things are and is not overturned by the existence of an alternative vision. There remains 'a whisper in the mind and a shy hope in the heart' (Manning Clark, quoted by Bouma 2006, p.2). That does not involve a narcissistic exaggeration of one's powers. Indeed it seems that religion commonly offers a solution to narcissism by giving a central place to humility, or even by producing convictions of guilt and worthlessness.

But the narcissism theory has an answer to all of this. In the case of religion Pataki (2007, p.15) offers the standard Freudian account, but he also he tells us that self-hatred is narcissistic because it is a

reflexive libidinal relation (2007, p. 32). The concept of narcissism in the Greek myth has marked explanatory and polemical power. Here it has been neutered. No affective self-directed attitude escapes its scope. In self-estimation there is no such thing as getting it right. So, if narcissism is still intended to be a bad thing, we must conclude that we ought to strive to extirpate all such attitudes. This is incoherent because any resolve to change would imply a reflexive libidinal attitude and thus stand condemned. This is a particular case of the narcissism of culture, which as we saw, entails the narcissism of psychoanalysis. Of course, given that the concept of narcissism has been generalized to vacuity, this tells us nothing about psychoanalysis as exemplified by Freud and Pataki except that it does not constitute a threat to anything it characterizes as narcissistic. At another level, given the substantive weaknesses in the Freudian argument we may suspect that psychoanalysis is also narcissistic, again in its own terms, in seriously over-estimating its own capacity to understand. There is ample room for wide variation in the realm of spirituality, including, unless better arguments can be produced than those considered here, traditional religious spirituality.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### Vattimo's Weak Thought: Christianity After the Death of God

by

Matthew Tones

This paper will provide a broad examination of the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo's theory of 'Weak Thought' and its application to Christianity, specifically within the current post-secular environment. The paper will be presented as an overview in order to capture the main themes that establish Vattimo's position on the future of Christianity. I will begin with a brief biographical outline, as his background is important to placing and understanding his thought within an historical theoretical epoch. This context facilitates Vattimo's interpretation of the Nietzschean 'Death of God' as the crucial 'event' leading to the creation of Vattimo's theory of 'Weak Thought'. From this foundation it will be argued that the 'Death of God' is a necessary occurrence in the revival of Christian thought. Vattimo's 'revival,' or 're-emergence,' is to be read as the response from Christianity to the specific modern condition that has questioned the metaphysical viability of Christianity founded upon Platonic metaphysics. Hence, he links religion to historical processes and this paper addresses the question of a 're-emergence' within the metaphysical structure of reality created by the Nietzschean 'Death of God'. Once this has been established an exploration of the ambiguous relationship between, and illegitimate existence of, power to 'Weak Thought' will be explored as an obstacle and influence on the possible future shape of Christianity. It will be shown that 'Weak Thought' raises questions of legitimacy that discourses of power struggle to respond to.

Vattimo's formative years were spent in Catholic monasteries and he credits his institutional education to his mentors, Luigi Pareyson, who was a leading hermeneutical scholar in Italy, and later Hans Georg Gadamer. He also spent time in Heidelberg under the tutelage of Karl Löwith and during this time formed a close friendship with Umberto Eco. These influences complimented his readings of Croce, Marcuse, Benjamin, Barth and Bloch, but his own interests developed in line with, and were facilitated by, his hermeneutical education. This education facilitated his approach to his primary influence, the German Friedrich Nietzsche, who he accessed through French linguistic readings, such as Klossowski, that were critiquing Heidegger's readings of Nietzsche at the time. This would shape his later re-engagement with Christianity through a practical hermeneutical approach that was underlined by the rigorous metaphysical enquiry of Heideggerian Nietzscheanism.

Vattimo no doubt recognised an affinity with Heidegger and spent the best part of the latter half of last century engaging with Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche. Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche's 'Death of God' clearly facilitated a rediscovery of his early Catholic faith from which he was estranged. He applied this education to his interest in Catholic ethics and politics. As a member of the European parliament his attention was largely directed towards issues of sexuality, equality, and authority. Vattimo, a homosexual, had a strained and estranged relationship with the Catholic Church throughout his tertiary life, as he himself notes: "how could I belong to a Church that treated me [as] ... a monstrous brother who must be loved but kept hidden?" (Vattimo 1999, p. 73) It is in many respects interesting that he constantly engages and seeks to reform the church adopting an overly critical position.

This fractious relationship to the Catholic Church was facilitated by the one event he designates as crucial to the future shape of Christianity, the Nietzschean *Death of God*. Vattimo's reading is taken directly from Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche; that is, as signifying the end of Platonic metaphysics. Further, there is no 'ultimate foundation' and the certainty of Being is replaced with the ambiguity of nihilism. It is this realization, Vattimo argues, that provides thinking with the "general framework for characterising late-modern experience" (Vattimo 2002, p. 12). The 'Death of God' addresses the issue of what it is we can take as Truth. Once this condition of nihilism has been realized, the metaphysical structure for the re-emergence of Christianity replaces the traditional Platonic metaphysical relationship of Being to becoming. This action de-legitimises authority, and creates three key points of transition that fundamentally alter the conditions of truth and value. These are:

#### 1. The move from passive existence to active

Heidegger had already addressed the threat of objectivity posed from techno-science, arguing the new conditions created by technology made it impossible to oppose objectivity with an ideal authenticity. Whether it was God, an 'I,' the 'God particle,' or something else, the same metaphysical structure remained. Heidegger's concern was with the drowning of the essentially human spiritual element that

could not be reduced to the objective. Vattimo favoured the Nietzschean return to flux, realizing that if the response to the Death of God was not active becoming, i.e. fluidity beyond or outside of 'Being,' then the passive nature of objectivity would either deny the destruction of Platonic metaphysics or be at the mercy of 'enframing' (*Gestellung*). The Platonic structure would then be continually replicated and controlled by the dominant ideology of knowledge (e.g. science).

## 2. The transition from transcendence to immanence

This was already achieved through the scientific process of *Gestellung*, or enframing, that objectified existence and removed the trace of transcendence from the metaphysics of Being (i.e. we do not need God to give us meaning). By making existence both immanent and quantifiable, *Gestellung* inculcated a discourse that made previous reliance on Platonic metaphysics redundant. The viability of quantifiable objectivity is rendered unworkable by the exponential increase in interpretations that arise when authoritative claims are questioned and reality is interpreted as an infinite series of 'events'. That is, interpretable immanent occurrences are subject to an infinite multiplicity of perspectives. Heidegger's move to interpret history as event is crucial to Vattimo's project because recognising Being as event is a "recognition that enables me [Vattimo] to enter actively into history, instead of passively contemplating its necessary laws" (Vattimo 1999, p. 78). Further, "it is above all because of the experience of postmodern pluralism that we can think of Being only as event, and of truth not as the reflection of reality's eternal structure but rather as a historical message that must be heard and to which we are called to respond" (Vattimo 2002, p. 6). The fallacy that both science and religion fail to overcome is in assuming Truth to be objective when, after the Death of God, truth can only be the product of interpretations; no discourse is able to claim privileged access to 'Truth'.

## 3. Truth changing from deductive/intuitive to constructive

Vattimo argues that modern philosophical inquiry has neglected the possibility of any knowledge or experience of that which is perceived to be beyond us, instead knowledge is reduced to linguistic agreement, and the role of philosophy to *Bildung*, or self-creation. The conundrum of a reality shaped solely by the calculative or deductive intuitive sense of understanding is that all existence can potentially be objectified and made understandable, interpretable through its 'events'. Unfortunately, "If this experience is essentially linguistic and our existence essentially historic, then there is no way to overcome language and to accede to the 'whole' of reality" (Rorty & Vattimo 2005, p. 7). The potential positive outcome from this reality is that language can be manipulated and constructed both to serve a particular discourse and to create new ones (such as a new 'language' of spirituality). For Vattimo, it is power that determines the currency of one language over another (e.g. the value of scientific language over spiritual). Vattimo was well aware of the potential to interpret existence not as 'event,' but to re-invest it with objective meaning and regress to mythology (grand narrative). He says "Popular consciousness, in its return to religion, tends to conduct itself reactively. It is articulated as a nostalgic search for an ultimate and unshaken foundation" (Derrida & Vattimo 1998, p. 83). What Vattimo demonstrates so effectively is that after the Death of God the desire to return to Platonism is problematic. When this is translated into the question of the future of Christianity, it presents a fertile new ground into which Vattimo plants his theory of 'Weak Thought'.

So what then is Weak Thought? The expression, 'Weak Thought' (*Il Pensiero Debole*) was taken from Carlo Augusto Viano's essay 'Reason, Abundance and Belief' in the book *The Crisis of Reason*, edited by Aldo Giorgio Gargani in 1979. Vattimo first used the expression in his own essay titled 'Toward an Ontology of Decline' in 1979.<sup>1</sup> 'Weak Thought' can be seen as an admission or concession that the once dominant realm of objective metaphysics, or Platonism, has conceded its position of authority to the temporal and fleeting world of man. Further, discourses of truth are recognised as constructed and are denied the authority of Platonic truth. This weakening gives preference to becoming over Being; though Weak Thought is not an overcoming (*Überwindung*) of Being in favour of becoming. Vattimo knew very well from Nietzsche that Being cannot simply be replaced with Becoming. Instead, the presence of truth exists as a transitory perspective in-between both. This transitory position does not make claims to the Truth but, conversely, it does not concede the non-existence of truth (relativism). Vattimo understood from Nietzsche that the human interpretation of existence could not be becoming alone, as this would provide no stability for the subject to interpret

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<sup>1</sup> For an excellent introductory chapter on Vattimo's background and the origins of Weak Thought see Zabala's introduction to 'Weakening Philosophy: essays in Honour of Gianni Vattimo' New York: McGill-Queen's University Press (2007)

and exist in the world. Nietzsche was well aware that there existed a number of necessary errors that facilitated human existence.

Further, Weak Thought does not exist in a dialectical opposition to Platonic metaphysics, but resides in the nihilistic aftermath, in the vacuum left by the Death of God. There can be no opposition between Platonism and Weak Thought because the modernist opposition of objectivity and opinion where power designates both no longer exists. Vattimo locates Weak Thought beyond a power that shapes man's subservient relationship to discourse: before the enlightenment man had duties to God, after it, to Reason (Zabala in Rorty & Vattimo 2005, p. 3). Weakening is achieved when truth is no longer the correspondence of thought to idea, but the consensus of a statement; that is, truth is the hermeneutical agreement of statements between individuals in dialogue.

Weak Thought inherits its Christian context when Vattimo identifies its genesis in the *Kenosis* of Christ. This action, whereby the divine surrenders its position of authority to the earthly, is the definitive endorsement of man's own authoritative interpretation of truth values. Vattimo emphasises the importance of the Christian society: "in a world where God is dead – where the meta-narratives have been dissolved and all authority has fortunately been demythologized, including that of 'objective' knowledge – our only chance of human survival rests in the Christian commandment of charity" (Rorty & Vattimo 2005, p. 54).

It is man who, through the action of dialogue, creates truths that are not permanent, but open to constant reinterpretation and renegotiation. It is the willingness to engage the other (charity), the willingness to acknowledge and engage in constructive, purposeful dialogue with different discourses that differentiates Weak Thought from relativism. *Truth* becomes *truth* and is arrived at by consensus, rather than by conceding a multiplicity of truths, that all aspire to the title of *Truth*.

How does Vattimo use Weak Thought? His primary target is the 'Letter,'<sup>2</sup> or any discourse that aspires to metaphysical authority. The contemporary opposition, that Vattimo problematises, can be likened to the struggle between Christ and the Judaic law. The *Kenosis* of Christ represents a monumental shift of perspective from the metaphysical distance of a disinterested, transcendent, God, to an immanent power that locates the divine spirit in the world. Christ's call to practice charity directly challenges the legitimacy of the Judaic authority of commandments by fulfilling the Judaic law<sup>3</sup> and becoming the only earthly obligation. This is found in the Augustinian motif:

The deeds of men are only discerned by the root of charity. For many things may be done that have a good appearance, and yet proceed not from the root of charity. For thorns also have flowers: some actions truly seem rough, seem savage; howbeit they are done for discipline at the bidding of charity. Once for all, then, a short precept is given thee: Love, and do what thou wilt (Homily VII, paragraph 8)

This precept is contemporarily translated as the act of charity and is manifested as a willingness to seek inter-subjective agreement on truth. 'Truths' can then only represent an outdated metaphysical form of the Judaic Law that was fulfilled in the Christian act of *Kenosis*. This is a particularly problematic position for the institutional Catholic Church which, in claiming interpretative authority, creates the paradoxical fallacy of situating itself on the wrong side of the transcendence/immanence divide where Weak Thought offers no possibility for a symbiosis of the two. The question that Weak Thought raises is, 'on what authority does your claim seek legitimacy?' This is a position of concern for Vattimo who argues that "violence found its way into Christianity when Christianity made an alliance with metaphysics as the 'science of Being as being,' that is, as the knowledge of first principles" (Vattimo 2002, p. 117).

This flaw is not unique to the Catholic Church and can also be found in science<sup>4</sup> where both attempt to claim the 'Letter' in an act of power. Weak Thought places upon this human predicament (created by a lack of truth, and the unwillingness to live in such a condition) a demand for the responsibility of the self to create one's own truths, rather than to conform to them. Derrida captures this motif of salvation

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<sup>2</sup> The 'Letter' is currently enjoying a renaissance in philosophical studies of St Paul. See Badiou (2003), Agamben (2005)

<sup>3</sup> Rom 13:8 – "Be under obligation to no one – the only obligation you have is to love one another. Whoever does this has obeyed the law."

<sup>4</sup> The word 'Catholic' is consistent with the motives of Weak Thought, but the Church's position on interpretation makes it problematic. i.e. Catholic has a universal connotation, while the Church designates membership (Catholic and non-Catholic). Science likewise, is founded upon values such as 'universalism,' and 'impartiality,' however, these only apply if you conform to the scientific paradigm. There have been numerous studies exploring this issue. See Adorno & Horkheimer's 'Dialectic of Enlightenment' for example, where the mythical origins of science are highlighted.

when he highlights the predicament of abstraction. Where abstraction was once the avenue of salvation, it is now that from which we need saving (Derrida & Vattimo 1998, p.1).

Once the 'Letter' has been rejected, and the desire to seek it overcome, a number of possibilities open up. I will propose three that are created by weakening.

1. Firstly, in a power vacuum comes the realization that interpretive reality facilitates and encourages greater inter-religious dialogue (as well as greater dialogue between religion and science). If no one religion has a legitimate claim to the divine, there exists the possibility that many different religions may experience the spiritual in their own way. The Christian spiritual experience of prayer may be fundamentally the same experience as the Muslim prayer, or the Buddhist meditation. If there is to be a re-acquaintance with the spiritual, a greater variety of experiences create greater possibilities for its effective realization.

2. Secondly, there exists no 'Letter' to contemplate and conform to, the legitimacy of ethical questions becomes open to debate. Ethics becomes an exercise in active debate leading to the realization of values rather than the passive conformity to prescribed values. Values would then be either the product of power, i.e. an ideology forcing meaning upon others, or an inter-subjective agreement as the result of dialogue. This has particular importance when values are considered in an historical context. Vattimo asserts that the Catholic Church's position on women (i.e. a ban on female priests) is the result of prevailing social attitudes toward women in Judaic culture at the time of Jesus (because the 12 apostles were all men). Vattimo suggests that there exists little to no doctrinal evidence to support this value.

3. Thirdly, when religious focus moves away from contemplation of the authentic (or Being), the religious aesthetic element re-emerges. Paul's *Pneuma*, or breath, is an experience of the spirit as sensation that eludes conceptual thought. Weak Thought enables religion, or spirituality specifically, to become once more an immanent lived experience linked explicitly to sensation. There exists an undeniable Nietzschean influence informing Vattimo's focus on sensation as an avenue to the divine. Both the multiplication of religious discourses and the emphasis on primary experiences reflect the Nietzschean privileging of art over science for its open creative aspect that is not restricted by rules. If this reality created by Weak Thought is not accepted, it is because: "we do not welcome the appeal of aesthetic emancipation offered to us by the new condition of existence ... we are still oppressed by the letter" (Vattimo 2002, p. 56).

It should be highlighted here that both Weak Thought and the future Christianity are mutually dependent upon each other. While Weak Thought enables a re-emergence of Christianity, Christianity plays a vital role in the genesis of Weak Thought. Without the *Kenosis* of Christ there exists no event to act as a catalyst for the theory. However, the importance of Christianity to Weak Thought is not without its critics. Richard Rorty proposed the argument that Weak Thought was still a viable theory when interpreted as a secular doctrine. While considering Rorty's point, I would highlight three further yet similar issues that could be used to question the relevance of Christianity:

1. Why is this doctrine not relativism? Post-modernism has already attacked doctrines that seek to occupy the empty seat of metaphysical truth. The result was a deep skepticism toward all modes of discourses that make claims to the Truth.

2. What is particularly religious or spiritual about this? How is it distinguished from the hermeneutics of Gadamer or Habermas? And where is the spirit? Indeed, willingness to dialogue shares close affinities to Habermas's communicative theory.

3. The French philosopher Alain Badiou in his recent book on St Paul (2003) argues for the legitimacy of feelings of fidelity to events regardless of the event's factual nature. Badiou, a self-confessed Atheist, finds useful affinities for his socialist agenda in the universalist message of St Paul. Rorty argues a similar point when questioning why fidelity to secular events such as the French Revolution cannot produce the same result of Weak Thought without the Christian element.

In response to these claims it could be argued that:

1. Vattimo leaves open the question of what he refers to as 'the liberating abyss,' that is, a place of the unknown that might one day be occupied by the divine (Vattimo 2002, p. 22). The abyss is not defined in any metaphysical sense so as to avoid recreating the Platonic metaphysics he critiques and carries with it a hint of an undetermined or undefined teleological element; a possibility.

2. Rorty, once a staunch atheist, conceded in his later life that if one does not share another's belief, then it can be conceded that the unbeliever does not possess the capacity or awareness to 'hear' what the other says (Rorty & Vattimo 2005, p. 31). He uses Max Weber's term to deem this person 'religiously unmusical'. Vattimo does not intend Weak Thought to be a panacea for all spiritual ills, but directs his dialogue to those willing to hear the spiritual. He does concede that not all participants will be able to 'hear' it. Where the spiritual becomes universal is in its hermeneutical importance. That is, in determining the role of the spiritual and its application to both the public and private domain.

While Badiou can read meaning into an event, fidelity to an event is conditional upon the nature of the event: i.e. fidelity to the French Revolution could very well instill one with a devotion to 'brotherly fidelity,' but the French Revolution must have a perspective that could conceivably be interpreted in this way. Vattimo emphasises the Christian event because it is by nature spiritual, charitable and universal. It is important to note Heidegger's influence here as the context of Vattimo's argument is the modern environment of techno-science. As Vattimo's reinvigoration of Christianity occurs after Heidegger's enframing, the spiritual presents itself as a renewed discourse, emerging once more from the repression of objective materialism. Finally, the emphasis on the spiritual makes Weak Thought applicable to all spiritual religions, not just Christianity.

It would be prudent at this point to highlight the connection Vattimo makes between western historical 'progress' and Christianity. The Death of God represents the culmination of a theoretical history that fundamentally changes attitudes to the way the world is understood and experienced, including Christianity. This is important because a large degree of importance is placed on specific events in the west that make possible a future religion. I will draw attention to two 'events' of thought.

The first is the triumph of science over religion in the period of enlightenment. While this predates the event of the (Nietzschean) Death of God, its importance lies in its promise of open dialogue against what Rorty cites as the 'obedience' commanded by religion (Rorty & Vattimo 2005, p. 31). Once conformity to value and adherence of thought to idea is overcome, this fundamental shift creates a perceived environment of rational, objective discussion that elevates enquiry above religious conformity.

The second is what Heidegger describes as the condition of the 'forgetfulness of Being' that comes about after the Death of God (Vattimo 1999, p. 22). This is the inescapable cutting off from origins that enables the cultivation of a progressive environment of dialogue without the need of recourse to an origin. Vattimo likens this to a fallen-ness that prevents conservative appeals to mythological origins for security and certainty. From this position he establishes two possible paths: either the embracing of Christian charity and its secular manifestation, democracy, which Vattimo and Rorty applaud and Nietzsche laments, or a violent assertion of meaning that founds a new order such as one might find in environments where supreme order is found in security e.g. Afghanistan under the Taliban. Rene Girard<sup>5</sup> has previously addressed the fallacy of the latter though this cannot be discarded as an all too common potential future outcome.

Vattimo admits that he places the greatest importance for the success of Weak Thought on the value of charity and he relegates other Christian values to historical occurrences. To understand the place of charity (Weakening), it is important to understand its opposition to, and incompatibility with, power. If

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<sup>5</sup> See Girard, R *The Scapegoat* trans. Freccero, Y Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (1986)

charity is an openness and willingness to dialogue with others, power is the enforcing of meaning or truth by making universal claims.

He argues that charity constitutes the foundation of popular values in the secular world, regardless of their historical origin. Hence, values of love, peace and anti-war tend to be popular among communities exhibiting traits synonymous with Weak Thought. Conversely, the assertion of values and the enforcement of meaning is synonymous with violence; historically taking the form of crusades, ethnic cleansing, and abuse of identity. Secular doctrines such as liberalism are not immune from such accusations and one needs only look at the recent French government order to ban aspects of Muslim dress from schools as evidence that liberalism itself is a doctrine in competition with other disciplines. Rorty highlights the barriers to the success of dialogue; using the example of Islam (but applicable to any doctrine), he states: "There was no dialogue between the *philosophes* and the Vatican in the eighteenth century, and there is not going to be one between the Mullahs of the Islamic world and the democratic west. The Vatican in the eighteenth century had its own best interests in mind, and the mullahs have theirs" (Rorty & Vattimo 2005, p72-3). Hence, the issue of 'interests' presents a considerable barrier to the success of Weak Thought.

That said, Vattimo does claim that a western foundation is paramount to the success of Weak Thought. Again he uses Heidegger's thesis on technology as a foundation to argue that charity and dialogue are better facilitated in a society that is technologically advanced, and hence more socially secure. This stems from the idea that when people feel threatened they tend to show a greater inclination to more radical, rigid, religious interpretations and have a tendency to enforce aggressively their own identities through their identification with religious doctrines, and ultimately violence. This line of thought is consistent with the argument that U.S foreign policy in the Islamic world seeks to moderate 'extremist' populations by improving education and social living conditions, thus emulating western society. The issues facing the Catholic Church are stated bluntly: "The only way open to the Church not to revert to being the fundamentalist sect it necessarily was at the beginning of its history, but to develop its universal vocation, is to assume its evangelical message as the principle that dissolves all claims to objectivity" (Rorty & Vattimo 2005, p. 49).

Weak Thought demands that individuals practicing different discourses promote and practice charity, and that after the destruction of metaphysics the Church (or any other discourse of power) realizes it cannot lay claim to the position of metaphysical authority left vacant after the Death of God. Instead, it adapts to the post-secular environment.

This demand uses the ambiguous relationship between the Church and history to call for a readdressing of the Church's position. Does the Church exist outside of history? In which case it still attempts to maintain the old metaphysics, or does it recognise itself as part of history, both shaping and being shaped by historical processes? Should it choose the former, Vattimo argues, it is reduced to a grand narrative and can only be considered as a sect. If the latter is chosen, then spirituality becomes as much a part of the historical environment as discourses such as liberalism. In this mode, spirituality gains its public legitimacy as a major historical shaper and participant of society.

Religion is made publicly relevant because no one discourse occupies the seat of authority and hence religion has the same legitimacy as science or any other competing discourses. The distinction and preference for values would then become the resulting dialogue between willing participants. The Church could then reassess its position on morality. Does it enforce doctrine? Or is it open to dialogue and the possibility for change? Vattimo highlights the relatively new role of women and homosexuals in positions of authority within elements of the Anglican Church as evidence that religious discourses are prepared to reassess their moral positions as historical influences and interpretations change. For secularism, Vattimo's Weak Thought is a demand placed on dominant discourses to recognise the potential contribution offered by, not just Christianity, but all forms of spirituality. The one necessary condition of Weak Thought is charity, a willingness to dialogue.

In conclusion. Nietzsche's Death of God provided Vattimo with the theoretical framework for questioning the legitimacy of authoritative discourses. By following the Heideggerian interpretation of the death as an 'event' that devalues the highest values, Vattimo is able to understand existence as an interpretive reality of competing discourses. From this foundation he interprets the *Kenosis* of Christ as God surrendering its divine power to the immanence of man, gifting man the power of interpretation. This act brings a message of charity which Vattimo understands as a call to recognise different discourses on an equal scale. In real terms, this means that religion has the same authority as other discourses, such as science. Hence, Weak Thought is formulated as the weakening of authoritative discourses in favor of a charitable recognition of the potential benefits of all discourses. Vattimo calls attention to the illegitimacy of discourses of 'power' that would stifle the charitable message by aggressively asserting their own values as universal. Once this foundation of Weak Thought has been

established, an environment is create that allows new discourses and possibilities for speaking of, and understanding the divine to have a public voice.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### Historical Jesus Studies and Talk about God

by  
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For almost a century and a half, through various waves, historical Jesus studies have kept pushing theologians to consider how they talk about God. Moreover, theological talk about God is a discourse about faith and its communication in a particular time and place. I also take it as axiomatic that the quest for the historical Jesus reflects the intellectual and cultural environment on the post-Enlightenment west. This paper then will follow two lines of enquiry. The first is concerned with the task of the theologian in the light of ever-greater clarity regarding the historical facts about Jesus. One is reminded here of the journey identified by Marcus Borg: from pre-critical naïveté, through critical thinking, to reading the gospels in a state of post-critical naïveté (Borg 1994, p.17). While I will not be following Borg specifically in this journey, it does indicate the type of question that concerns me. The second avenue of exploration I wish to follow concerns what I observe as a significant shift in the theological endeavour in response to a massive cultural shift. Put in the simplest terms, it is about how theology is responding to the shift from the modern to the post-modern. It is also about how theology responds to the fundamentalist challenge – and this seems to be growing – without losing its capacity for critical exploration. This too is a question of faith, specifically how faith is intelligible in the modern or post-modern world.

Over a century of scholarship in the quest for the historical Jesus illustrates well the magnitude of the change and the challenges this presents for us today. In this paper I am less interested in the chronology and details of this scholarship, than in the impact it has on the broader community. In other words, how have historical Jesus studies affected the way people talk about God and believe in God? What challenges does this raise for belief today? Or, to use the language of debates about the historical Jesus, can the Christ of faith be reconciled with the Jesus of history?

The paper will begin with a brief account of the changing intellectual and cultural environment, relying on the work of Charles Taylor. This will be followed by a brief analysis of the impact of modern western theology on the lives of believers – those who rely on theologians to give them language to talk about God. These two brief surveys will prepare the way for a consideration of two recent christologies, those of N.T. Wright and Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI). I will argue that in these two quite different christologies we see an attempt to undertake theology in the face of the modern (or post-modern) situation, and that each offers a way forward for speaking about God.

#### **The Present Situation: An Analysis by Charles Taylor**

Charles Taylor's monumental work, *A Secular Age*, helps us begin to understand the movement in the West that has seen the end of Christendom and the rise of the secular age (Taylor 2007). In a thoroughgoing way he maps the intellectual shift that has taken place. It is not my intention in this paper to trace over that map, but I want to take my lead from two characteristics of the shift identified by Taylor. In the first place, the enchanted world of spirits, demons and moral forces has disappeared and been replaced through a process of disenchantment by a world where meanings are in the mind (Taylor 2007, pp.29-30).<sup>1</sup> In terms of the concerns of this paper this shift means that the way we think about God and talk about God has changed. Secondly, this shift has coincided with knowledge no longer being the preserve of the elites, but now being widely accessible among the populace. Truth is reached through debate and discussion carried out in a more public and dispersed way than previously (Taylor 2007, p.185-196).

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor writes, '... the enchanted world, the world of spirits, demons, moral forces which our predecessors acknowledged. The process of disenchantment is the disappearance of this world, and the substitution of what we live today: a world in which the only locus of thoughts, feelings, spiritual élan is what we call minds; the only minds in the cosmos are those of human (grosso modo with apologies to possible Martians or extra-terrestrials); and minds are bounded, so that these thoughts, feelings etc, are situated "within" them.'

### **The Present Situation for Theology: An Analysis by Alister McGrath**

To speak about the current situation and impact of theology is fraught with danger, as theological scholarship is so diverse. For the sake of having a point to anchor this I will concentrate on the analysis of Alister McGrath, in his book *The Future of Christianity* (McGrath 2002). The choice here is not necessarily because it is the most scholarly analysis, but because he sets out his analysis of the situation in stark, often troubling terms. His focus is theology in the West. It should also be noted that most of it is directed at Protestant theology, but this is not to say that Catholic theology is not dealing with some of the same issues.

His basic diagnosis is that there is a massive disconnect between the world of ordinary Christians and the world of the academy. Despite two centuries of Enlightenment thought most ordinary believers in the twenty-first century “find it remarkably easy to suspend rationalist and positivist views of the world and to entertain the idea of the supernatural” (McGrath 2002, p.123). If I interpret what he is saying correctly, then he is arguing that theology has not been very successful in nourishing the faith of the great masses of the people, even though it has touched some people in very significant ways. In offering a prognosis of this situation he appeals to Adrian Hastings who wrote, “no church can continue for long without a theology possessing a fair measure of internal coherence, one related organically both to the actual religious practice of believers and to certain basic requirements of credibility or utility posited by contemporary society” (McGrath 2002, p.133).

McGrath then offers his own way forward, arguing for the need of what he calls the ‘organic theologian’. He develops this out of the critical theory of Antonio Gramsci who distinguishes the traditional intellectual and the organic intellectual. Organic intellectuals are intellectuals who emerge within a community, and give intellectual rigour and substance to its basic beliefs and values. They also have the task of countering the prevailing worldview, and presenting a plausible alternative to it (McGrath 2002, pp.146-149). By analogy McGrath describes the organic theologian as someone who arises from within the community of faith, is accountable to it, and speaks for it. The organic theologian will be an activist and a populariser. His/her task is to work within the community of faith to support it and to help shape its thought in a systematic way; but also to work beyond that community to be evangelistic and apologetic (McGrath 2002, pp.150-155).

While McGrath has not focused on the quest for the historical Jesus as such, he did point to it as typifying the methods of the age of the Enlightenment (McGrath 2002, p.122). His scenario for the future is useful because he identifies the main characteristics of a new wave, namely that it is more tightly anchored in the Christian community, and it sees its task as more closely connected to the Church’s evangelising mission.

### **Jesus in the Public Arena**

Let me illustrate the problem by referring to the film *Monty Python’s Life of Brian*. It is both comedy and satire, and offers a humorous commentary on modern religious imagination and discourse. Two scenes from the movie will suffice. The first is the Sermon on the Mount, where we hear the now infamous words, “Blessed are the cheese makers” (*Monty Python’s Life of Brian* 1979, ch.3). When Brian asks what is so special about cheese makers, another character responds that it is not meant to be taken literally, but refers to any manufacturers of dairy products. By setting up a great distance between the prophet who is standing on the hill and those who are having this conversation about cheese makers, the movie suggests – and we the audience know – that they have misheard the speaker. The result is that they say what they think they heard, which sounds silly to them, and then go on to interpret it in what they believe is a more intelligent way. It can be argued that the film as satire is making two points: first, that the task of scholarship is to ascertain the accuracy of the texts it deals with; but secondly, that it is possible for the whole project to become disconnected from its original source, thereby arriving at strange conclusions.

The second scene is much later in the film and revolves around a miracle (*Monty Python’s Life of Brian* 1979, ch.20). The central character of this scene is a man who has taken a vow of silence and has not spoken for eighteen years. Brian enters the scene, running along trying to escape from the crowd who are looking for a miracle; he jumps into the hole where the man is and lands on his toe such that the man lets out a yell, thereby breaking his silence. The crowds quickly arrive and see that the man who had not spoken for eighteen years is now speaking, and proclaim it as a miracle. We, the viewers know what is going on and know that nothing miraculous has occurred. We, of course, live in Taylor’s disenchanted world where we can explain everything. The characters in the film, however, only see a miracle; they inhabit an enchanted world.

There is a further point to be made about the film. Some people easily laugh at what they see, but others are scandalised. This was a major release film, not art-house. Everyone probably knows what is going on in the film, even if they are not able to articulate it as explicitly as I have just done. The point

is that all of us today inhabit a world where modern methods of scholarship, even about religious themes, have an influence on us. Even those who have not formally studied these methods and may not advert to them live under their shadow.

This can be observed in historical Jesus studies, whose influence reaches far beyond the academy. People may react in a variety of ways, often out of fear or confusion, to what they hear or read. One pathway is that of crude literalism, even fundamentalism, where the biblical text is taken at face value, without any reference to its context, its literary form, or its place in the larger biblical text. This is clearly an unsatisfactory approach, as it ultimately distorts the truth of the text. Sadly, it is an approach that seems to be gaining popularity.

Another pathway, trying to be more cautious, attempts to confine scholarly work to the academy with the hope that it does not filter down among the general population. In fact, this was the way things were in pre-modern times. It is illustrated well in the counsel of Thomas Aquinas in dealing with the question as to whether divine truths ought to be concealed. He answered that yes, they should be, because the uncultivated and uneducated may imperfectly comprehend the meaning as explained and fall into error (Aquinas 1946, pp.62-66). While our modern outlook and modern methods of communication may make us balk at this advice, two things are worth noting. First, the right to engage in scholarly enquiry was important, as it would lead to a deeper penetration of the truth. This is indicative of the best of Christian tradition that placed high importance on rational enquiry, and believed there was nothing to fear from it. This is no less true today. Secondly, the scholar was advised to be alert to the possibility of scandal and to take care to protect those whose faith may not be strong enough to hear the truth in all its fullness. As a foundational principle, this is a challenge concerning the context for communicating scholarly insights.

Both these concerns are not absent from some recent Jesus scholarship. This takes us to the next generation of scholarship beyond what was parodied in the film *Monty Python's Life of Brian*. I wish to consider two quite different approaches: one is by the New Testament scholar N.T. Wright, the other the systematic theologian, Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI.

### **N.T. Wright**

N.T. Wright carries out his investigation against the background of what he identifies as the shift from a modern to a postmodern outlook. While this is not the specific focus of his major study on Jesus (Wright 1992, Wright 1996, Wright 2003), it does form a background in his more popular digest, *The Challenge of Jesus* (Wright 2000).

The Enlightenment, he argues, asked a necessary question in a misleading fashion. The concern for the historical was necessary in order to shake European Christianity out of its dogmatism. Asking the historical question was a form of protest against a timeless system. It offered a positive challenge to grow in the understanding of who Jesus was and what he actually accomplished. However, Wright claims, the question was dealt with in a misleading fashion because it insisted on splitting apart history and faith, facts and values, religion and politics. The consequence has been that any one of these categories now carries an implicit opposition to its twin. The real challenge, "to rearticulate a reintegrated worldview", has not been attempted (Wright 2000, p.7).

The second problem associated with the Enlightenment, according to Wright, was that it offered a rival eschatology to the Christian one. Jesus was not seen as part of the first century eschatological world, but tended to be slotted into eighteenth and nineteenth century categories of liberal or conservative. These two questions of history and eschatology are the concern of Wright's Christology. He wants to understand Jesus in his Jewish context. This means getting to know the expectation of first century Judaism in relation to the creator God and the God of the covenant. This is a history that is not particularly interested in the question, did such and such actually happen or did Jesus say this or that. There is a bigger historical picture to be considered. Further, there is a story-telling culture with which the modern reader needs to come to terms. Wright's basic argument is that Jesus is the fulfilment of the longing and expectation of the Jewish people. This can be demonstrated, for example, by considering the significance of Jesus' actions and sayings in relation to the Temple. There we have a prophetic, symbolic word-act that calls judgement on the people who fail to listen to Jesus and fail to recognise what is happening. Positively, the prophetic act also demonstrates that something new is here in the person of Jesus, that God's promise is fulfilled.

Wright's Christology would seem to be written as a challenge to the Enlightenment paradigm. But just as importantly it is a response to what he would see as the postmodern predicament. He wants to tell the story of Jesus in such a way that it is not caught up in the metanarrative of modernity. He wants to better understand Jesus within his historical context; he will ask questions about continuity and discontinuity between Jesus of Nazareth and Christian faith, and about the *agenda* of Jesus of Nazareth

and the contemporary *task* of the Church (Wright 1996, p.123). The present western context is important for the way he tells the story. He asks:

How are you to address this world with the gospel of Jesus? You can't just hurl doctrine at it. You will either crush people or drive them away. That's actually not a bad thing, because mission and evangelism were never actually meant to be a matter of throwing doctrine at people's heads. They work in a far more wholistic way: by praxis, symbol and story as well as what we think of, in a somewhat modernist way, as 'straight forward' exposition of 'truth' (Wright 2000, p.128).

In these words there is a succinct description of the theological project he believes is necessary in the present era in order to strengthen the faith of the general population while saving them from both error and scandal. It certainly cannot be a return to the dogmatism of the period before the Enlightenment. To move there would be to ignore the importance of the Enlightenment's question about history. However, it can no longer continue by splitting apart history and faith, facts and values, religion and politics – hence the appeal for a more wholistic approach. This approach, as Wright develops it, has three pillars: telling the story, living by the symbols, and acting out the praxis. It is no accident that he uses the biblical account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus as a way to lead into this new paradigm. There we see the inter-connection between story, symbol and praxis. In order to embrace this 'new' theological paradigm people need to put themselves in the place of the disciples on that road, according to Wright. He puts his case in a rather suggestive way:

I suggest, in fact, that if postmodernism functions as the death of modernist culture, many of us will find ourselves like the disciples on the road to Emmaus. We as Western Christians mostly bought a bit too heavily into modernism, and we are shocked to discover that it's been dying for a while and is now more or less completely dead. We need to learn how to listen to the hidden stranger on the road, who will explain to us how it was that these things had to happen, and how there is a whole new world out there waiting to be born, for which we are called to be midwives (Wright 2000, p.129).

### **Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI)**

The second work this paper wants to consider is the book *Jesus of Nazareth* (Ratzinger 2007) by Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI). It is interesting for the fact that it has had record sales, indicating that it is a book that the general population is reading, but it is also clearly the work of a scholar. Perhaps the author has followed Aquinas' advice and written in such a way that those without the necessary scholarly background can still take something of significance from it. In this work, moreover, we do not find the type of analysis of the contemporary situation of faith that is found in Wright. However, a quick survey of some of Ratzinger's earlier work will give an adequate glimpse of his outlook on the world. This will give us useful background for interpreting Ratzinger's project in *Jesus of Nazareth*.

In 1968 Ratzinger wrote his *Introduction to Christianity*. A new edition appeared in 2000, with a new Preface (Ratzinger 2004). It contains his synthesis and evaluation of Christianity in the modern world, which he builds around two defining years, 1968 and 1989.

1968 was the year of the student riots, most notably in Paris, but also at his own German university. He regards it as a defining year for Christianity because this is when young people embraced Marxism. They were motivated by the hope for a better world, where oppression and poverty would be done away with, and where unjust structures and abuse of power would be wiped out. About this time liberation theology sprang up, and Ratzinger seemed to be full of hope. "Christianity had stepped once more onto the world stage, and had become an 'epoch-making' message" (Ratzinger 2004, p.15). But 1968 represents a missed opportunity, because God was effectively left out of the equation, as political life was reduced to politics and economics. What could have been an epoch-making synthesis of Christianity and the world collapsed as faith was removed from politics. He had hoped that faith would have come out of the ghetto where it had been for too long; but it could do that only if it brought God into public discourse. He wrote:

But the faith would really have come out of the ghetto only if it had brought its most distinguished features with it into the public arena: the God who judges and suffers, the God who sets limits and standards for us; the God from whom we come and to whom we are going. But as it is, it really remained in the ghetto, having by now absolutely nothing to do (Ratzinger 2004, p.17).

The other defining year for Ratzinger was 1989 because it marked the beginning of the collapse of the socialist regimes in Europe. At this time something happened to religion: "religion became modern

again; its disappearance is no longer anticipated; on the contrary, new forms of it are growing luxuriantly” (Ratzinger 2004, p.17). This phenomenon is complex and is characterised by a focus on religious experience rather than religious institutions. He comments that with the shift to religious experience, “the mystical religions of Asia” can appear to be more suitable for enlightened humanity than “dogmatically determined and institutionally structured Christianity”. The consequence is that Christian faith is radically changed, especially in two fundamental areas. The person of Jesus Christ is integrated in a completely new way, bypassing, as it were, the Incarnation. Moreover, the concept of God is fundamentally changed, and there is no longer an essential difference between theistic and non-theistic forms of religion. Ratzinger claims that the biblical faith in God is at stake:

Of course, the fact that God is personal is not mentioned in the Bible using that term, but it is apparent nevertheless, inasmuch as there is a name of God. A name implies the ability to be called on, to speak, to hear, to answer. This is essential for the Biblical God, and if this is taken away, the faith of the Bible has been abandoned (Ratzinger 2004, p.22).

He returned to some of these themes in a homily he gave at the Mass to begin the conclave that eventually elected him as Pope. The phrase that rang in the ears of many at that time was ‘a dictatorship of relativism’. He named various modern doctrines that have blown from one extreme to the other: ‘from Marxism to liberalism, even libertinism; from collectivism to radical individualism; from atheism to a vague religious mysticism; from agnosticism to syncretism and so forth’. He contrasts this with the way of Christian faith, when he goes on to say:

We, however have a different goal: the Son of God, the true man. He is the measure of true humanism. An adult ‘faith’ is not a faith that follows the trends of fashion and the latest novelty; a mature adult faith is deeply rooted in friendship with Christ. It is this friendship that opens up to all that is good and gives us a criterion by which to distinguish the true from the false, and deceit from truth. We must develop this adult faith; we must guide the flock of Christ to this faith (Ratzinger 2005).

This broader background to the thought of Joseph Ratzinger that has just been sketched allows one to surmise what the core of his Christological project would be. In the first instance it could be expected that he will be concerned about friendship with Christ. This, moreover, will be a discourse about faith, because friendship with Christ is ultimately an act of faith. It could also be expected that Ratzinger will want to overcome the split between faith and history. Finally, it could be expected that the underlying concern will be the Incarnation. The title of the book suggests that it will be about Jesus of Nazareth, the historical figure, but we would expect that this cannot be divorced from his concerns to know the Son of God.

In the Foreword to *Jesus of Nazareth* Ratzinger describes it as an expression of his personal search ‘for the face of the Lord’. He observes that the gap between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith has grown wider, and that his aim is to preserve a real identity between the man Jesus and the picture of him portrayed by the Evangelists and the Church. This may raise the question as to whether the reader can expect a solid work of theology or rather a spiritual meditation. It may also leave one wondering what he will do with over a century of historical Jesus scholarship. Will the historical-critical method be the real object of his critique? These questions are answered in the very careful setting out of the methodology he will employ.

He begins by discussing the historical-critical method, which he says “is and remains an indispensable dimension of exegetical work” (Ratzinger 2007, p.xv). However, he is wary lest this method become so refined that the real object of faith becomes increasingly blurred. Furthermore, he says, the impression is given by some authors that we have very little certain knowledge of Jesus and the image we have of him was shaped by a later faith in his activity. Ratzinger comments on this by saying: “This is a dramatic situation for faith, because its point of reference is being placed in doubt: intimate friendship with Jesus, on which everything depends, is in danger of clutching at thin air” (Ratzinger 2007, p.xii). While he does not state it explicitly, it would seem that this observation about the separation of faith from history may also offer a reason why some people find fundamentalism attractive. Ratzinger insists on the necessity of historical methods, but also understands that the task of the theologian is to follow up the reflection after the historians and exegetes have completed their work. An important element of his own methodology is what he calls canonical exegesis. He describes this as reading the individual texts within the totality of the one scripture, in order in turn to shed light back on individual texts. He explains that individual texts can carry meanings that the author was not immediately aware of at the time, but which were implicit. He puts it this way:

(The author) is speaking from the perspective of a common history that restrains him and that already implicitly contains the possibilities of its future, of the further stages of its journey. The process of continuously re-reading and drawing out new meanings from words would not have been possible unless the words themselves were already open to it from within (Ratzinger 2007, p.xx).

This statement points to the core of this methodology, namely he will apply a Christological hermeneutic to the texts. This means that he sees Jesus as the key to the whole Biblical witness and that friendship with Jesus will teach people how to understand the Bible as a unity.

The application of this method is seen in the opening pages of the book proper, where he starts with the book of Deuteronomy and the figure of Moses. There we see the hope of Israel: that the Lord will raise up a new Moses as a prophet for the people. This is decisive, argues Ratzinger, for understanding the figure of Jesus. The task of the new prophet is to show the face of God, and in doing so to show the path that humans have to take. Jesus is the new prophet presented in Ratzinger's book.

He sums up his aim and his methodology in these words: "I have merely tried to go beyond purely historical-critical exegesis so as to apply new methodological insights that allow us to offer a properly theological interpretation of the Bible. To be sure, this requires faith, but the aim unequivocally is not, nor should be, to give up serious engagement with history" (Ratzinger 2007, p.xxiii).

### Conclusion

Charles Taylor argued that contemporary Christianity has gone through an 'excarnation', 'a transfer out of embodied, "enfleshed" forms of religious life, to those which are more "in the head"' (Taylor 2007, p.554).<sup>2</sup> Tom Wright and Joseph Ratzinger, each in his own way, sees this as a challenge. In Wright's case the key is to broaden our perspective so that we do not rely on a purely rational discourse. To speak intelligently today about Jesus and about God requires that rational discourse be integrated with symbol and praxis. In Ratzinger's case, the key is in the connection with the community in which the story came to birth and in which it is lived. This means that thinking and talking about God are dynamic because they are connected to the word and history of human beings. Hence, for both, it is a question of how people can speak about God intelligently, in a way that does justice to the biblical text and to their own context.

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<sup>2</sup> See also his further discussion of this, p.615: 'If we think of the three levels of human linguistic-communicative activity in its broadest sense: one of bodily habitus and mimicry, one of symbolic expression in art, poetry, music, dance; and one of prose, descriptive language; we can say that aboriginal religious life was mainly couched in the first two, but that the culture which emerges from modern Western Reform has largely abandoned these, and confines itself to the third.'

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## CHAPTER SIX

### **Prophetic and Dialectical? A Public Church's Quest for an Effective Engagement with Culture** by Luke Holohan

Too often... the churches seek popular political causes or cheap headlines, and this tends to cut across the central role they have in providing spiritual comfort and moral guidance to the community. (Downer 2003)

Some church leaders involve themselves in political issues of the day in an uninformed way – resulting in a loss of credibility. I get a funny feeling that church leaders will not be asked on the last day whether or not they supported the privatisation of Telstra. (Abetz 2005)

A political argument is not transformed into a moral argument simply because it's delivered with an enormous dollop of sanctimony. (Abbot 2007)

The above statements by ministers of the Howard government raise important questions for Christian social ethics. They are frequently endorsed in printed media opinion columns. Christopher Pearson (2007), for example, in an article entitled “Bishops’ pious blather” lamented that some of the socio-political instructions of prelates and the agencies which they head manifest “delusions of omniscience” which amount to expressions of “solidarity with the Catholic wing of the wet Left.” Given that each of these critiques of the Church’s interventions emanate from those on the conservative side of the political spectrum, it might be argued by some that they are an elaboration of the claim that there is a logical nexus between Christianity and socialism (Tillich 1977). This paper does not seek to analyse that claim but rather to address the two principal planks of the critiques. The first of these pertains to the proper demarcation of the sphere of influence of the Church when it comes to its pronouncements on social issues. The second concerns the content of those pronouncements, when they are judged to be based on shoddy reasoning or on an inherently biased set of presuppositions. For Catholic theology, the first critique is less problematic than the second. There are thus few who dispute in principle the project of political theology which in a post-Enlightenment setting takes the form of a robust defence of the constructive potential of a public Church as it asserts the reign of God in this world as well as the next. What is far more contentious is the question of the foundational principles of political theology, and that of its relationship with the social sciences. In order to illustrate this, the paper will outline the contrasting approaches of two movements of Catholic political theology which have gained impetus in recent decades – German political theology and radical orthodoxy, which have been classified respectively as modern and postmodern. The former accords a privileged place to social analysis. The latter rejects the claim that the secular sciences have anything to offer theology, indeed that they implicitly marginalise what theology’s unique contribution to political discussion can be. These differences are largely attributable to divergent treatments of the relationship between nature and grace and of the notion of freedom. In the concluding section, it will be argued that, in spite of the pungent critique by radical orthodoxy of what is said to be an ideologically-skewed political theology, it has yet to itself manifest a capacity to helpfully assist those engaged in the complexities of statecraft. Indeed a prudent, albeit limited use of economic analysis, can assist political theology to overcome its prevailing weakness, namely, a tendency to lapse into generalised assertions which appear to be at variance from empirical reality.

#### **Public Theology**

To begin with, how does contemporary Catholic theology conceive its task in relation to the Church’s mission in society? Western societies are constrained by the individualistic tenets of liberalism and by the absence of what was once conventionally understood to be a linchpin of moral formation, namely, a commonly held notion of the public good to which individuals would submit and according to which the political order would be adjusted. The manifest absence of such a notion today is such that individuals find it difficult enough to sustain the basis of their own social commitments to others (Wogaman 1988, p.132), let alone argue persuasively that specific political arrangements be put in place on the basis of what are said to be commonly held values. What has thus emerged was termed by Richard John Neuhaus the “naked public square”, that “vacuum begging to be filled” (Neuhaus 1984, p.86) which upholds as fundamental the values of individualism and negative freedom but little else. One might have grounds to suggest, however, that even the commitment to the value of the individual and to what John Rawls has termed “the social bases of self-respect” (Rawls 1973, pp.92-93, p.396)

might be at risk should the economic prosperity that was always the jewel in the crown of the liberal dream, and which shrouded more communally-oriented aspirations, fail to materialise.<sup>1</sup> It is arguably because of this context of shaken certitudes of old that the notion of a public Church seems to have grown in appeal. The term seems to have been in usage for several decades.<sup>2</sup> This does not amount to an integrist campaign to impose a theocratic order on society but rather a recognition by the Church that it is called to address creatively and responsibly the moral void that is manifest in many debates about polity in liberal societies. It stems from the Church's stature as a "community of moral conviction" (Rasmussen 1993, p.11) and the prevailing crisis of legitimation of institutions in broader society represents, in the eyes of many, something of a *kairos* for the Church (Forrester 1988, p.154). A public Church looks to society, not itself, as its primary community of reference, immersing itself in the formation and critique of contemporary culture, recognising the transformative and reconstructive potential of the Christian Gospel for a morally uncertain and fragmented society. A public Church, while recognising the excessively restrictive conditions which liberalism has imposed upon public discourse, is not thereby opposed to the wider array of practices and institutions which is liberalism's legacy to modern society. A distinction should thus be made between the institutional order that is characteristic of liberal democracies and the ideology which has given rise to it. It is this problematic to which political theology addresses itself, a theology, as described well by Oliver O'Donovan, which "postulates an analogy... between the acts of God and human acts, both of them taking place within the one public history ... The point is not to reduce the semantic range of speech about God's acts to the limits of our commonplace political discussion... but to push back the horizon of commonplace politics and open it up to the activity of God" (O'Donovan 1996, p.2).

### Political Theology

What are the ideologies which political theologians of our era have critiqued? For the great champion of religious liberty, John Courtney Murray, it was the idea of state absolutism, which he judged to be the factor contributing most to the emergence of secularism, and which both undermined religious vitality and effectively disqualified *spiritual* resources from being *cultural* resources (Murray 1953, p.147). For the exponents of the school of German political theology, Jürgen Moltmann, Dorothee Sölle and Johann Baptist Metz, it was again the privatisation of the religious impulse, but their works differ significantly from those of Murray, who invoked Thomistic notions of natural law and the common good. German political theology adopted the method of idealist historicism and was a reaction to the individualism of existential theology.

Metz, the only Catholic of the aforementioned trio, has had considerable influence in Catholic theology since Vatican II. His political theology is largely shaped by the shadow of the events of recent history, in particular, the impact of the atrocities of the Nazi regime. The hermeneutic he adopts is not existential but political – faith must necessarily express itself by way of social and political *praxis*. For Metz, secularisation itself is not a regrettable development. He argues that it is a sign that the Christian impulse is at work in society (Metz 1969, p.39) since all that is secular draws its life through God and Jesus Christ. Indeed, he argues, "to Christianise the world" means fundamentally 'to secularise it'" (Metz 1969, p.49). But if secularisation results in a privatised religious sensibility, society is at risk of succumbing to a distorted anthropology in which there is no place for interdependence and solidarity. Emancipatory social action is said to have a certain primacy in the theological project. However, there still needs to be a dialectic between *praxis* and theoretical principles which can function as interpretive and strategic criteria governing the *praxis*.

An important aspect of the dialectical process is the attempt to articulate ways in which engagement in liberating *praxis* provides access to the transcendent reality of God's saving activity in and through the Christ-event. Metz has suggested that the basis of this process is Christian faith in the God of history, including the history which has yet to be lived and recorded. God is said to be no longer "above" history. He is himself "in" it as "its free uncontrolled future" (Metz 1969, pp.22-3). The *praxis* itself constitutes an actualisation of our freedom and it finds its ultimate explication in the hope-inspiring eschatological vision of a world renewed and transformed in view of its status as *God's* world (Metz 1969, pp.89-90, p.96). The Church's fundamental task is thus to claim responsibility for society, to act as the guarantor of its future (Metz 1969, p.50) and to assist in the shaping of the public ethos in ways which proclaim and reflect the freedom of Jesus Christ and which uphold that freedom as a "dangerous memory" (Metz 1980, p.88). On this basis, it would be entirely appropriate for theology to concern

<sup>1</sup> For an analysis of liberalism's vulnerability on this count, cf. R.Bruce Douglass (1994) 100-124.

<sup>2</sup> Advocates of a public church in America include Robert Bellah (1992), Richard John Neuhaus (1984), Martin Marty (1981) and Dieter T.Hessell (1993).

itself with politics, if we accept what Charles Davis has described as the right conception of politics, namely, “the realm of human freedom and community in the pursuit of values” (Davis 1980, p.20). There is probably no more severe critic of Metz’ theology than Joseph Ratzinger, who claims that its main deficiency is its lack of metaphysical foundation. Thus, he argues, that for Metz, “no human nature exists for which history is the mediator, only the rough draft *man*, the ultimate form and scope of which is determined by *this* particular individual who, out of the rough draft, *creates* a man” (Ratzinger 1987, p.160). If we accept this description of Metz’s view of nature - and the Hegelian pedigree would help to account for it - then there are implications, too, for how we are to interpret the notion of freedom in Metz. The Belgian moral theologian, Servais Pinckaers, has classified the two versions of freedom in Catholic moral theology as “freedom for excellence” and “freedom of indifference” (Pinckaers 1995, pp.327-378). Freedom for excellence is said to “develop principally in us through a sense of the true and the good, of uprightness and love, and through a desire for knowledge and happiness” (Pinckaers 1995, p.357). It is a morality of attraction, and it is contrasted with a morality of obligation, stemming from freedom of indifference, the outcome of the nominalist attempt to defend divine freedom by asserting that God is free to command what he likes, unfettered by the restrictions of any supposedly immutable nature that is apprehensible to human reason. Pinckaers suggests that all versions of freedom based on “a human will to self-affirmation” fall into this category (Pinckaers 1995, p.338). Metz has buttressed his own treatment of freedom with an eschatological reference point and the hope that this engenders might suggest that it qualifies as a freedom of attraction. But for Ratzinger, it nonetheless remains a freedom that is, for all intents and purposes, arbitrariness, and a political theology constructed on such a foundation will be susceptible to relativism.

The dialectic between *praxis* and theory is one which Metz insists must involve the social sciences. Given that Metz’s critique has given prominence to the ways in which members of the *bourgeoisie* have been responsible for so many being *victims* of history, not its *subjects* (Metz 1980, p.43, p. 46, p.61), use has been made of Marxist analysis, even though Metz has acknowledged the danger of the totalising tendencies of emancipatory movements (Metz 1980, pp.119-135). Notwithstanding this acknowledgement, theologians from the radical orthodoxy movement argue that a political theology that engages in such analysis in effect surrenders any claim to be genuinely Christian since what will be determinative of its content will be something other than the particularity of Christian revelation.

### Radical Orthodoxy

The argument, as set forth most fully in John Milbank’s *Theology and Social Theory*, is that a particular theology of grace that was apparently endorsed in the Vatican II Constitution, *Gaudium et spes*, which upheld the integral unity between the domain of the natural and of the supernatural, has contributed to the abiding “pathos of modern theology”, namely, its “false humility” (Milbank 2006, p.1), and that this is evidenced in the trajectory of European political theology. This conciliar document’s manifold affirmations of the autonomy of the secular order have been said by Tracey Rowland to rest on a flawed hermeneutic of culture and on an uncritical acceptance of the capacity of the modern world to achieve human progress (Rowland 2003, pp.11-35). Milbank contends that theologians whose representations of grace and nature could be described as integralist fall into two camps, originating respectively in France and Germany. The French version of integralism, with Maurice Blondel as its seminal thinker (Blondel 1984), “supernaturalises the natural” and is said to favour “a pre-modern view of the Christianised person as the fully real person” (Milbank 2006, p.207), reinstated as such through action. The German version, with Karl Rahner (Metz’s teacher and collaborator) as its chief exponent, is said to “naturalise the supernatural” such that theology’s function is to mediate and to accommodate the universal humanism and deferral to secular reason which is recognised as the irreversible legacy of the Enlightenment (Milbank 2006, p.207). It is Milbank’s view that political theology, and the liberation theology which it spawned, insofar as they adopt this latter theology of grace, disqualify theology from offering authoritative treatments of socio-political questions, confining substantive ethics to the restrictions of the Kantian and Marxist paradigms (Milbank 2006, p.208). The principal restriction is that the claim of any historical text to be fundamental for human history is disputed, as is the claim that any supernatural phenomenon can be “limitlessly capable of transforming all other cultural phenomena” (Milbank 2006, p.209). Blondel’s phenomenological analysis of action upholds the “freedom for excellence” concept, even though its historicist methodology differs from classical formulations of philosophical realism. Action, it is argued, has the character of “self-immolation” and risk, based on a faith that a correct, non-arbitrary synthesis will be discovered, since there is a ground that holds together the products of our action (Milbank 2006, pp.214-215). Thus freedom, for Blondel, is more than that capacity for self-actualisation which is a fundamental anthropological fact. It is a freedom exercised against the

background of the unconditional gift that is God's creative and salvific economy. Indeed, human action is both a participation in and a response to that free divine gift, the profound depths of which we discover as we act. In this way, Blondel affirms the reality of a transcendent divine grace and the mediation of supernatural charity, so that our series of actions are, in Milbank's words, "the endless interplay of creative... redemptive and sanctifying... mediations" (Milbank 2006, p.216). Blondel's concept of self-dispossessing action and of "supernatural knowledge as mediated through human creative endeavour... 'supernatural pragmatism'" (Milbank 2006, p.209), is said to be a helpful resource for the development of a social and political theology that is capable of an adequate critique of an existing secular order. But, so it is argued, European political theology is unable to achieve this because of its commitment to "foundational *praxis*" (Milbank 2006, p.209) which fails to adequately account for the contours of that *praxis*.

In Milbank's view, Rahner's theology of grace, with its affirmation of an openness to transcendence in the *a priori* structure of every created person, in effect provides us with no content other than the affirmation of the universal availability of grace. This results in the doctrines of the Christian theological tradition having to somehow accommodate "an account of human aspirations and human ethical norms which is thoroughly naturalised" (Milbank 2006, p.224). And it is because of this disjunction between the supernatural and the merely historical that the German version of integralism can be said to denaturalise history and even ignore what Milbank describes as "actually constituted human nature" (Milbank 2006, p.224).

Milbank argues that this is the path pursued by European political theology, which has rejected the notion of a specifically Christian programme and which sees its project as an encounter with secular modernity (Milbank 2006, p.231). This results in the content of emancipatory *praxis* being decided at the level of a Kantian principle of practical reason. Theology, suggests Milbank, "merely provides an elaborate regulative apparatus to secure this content and bestow upon it an infinite significance" (Milbank 2006, p.232). Because ethics is seen as a task which belongs to the world, and because its norms are derivable from "the formal fact of our freedom" and capacity for self-transcendence, all ethical claims are logically protected from theological critique (Milbank 2006, p.234). But if we are to view ethics as human reason participating in divine practical wisdom, radical orthodoxy insists that it be a participation which proceeds via conscious reference to historical events which are in some way normative for Christian ethics. Otherwise one is left with a transcendence that is empty of content, a void which is filled by humanist-Marxist-inspired ethical principles.

Milbank does not deny that Metz and others take seriously theology's potential to illuminate political and social understanding. Thus eschatological symbols do function potentially as sources of political criticism. But the form in which Metz appeals to Christian sources is said to fall short of emphasising the uniqueness of Christ and of "the practice of responsibility which the Church helps to define" (Milbank 2006, p.243). It is an appeal to universal rational foundations of a sense of justice more than it is an appeal to "what is positively imagined by a particular, contingent community such as the Church" (Milbank 2006, p.242) whose living practice is the context for what can be known about salvation. The likely outcome of this is a diminished role for the Church in the determination of just social outcomes. His provocative description of the subtext is that all that Christians can do about society is "say their prayers and otherwise just accept society as it is" (Milbank 2006, p.249).

### **Can theology be interdisciplinary?**

If we are able to see the contrasting answers of Metz and Milbank to the question in this paper's title, respectively, that a public Church *must* adopt a dialectical approach in order to be prophetic; and that a public Church *forfeits its claim* to be prophetic by being dialectical, one is less sure of the extent to which either of these fundamental theologies is a helpful resource for Christian ethics. Of course, political ethics deals with issues and political theology operates at a prior level of reflection. But the kind of political theology one subscribes to will inevitably manifest itself in the conversation partners one chooses and the proposals and counsels one gives. Events of recent decades have undoubtedly alerted most people to the limitations of Marxist analysis and to the encroaching forces of what Pedro Morande has described as "libertine nihilism" (Morande 1991, p.146), the pseudo-creed of an aggressive secular humanism. A further consideration, when it comes to assessing the authority of any social analysis for theology, is that social sciences are intrinsically incapable of resolving theological issues. Neil Ormerod has also pointed out that "the multiple approaches within the social sciences (physicalist, functionalist, conflictualist, symbolic interactionist) have simply reduplicated the very divisions they sought to overcome" (Ormerod 2005, p.826). Having said this, it should be noted that support for the principle of theology's interface with the social sciences is to be found even among those whose theological stance is not correlationist (Lonergan 1972, p.364; Wilfred 2006, p.25; Roberts 2006, p.124).

Milbank, in another section of his densely written work, has traced the genealogy of the social sciences to their Enlightenment context of seeking to contain the influence of revealed religion. His audacious assertion that theology is the pre-eminent social science (Milbank 2006, p. 6, p.382) is not reflected, however, in subsequent publications of members of the radical orthodoxy movement, if one is seeking guidance on questions of justice, peace, and various issues of public policy. Mary Doak has classified the various political ecclesiologies that have emerged among these scholars as “remnant Christendom”, “anarchic oppositionalism” (between Church and State) and “critical engagement” (Doak 2007, p.369). The last of these, attributed to Graham Ward (2000), at least seems to allow for the principle of statecraft and for the possibility of justice being realized by those outside the Church. In contrast, Milbank is less respectful of conventional boundaries between Church and State than St Thomas Aquinas was, boundaries described by William Cavanaugh as a “fraudulent invention” (Cavanaugh 1998, p.10). Such views are attributable to a preference for the Augustinian theological paradigm. Augustine’s political theology, as contained in the *City of God*, exhibits a highly critical evaluation of secular history and holds out little hope of historical progress. What was important for human welfare was not the secular empire but the Church. Thus no human potentiality is able to reach its fulfillment in the *saeculum* (Brown 1972, pp.35-45). Man’s redeemed nature is thus a gracious replacement of his sinful nature (Green 2008, p.77).

In spite of the genuine insights that thinkers such as Metz and Milbank have provided, comments such as those referred to at the beginning of this paper are not uncommon. Church teaching on a variety of social issues is perceived by many to be either tendentious or else somewhat disengaged from the complexities of political discourse and the minutiae of public policy. This can only detract from the Church’s prophetic role, since “the intelligibility of prophecy...is a necessary condition of its authority and effectiveness” (Plant 2001, p.28). It is surely incumbent on a public Church, which Pope Paul VI once described as “an expert in humanity” (Paul VI 1967, n.13, p.263), to confidently engage and mediate God’s wisdom and justice in matters of public importance. That must involve prudent analysis of what the social sciences have proposed in relation to various issues, rejecting any implicit dogmatism in these disciplines that defies revealed truth about God, humanity, grace and nature, freedom and redemption, but acknowledging at the same time that theology cannot negotiate testing terrain on its own. If the Church were to adopt such an approach, it would be well placed to overcome a weakness in much of its social teaching, namely, the failure to teach at a level of specificity that is able to provide helpful guidance. This is not to deny that on many questions there will be a legitimate diversity of approaches based on prudential judgment. However, to be aware of the provisionality and limits of earthly realisations of the reign of God should not be a source of discouragement.

One instance of a potentially fruitful engagement of theology with the social sciences is the use of economic analysis to confirm or even challenge the Church’s social teachings on a range of matters. Milbank has argued that the science of political economy “imagined and helped to construct an amoral formal mechanism which allows not merely the institution but also the preservation and the regulation of the secular” (Milbank 2006, p.47). Whatever we make of this claim, it surely does not warrant a complete dismissal of all that the science of economics has to offer theology, if not its value judgments, at least its tools of measurement. There have been few instances of such interdisciplinary research. Richard Bayer (1999) has made a significant contribution by comparing data from free market and planned economies on a range of things such as per capita gross Domestic Product, distributive shares in national income as allocated to labour and capital, and income shares of various demographic cohorts. These were tested against the claims in certain instances of Catholic Social Teaching that market systems are a poor basis on which to meet human needs, that there is a tendency of capital to exploit labour and that an expanded role by the state is a requirement of justice. The free market economy was judged favourably on the basis of this research. There is much to be said for this interface between a theologically-inspired social vision and empirically-documented facts. And it is perhaps what already happens implicitly in social encyclicals, without the relevant footnotes, such as Pope John Paul’s rhetorical question in *Centesimus Annus* (1991): “Can it perhaps be said that, after the failure of Communism, capitalism is the victorious social system, and that capitalism should be the goal of the countries now making efforts to rebuild their economy and society?”, to which he answered with a highly qualified “yes” (John Paul II 1991, n.42, pp.845-846).<sup>3</sup> It is also instructive to note that the interdisciplinary dimension of the Church’s social doctrine has been affirmed in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2005, n.76, pp.37-38). However, despite the stated requirement of “a constant updating of the reflections on the various issues

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<sup>3</sup> David Hollenbach (2001) analyses the Pope’s “complex” answer, critiquing the flawed responses to it by some neoconservatives and libertarians

raised here” (PCJP n.9, p.5), there is a disappointing lack of information about how such updating is to proceed and about which resources and insights from other human disciplines are to be used.

## Conclusion

During the twentieth century, the Church developed a strong social voice in the midst of a post-Enlightenment climate of individualism and fragmentation. Christian theology confidently asserted that religious values must feature prominently in matters of public discourse. Its rationale was that the deepest political questions have a theological underpinning. The emerging concept of a public Church was based on firm theological foundations but significant differences have arisen in regard to how it can best evangelise contemporary culture. This paper has described the contrasting approaches of German political theology and radical orthodoxy, as exemplified in the writings of Johann Baptist Metz and John Milbank., focusing on their divergent accounts of freedom and nature and of the status of the social sciences in the theological task. An understanding of these differences assists us to come to terms with the problematic aspects of the Church’s interface with contemporary culture, in particular, a perceived political bias and a lack of specificity in the public Church’s teachings and pronouncements. It was argued that a judicious use of the social sciences, in particular, economic analysis, can assist the Church to redress these defects in such a way that the complexities of statecraft and public life are better appreciated and the Church is better equipped for its prophetic mission.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### State School Chaplaincy: Talking About God in Contemporary Culture

by

David Pohlmann & Garth Hentzschel

#### Introduction

Young people are bombarded with talk and messages of all kinds. The lines of Harry Nilsson's (n.d.) song are becoming true for many young people, 'Everybody's talking at me. I don't hear a word they're saying. Only the echoes of my mind.' Sorgi (2002) showed that six years ago the average person received over 3,000 messages each day from advertising alone. Now with the advent of email, instant messaging, iPods, iPhones, Facebook, MySpace, and sms, the amount of information has increased and 'talk is cheap'. As young people are bombarded with words, and flaunt their knowledge of generational identity, they are becoming embedded in mindsets and actions that reflect post-modernism and the theories relating to Generation Y (Sorgi 2002). These mindsets encourage insular actions and ideas focused on, 'Thinking about you, thinking about me, Thinking about just you and me, la-dah-de-de, there ain't no place I'd rather be' (Swingers n.d.). Many young people are now encouraged to think more of themselves, their rights and their emotions. They believe all that they think, feel and believe is right; because they have experienced it, it therefore must be correct (Gare 2006).

All this information received through the digital super highway, as well as society's acceptance of young peoples' egocentric tendencies, has made talking about God more to the contemporary culture more difficult. The church is finding its impact on society decrease and in general, how the church talks about God is not being heard by the population. As will be shown, there is a decline in the number of young people attending church (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2006), this paper will give some reasons for this in light of generational and post-modern theory. The church uses a number of models to communicate with secular culture, deriving from different theory and theology. This paper argues that one praxis model, the Incarnational Model, presents an acceptable way to talk about God in the contemporary youth culture. It is argued in this paper, that the model of incarnation is positively linking young people with the concept of God and that this may be an example for churches to follow in order to connect to contemporary culture.

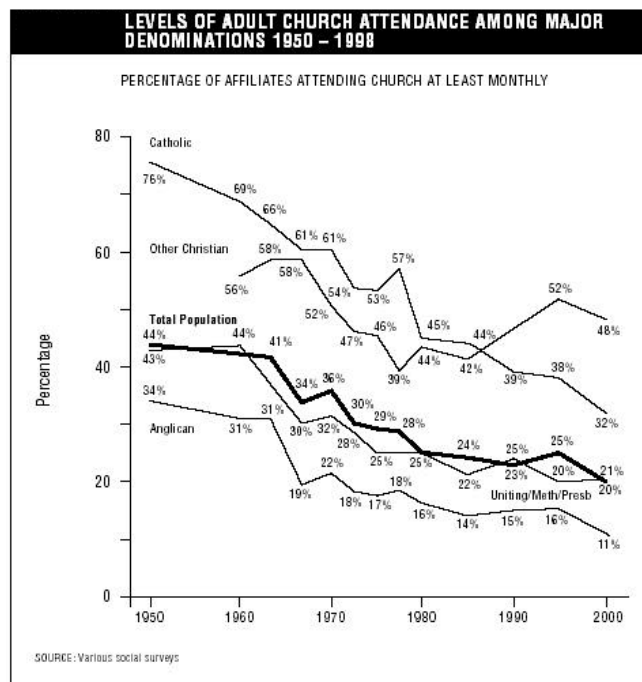
#### The Late Great Church

Over the last five decades the attendance in churches have declined (see TABLE I) and the number of people identifying themselves as having 'no religion' has increased. The ABS (2006) showed that in 1901 Australia was predominantly Anglo-Celtic, with 40% of the population being Anglican, 23% Catholic and 34% other Christian. Only about 1% professed to belong to non-Christian religions. In 1971 the category of 'if no religion, write none' was introduced into the census and since then this category has increased.

The 2001 census showed that religious affiliations in Australia were (all numbers in brackets are changes over the last century): 27% Catholic (+4%); 21% Anglican (-19%); 21% other Christian (-13%); and 5% non-Christian (+4%). The second largest group, after the Catholic faith was those that claim no religion, now 26% of the Australian population (+26%) (ABS 2006).

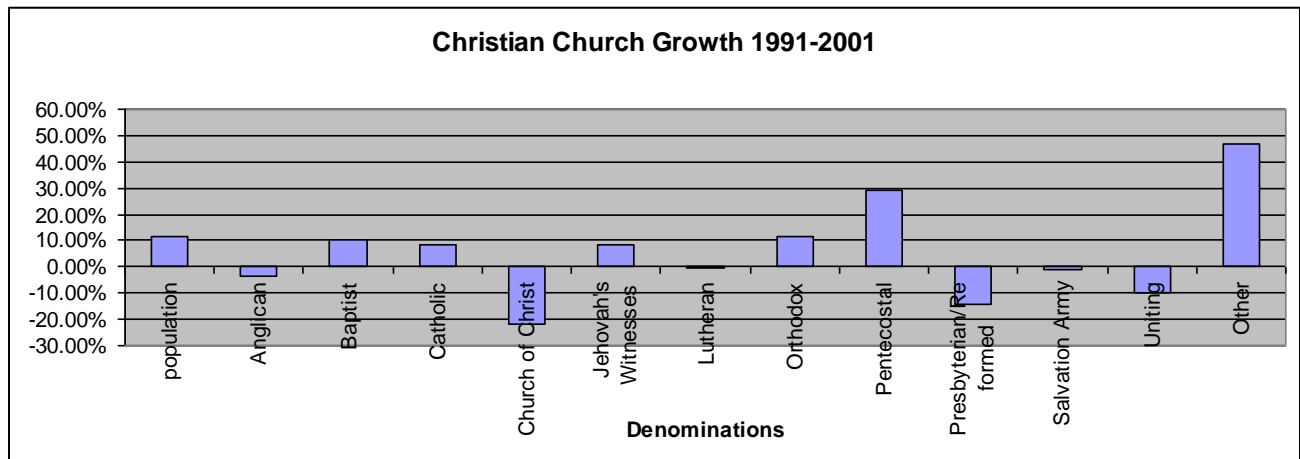
Most of the people who identified themselves as Christians were affiliated with traditional denominations, and although some denominations did show increases, the church in general has not kept up with the population growth. For example between 1991 and 2001 traditional denominations slightly increased, Orthodox churches increased by 11%; Catholic churches increased by 8% and Baptist churches by 10%, however, the total population grew by over 10% during this period (ABS 2006). The most notable increase of this period was the group of Pentecostal denominations, with almost a 30% increase (ABS 2006) (see TABLE II). However many of these figures did not represent a significant increase in the overall percentage of those identifying as Christian because the Baptist and Pentecostal denominations saw much of their growth from church 'switches' or those 'playing religious musical pews' with Pentecostal denominations having up to 55% of their congregation moving in from other churches in the last 10 years (Sterland, Powell & Castle 2006). The most notable decreases in Christian affiliation occurred for Churches of Christ (-22%), the Uniting Church (-10%), and Presbyterian and Reformed (-14%).

**TABLE I**  
**LEVELS OF ADULT CHURCH ATTENDANCE 1950-1998**



Source: *Build My Church*, Kaldor et al 1999, p. 21 ff, as cited in National Church Life Survey 2008.

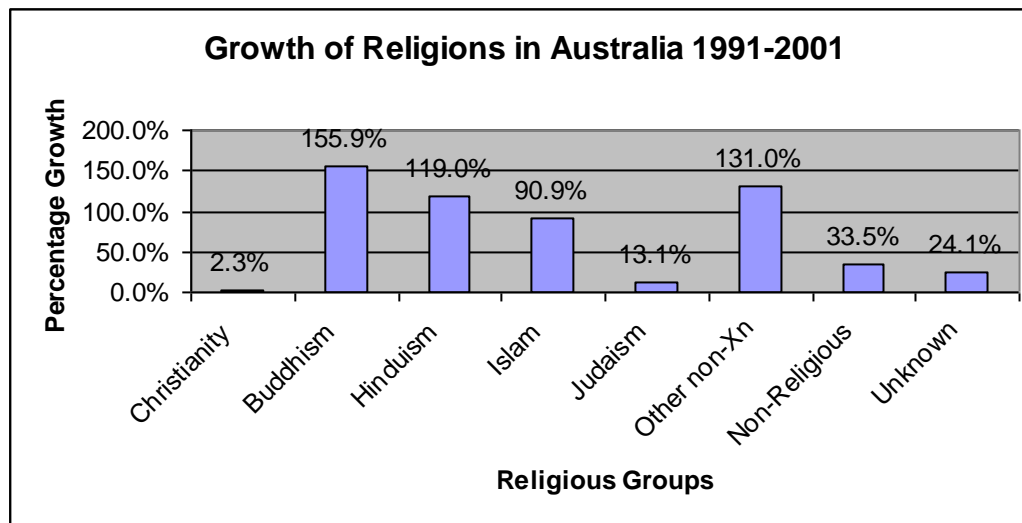
**TABLE II**  
**COMPARISON: CHURCH GROWTH RATES AGAINST POPULATION 1991-2001**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002, 2004. The term 'Other' here refers to all other Christian groups not otherwise named, and consisted of only 2.7% of the Australian population in 2001

As those in Australia who identify as Christian decrease, disciples of other religions and those of no prescribed religion are increasing (ABS 2006) (see TABLE III).

**TABLE III**  
**GROWTH OF RELIGIONS IN AUSTRALIAN 1991-2001**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002, 2004.

With the failure of Christian denominations to sustain growth, many churches now reflect a much older demographic compared to the general Australian population. Only 60% of young Australians aged 18-24, identify themselves as being Christian. Young people are therefore greatly under-represented in Christian churches in Australia. Only 8% of Christians are aged between 18 and 24 years (see TABLE IV), which for this faith group is concerning, considering that other faiths (example 13% of Buddhists are 18-24 years old) are have higher youth representation. This age group is also more likely to state that they have no religion, and 20% declare this (ABS 2006). Even denominations that focus on young people and use the Attractional Model, such as the Pentecostal churches can only claim 5% of their adult congregation to have remained from their youth ministries (Sterland et al. 2006).

**TABLE IV**  
**AGE PROFILE BY DENOMINATION 2001**

OVERALL DENOMINATION	15-19yrs (%) 6	20-29yrs (%) 8	30-39yrs (%) 12	40-49yrs (%) 18	50-59yrs (%) 19	60-69yrs (%) 17	70+yrs (%) 21
Anglican	4	7	10	14	18	19	28
Baptist	8	15	16	21	17	11	12
Catholic	6	6	12	18	20	18	20
Churches of Christ	8	14	15	19	17	12	16
Lutheran	6	8	12	19	19	16	21
Pentecostal*	11	19	21	22	15	7	5
Presbyterian	5	11	12	13	14	16	29
Salvation Army	6	10	12	15	19	17	22
Seventh-Day Adventist	7	11	14	20	16	14	19
Uniting	3	5	8	12	16	20	36
Other Protestant**	12	15	17	20	15	11	10

2001 National Church Life Survey – adjusted for non-participants.

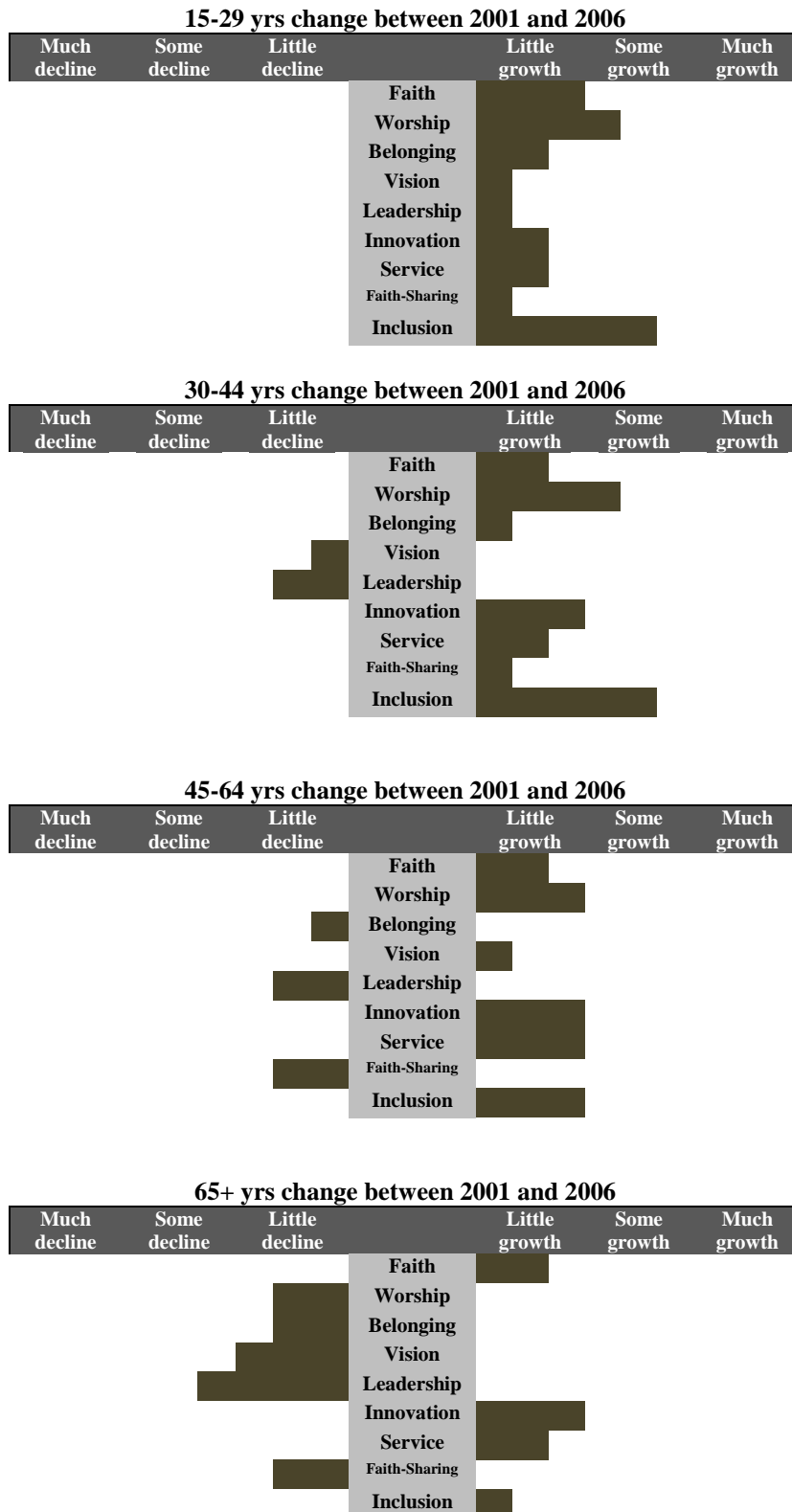
\* Note: 'Pentecostal' includes Apostolic, Assemblies of God, Christian City Church, Christian Revival Crusade and Vineyard Fellowship

\*\* Note: 'Other Protestant' includes Christian & Missionary Alliance, Church of the Nazarene, Reformed Church and Wesleyan Methodist.

Source: National Church Life Survey 2001

Many young people pride themselves on being different from previous generations (White & Wynn 2004). There are some striking differences between generations, even with the young person in the church. Powell and Jacka (2008a) show that young people in the church have far greater emphasis than older generations on belonging, vision, leadership and faith-sharing (see TABLE V). In the secular area two major theories drive the understanding of youth people.

**TABLE V**  
**CHANGES IN CORE QUALITY SCORES FOR FOUR GENERATIONS: 2001 TO 2006**



Source: Powell & Jacka 2008a, p. 4. The circles on the right show increases, by age groups in the areas identified as important in the quality of church life. Those to the left show decreases in importance placed on the attributes.

### **The young person: “In the world of their own”**

#### **A. Post-Modernism**

The major change that has occurred in society’s thinking as a result of post-modernism is the disappearance of a meta-narrative. In its place there has become ‘many stories [that] seem to be relevant and discernible’ (Noakes 2006, p. 13). In this way Christianity is only one of many stories or pathways leading to ‘god’. Noakes (2006) goes further by stating that post-modernism includes the,

...applause of diversity, an increasing value of localisation, a search for community, a return to the spiritual (usually of a New Age nature), and the acceptance of both pluralism (many truths) and relativism (where there is no one truth).

Of considerable concern is the emergence of a loss of *nomos* (sense of meaning) and a loss of hope as a result of having no master story. On the other hand, while there has been a significant loss of faith in human progress and deep suspicion of institutions (especially the Christian church), postmodernity has ushered in a more holistic view of people and a deep concern for ecology (p.13).

Smart (1993) takes this further by showing that there is a specific rise of interest in the ‘Middle Ages’, (one example is the rise of the gothic sub-culture) and that intellectuals no longer hold the ‘power’ of knowledge or they ‘cannot speak in the name of an ‘unquestionable’ universality’ (Smart 1993, p. 301). Along with these elements many in the West have abandoned the religious meta-narratives and actively attacked Christianity, sometimes without real evidence or having sufficiently thought the issues through. This has led to what Gare (2006) has called the ‘Triumph of the Airheads’ leading to the belief that whatever a person thinks or feels is correct, true and right because it is real, at least real in their own mind.

#### **B. Generation Y**

The generation this paper refers to are ‘Generation Y’ born 1982 – 2003 (Also called ‘Millennials’, ‘Net Generation’, ‘Dotcoms’, ‘Echo-Boomers’, or ‘Paradoxical Generation’ and sometime reported as being born as early as 1976), for whom issues of leadership and values have changed significantly from those belonging to previous generations (Strass & Howe 1997). Their childhood was seen as a dangerous and difficult time, as children they were heavily protected, and even spoilt (Brooks 2008). For many of these young people their lives have been characterised by the perception that each of them is particularly special, aided and abetted by the ‘every child wins a prize’ principle adopted in many Australian schools (Brooks 2008). Hence Generation Y is a group of people who have adopted many new beliefs and are certain that they are right. With adults viewing children as special, test scores are faring better, so not only is this generation used to getting their own way, they are also smarter than previous generations (Armour 2005; Generation Y 1999). It is not surprising therefore that this generation questions the Church and its teachings while demanding that the Church caters for their individual physical, social, emotional and spiritual needs. It seems that Generation Y will only become involved if they can see what is ‘in it’ for them and if they feel the program has been designed especially for their individual felt needs. However they will only show a sense of loyalty to a person, place, idea, belief or fashion until something better comes along.

Since the 1980s, books teaching virtues and values have become best-sellers, and those based on humanist and New Age philosophy have resonated with the post-modern mindset in Generation Y. Hence these books have taken something of a ‘smorgasbord’ approach to spirituality, philosophy and faith but at the same time have distanced themselves from any one particular doctrine or faith tradition.

### **A Snapshot of Church models**

#### **A. LOYALTY MODEL**

As was shown in the discussion on Generation Y, young people are unlikely to show loyalty for loyalty’s sake. Yet there are many churches that still rely on this model for growth. Strommen, Hardel, and Hardel (2000) argue that (1) the Loyalty Model is strongest where there is positive biological growth in the congregation and, (2) that many congregations encourage it on a theological basis (Luke 14:26-27). Shanks (2005) goes even further imploring that Christians should show exclusive loyalty to the church. Strommen et al. (2000) found that there are a number of activities churches do or could do to build loyalty in young people and these include— service to the community through the church; encouraging the level of loyalty their peers show; and developing a sense of affection for other members of the congregation. They identified eight points for a church to develop loyalty: 1) a

hospitable climate 2) inspirational worship 3) a caring environment 4) a thinking climate 5) families who help families 6) an emphasis on prayer 7) intergenerational service efforts and 8) a sense of mission (Strommen et al. 2000, p. 158).

There are some weaknesses in this model, as the culture of these churches do not line up neatly to the needs felt by young people in churches (Powell & Jacka 2008a, TABLE V). Also Generation Y and post-modern thought generally discourages loyalty and instead encourages cynicism of authority figures of any kind. Cloud (2008) argues that even in the church there are some people, who warn that for...

..church leaders to demand unquestioning loyalty is a perversion of biblical truth and is the mark of a cult (Cloud 2008, ¶1).

In addition, as Powell and Jacka (2008b) show there is a full generation or more who have not gone to church. They point out that the Baby Boomers left the church in their teens and did not return with their children, as occurred in previous generations. In this way their children (Generation X) have had very little affiliation with the church, leaving Generation Y to not even have a 'family church' to place loyalty with.

## B. ATTRACTIONAL MODEL

This model is self explanatory, it occurs where the church organises events in order to attract people, but this has recently come under severe scrutiny. Shuman (2007) defines the characteristics of the Attractional Model by showing that it;

- Extracts people from the world by attracting them to the ministries of the church;
- Has buildings, organization, and programs;
- Keeps members busy attending church services and activities;
- Measures success by attendance at the weekend worship services;
- Monitors budgets, buildings, and baptisms; and
- Focuses 0% to 5% of the church's resources externally.

(Shuman 2007, ¶2).

Wax (2007) states that while 'big events and fun activities do indeed serve as a successful evangelistic tool and can greatly help young people get involved in church' (¶5) they do not fulfill the aims of the church because,

...too often the events themselves become the ends and not the means. Success is defined by the size of the crowd, not by the fruit seen in the lives of those in attendance. Furthermore, when the attraction becomes the end goal and not the means to an end, those who attend are usually left with just a "spoonful of sugar" and no medicine at all. The sweetness may attract a crowd, but the church is no longer offering anything of substantial spiritual value (Wax 2007, ¶6).

This is supported by Sterland et al. (2006) and Strommen et al. (2000) who show that youth ministries using this model do not encourage loyalty to the church or for young people to remain in the church when they get older. To given even more support to the question of this model's successfulness are the statistics quoted earlier showing the lack of retention of young people in denomination such as the Pentecostal movement.

## C. INCARNATIONAL MODEL

The Incarnational Model will be investigated further in the remainder of this paper. It is a strong and emerging model for the future and survival of the church. By way of definition it is a church that aims for its members and structure to emulate Jesus Christ in 'serving suffering humanity' (Gowans 2002, ¶11). Shuman (2007) defines the characteristics of the Incarnational or Missional church in that it:

- Studies and knows their community;
- Equips and releases people as incarnational missionaries;
- Looks for and goes to unreached people or groups both locally and globally;
- Fosters new congregations to emerge from within an unreached group of people;
- Lives among the unreached, learns from them, loves them, starts where they are, and builds on what they have;
- Measures success by the number of people living as incarnational missionaries among groups of unreached people; and
- Focuses 50% to 70% of the churches resources externally.

(Shuman 2007, ¶ 5).

This paper continues by arguing that this Incarnational Model is one that will better suit the church with its need to connect with contemporary culture.

### **The Incarnational model – A Theological Sketch**

Matthew the evangelist (1:23) quotes the prophet Isaiah (7:14) in making the point that Jesus is 'Emmanuel' – 'God with Us'. This theology of the incarnation makes Christianity stand out among the great faiths extant today. It is at the core of Christian understanding and belief and therefore has implications for 'authentic' Christianity. The gist of incarnation is that 1) God became man in Christ; 2) Christ lived as God embodied; 3) following Christ's death and resurrection, Christ sent His followers the Holy Spirit who; 4) indwelt and empowered them to live as Christ did.

Paul's symbolism of the Body of Christ (e.g. Rom 12:4-5) takes this idea and expands it to show that as the Holy Spirit inhabits His people, He gifts them for service, and that it is only when each of these gifts are put into operation that the body of Christ (the Church) really becomes apparent. This paper argues that if the church is to talk about God in this contemporary culture it must again discover the miracle of the incarnation. It has been noted that this Incarnational Model is the core for successful ministry that aims to connect with contemporary society (Francis 1998, p. 311). This connection and mode of living is intrinsic to the ministry of chaplaincy in general, and is particularly apparent in specific discipline of state school chaplaincy.

### **The State School Chaplaincy Service**

In contrast with the decline in Church attendance, especially with young people distancing themselves from established religion, there has been a trend for State Schools in Australia and New Zealand to embrace Christian Chaplains.

State school chaplaincy began in Victoria in 1955 under the auspices of the Council for Christian Education in Schools (now called ACCESS ministries) (Hill 2005). This was continued in Western Australia and South Australia in 1982 and 1986 respectively. A similar movement began in New Zealand in the late 1980s (Hill 2005). There was continued growth across the board and the major factor for growth appears to have been 'word-of-mouth' support by principals and other school administrators. In Queensland, formal state school chaplaincy services began in 1990 and these services experienced average annual growth of almost 84% over each of the next ten years (Pohlmann & Russell 2005).

In 2006 the Federal Government announced the National School Chaplaincy Program (NSCP) funding. This program built upon the success of the chaplaincy program across the nation and aimed 'to assist schools and their communities to provide greater pastoral care, general religious and personal advice and comfort to students' (DEST 2008, ¶1). Over 2600 successful applications from schools across Australia were processed (DEST 2007a; 2007b). As a result chaplaincy has ballooned in State and Independent Schools. In Queensland alone state school chaplaincy services increased in number from 200 to over 600 almost overnight (SU Qld 2008).

Under the program only school principals could apply for the funding and money was only provided when broad school community support could be demonstrated for the appointment of a Chaplain. At the time that the Howard Government created the NSCP scheme, money was only provided for the employment of Chaplains. The Rudd Government has since allowed secular youth workers to be employed where a Chaplain could not be sourced. The cynical reader might assume that principals and schools supported chaplaincy simply because it was the *only* choice being funded. This is not so.

In the 2006 Queensland electoral cycle, both the (then) Beattie Labor Government (Australian Labor Party 2006) and the Opposition (Queensland Coalition 2006) offered funding for state school chaplaincy in that state. (This predated the NSCP funding by several months [DEEWR 2007]). The re-elected Government's funding package offered \$3 million over three years and was rolled out as grants of \$10,000 per year to schools identified by the Department of Education as in need of additional pastoral care services. This money was, from day one, able to be used by schools to employ either Chaplains or secular youth workers. A Department of Education survey in early August, 2008 indicated that 98 schools employed Chaplains whereas only 18 schools opted to employ youth workers (EQ 2008).

There appears to be a significant interest in chaplaincy as an appropriate way of providing spiritual and pastoral care in secular State Schools. Could it be that the incarnational approach of chaplaincy is an acceptable means of approaching spirituality and the notion of God in a contemporary setting?

### **Incarnational Model – A major reason for the growth of Chaplaincy?**

#### **A. ENGAGING WITH THE NEW MINDSETS**

Within post-modern culture generally and for Generation Y in particular, there has been a major change in thinking about religion. This is probably no more pronounced than here within the Australian Culture, (Bouma 2006) which has traditionally been a bit cynical about organised religion. The post-

modern Australian young person values experience over dogma. They are looking for an experience that is authentic. They also understand the power of narrative – they long to share their stories and are happy to listen to the stories of others.

Chaplains working in any secular context will not survive in their roles with any sense of pretence or dogma. This is especially true for Chaplains in state schools. Chaplains must be real, and live out the Gospel, stripping away the ‘religious trappings’ that people might normally expect from the ‘God-bod’. In doing so, Chaplains journey alongside young people, hear their stories, and in turn win the great privilege of gaining the courteous permission to share their own.

The approach taken by Chaplains in State Schools seems to be more acceptable to contemporary culture than the more traditional approaches to youth ministry. This appears to be true for principals and teachers, parents, students and the broader community (Armistead 2008). Such an approach to practical theology offers young Australian the freedom to experience God within the natural culture or “on their turf”. Some Queensland research suggests there is a strong correlation between the Christian spirituality of chaplains and the endorsement of chaplain motives by school administrators, guidance staff and students (Pohlmann 2008).

#### B. SPECIFIC LINKS TO STATE SCHOOL CHAPLAINCY – THE EVIDENCE IN THE SCHOOL YARD

Chaplains are not just talking about God but trying to live as ‘God with skin on’. Christians who seriously accept the reality of incarnational theology can do no other. And in doing so, God connects with the Chaplain and also those with whom the Chaplain journeys. So the work of the Chaplain transcends what we would normally understand by talking about God, because it instead focuses on God speaking for himself, just as He has done throughout the ages.

Post-Modern young people are not very likely to engage with God out of loyalty. Gone are the days of staying with a spiritual tradition simply because they are born into it. The church is competing with so many media-based distractions, the strong attractions of peer-life and the demands of youth-culture itself. There is little room for the modernist meta-narratives that pervade the traditional church.

The growth of the youth market within the Australian Pentecostal movement does indicate that young people do respond to the Attractional Model for a time. After all, the dominant Pentecostal paradigm includes a youth-oriented multi-media loaded approach which is bound to appeal to many young people. The problem is that those same young people may only stay connected to the church until the next distraction. For those who are drawn to the movement by an attraction can also be drawn away from the movement by another distraction.

While a very small proportion of young people regularly attend church, almost all attend school. Indeed it is one of the last true communities left in Australia. With the increased incidence of chaplaincy in state schools, it is likely that more young people have come to experience some aspect of God through this medium than they would have in church. In acknowledging this fact it should be noted that within school chaplaincies, young people are free to engage with God and spirituality within ‘their culture’ rather than having to adapt to a largely foreign ‘churchy’ culture and on their own terms rather than ‘ours’.

#### State School Chaplaincy – A lesson to the Church

What we have built up in ‘Christendom’ is a culture that would seem rather foreign to Jesus and the Apostles. The great commission (Matt 28: 18-20) is outward looking, sending Christians into their world to engage with those around them. Paul at Mars Hill (Acts 17: 22-32) spoke to the Athenians in their language and within their culture about the innate sense of God they already had inside. What’s more they wanted to hear more from him on the subject of Jesus. Instead we have built our religious edifices, inviting people to come to us, on our terms. No – the early Christians probably wouldn’t recognise the church today! Perhaps the Incarnational Model evident in state school chaplaincy provides a model for the Church in its mission of engagement within Australian society?

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Authentically Human: von Hügel's Spiritual Direction of Gwendolen Greene

by  
Robyn Wrigley-Carr

#### Introduction

Baron Friedrich von Hügel is primarily remembered as a lay Catholic religious philosopher of the late 19th and early 20th centuries who was involved in the Catholic Modernist crisis. Less well known is von Hügel's role as a spiritual director to many, including Evelyn Underhill. But his most extensive direction was given to his niece, Gwendolen Greene. The centrality of this relationship of spiritual direction is outlined by von Hügel himself when he writes,

Since my True died [his daughter, Gertrud] I do not think I have cared to try and serve and feed any soul as much as yours. My chief prayer has been... that in a Fenelon-like self-oblivion I might just simply help and feed and carry you, if and when and where you required it - to let God lead (Greene, 1928, p.123).

von Hügel's letters to Gwen Greene contain much teaching about how to become authentically human - how to become "real" persons in relationship with God and others, as opposed to becoming objects or animals.

This article discusses just *one* theme that von Hügel clearly states as a key *desire* he has for his niece: that she would "...feed on what truly helps [her]... to love God and Christ, and to hate, and constantly to guard against self" (Greene 1928, p.115). It is the idea of turning from self to Christ, of being *indwelt* by Christ so that we become authentically human, a new creation. We cannot be truly ourselves, without being prepared to die to ourselves, to be *in* Christ.

von Hügel was Gwen's spiritual director for the final 7 years of his life. His relative deafness made letter writing his primary vehicle for this spiritual direction, providing us with an unusually complete record of the spiritual nurture he provided her.

After publishing von Hügel's letters to her in the volume *Letters to a Niece*, Gwen received world-wide correspondence from people asking questions about the letters and how to "...live them into their lives" (Greene 1929, p.ix). As a result, a year later, in 1929, Gwen wrote *Mount Zion*. It was her attempt "to answer some of the questions" (Greene 1929, p.x). In this book, we see Gwen attempting to flesh out and expand von Hügel's shorthand. Although she uses the third person, we vividly see how Gwen herself has attempted to embody and live out von Hügel's teaching.

From this introduction, we now examine the theme of dying to self so we can be indwelt by Christ and become more authentically human. We will briefly look at von Hügel's teaching about this (as found in his letters to Gwen), before more extensively examining Gwen's fleshing out of this theme in *Mount Zion*.

#### Dying to Self

Throughout his letters to Gwen, von Hügel emphasises the necessity to get *self* out of the way. He tells Gwen "I want you to learn to die to yourself daily; the daily death is a spiritual habit" (Greene 1928, p.xxiii). And similarly he writes, "...deliberate self-renunciation is everywhere dear and darling..." (Greene 1928, p.158); avoid "utter self-absorption" (Greene 1928, p.187) and "...look[ing] out for No.1..." (Greene 1928, p.142).

This warning against a focus on self also applies to the practices of prayer and Confession: von Hügel warns Gwen that "too much dwelling (even from the best of motives) upon the criticisms of yourself" could "easily weaken" your Recollection and Prayer of Quiet (Greene 1928, p.140). Even in her formal Confession, von Hügel tells Gwen to confess "...very gently, with your soul turned to Christ your light and love and life" (Greene 1928, p.180).

Prayer and devotional reading are two means that von Hügel uses to help encourage Gwendolen Greene to keep her eyes off self. He emphasises, "Keep your life a life of prayer, dearie. - Keep it like that: it's the only thing..." (Greene 1928, p.xLiii). He also encourages her to follow his daily practice of 15 minutes of devotional reading, recommending a diet of the New Testament, Psalms, *Imitation of Christ*, and Augustine's *Confessions* (Greene 1928, p.xxxviii). This *devotional* reading is about the truth moving from head to heart and in von Hügel's words is like "letting a very slowly dissolving lozenge melt imperceptibly in your mouth" (von Hügel 1927). von Hügel models this, telling his niece that he has "tried to live the *Confessions* at their deepest these last fifty years..." (Greene 1928, p.45).

In *Mount Zion*, we see Gwen take on board von Hügel's words about dying to self. She repeatedly uses his terms of "costing" (Greene 1929, p.45) and "heroism" (Greene, 1929, p.63) to describe this death. She writes that we need to "die daily" (Greene 1929, p.146); "...to really die to ourselves, it is no sham dying" (Greene 1929, p.145). Instead, it is an "undoing... self-losing, the way of denudation..." (Greene 1929, p.147). Gwen writes,

There is a *continual* necessity for a new conversion in every soul; for *we ever make ourselves chains*; we get tied up in customs, *we hide ever and again under new veils - the desperate claiming self* is ever building again the shelters we have destroyed... (Greene 1929, p.145)

So von Hügel begins with a very clear negative - that the "desperate, claiming self" must decrease. But what is this self-denial and self-renunciation for? The purpose of this ongoing death to self, von Hügel teaches, is to *make space* for Christ.

### **The Indwelling Christ**

The purpose of von Hügel's words, "die, die day and night, to self" is so we can "gain vivid experience" of Christ (Greene 1928, p.135). So von Hügel writes, "Get rid of all self-occupation... move out of yourself, let in God" (Greene 1928, p.xxiii).

Gwen echoes this idea of making space so that Christ can be *in* us when she writes of becoming "...wholly full of Him" (Greene 1929, p.150); being "...delivered from self, not by a suppression of self, but by an enlargement of self, into Christ..." (Greene 1929, p.148). She observes that in "...looking at them [Christ & God] our souls are dilated, expanded - we can take in what they want to give" (Greene 1929, p.146). She describes this process:

Christ enters our souls... 'He must increase, I must decrease,' so as we decrease he shines more. The soul must be empty for him to enter, *her "I" must disappear....* He does not remain outside us, a wandering voice, but close within us *Christ's love mingles in ours*; this is his sacramental life. Christ's life is as a deep river that *fills all our empty streams*, or it is *like a thread intimately woven into all we are*, and *issuing in all we do* (Greene 1929, p.205, italics added).

These words from Gwendolen Greene flesh out for us the *ontological* change that Christs' indwelling brings. Her two images - Christ as a deep river filling our empty streams, and Christ as a thread "intimately woven into all we are" both emphasise the *existential* change that being in Christ brings. We cannot separate waters once they are mixed. We cannot unravel thread that is "intimately woven into all we are". Being indwelled by Christ, having his love "mingle in ours", brings a fundamental change to who we "are" and "all we do". It's clear that Gwen has taken on board von Hügel's words to her that "Christ recreates" (Greene 1928, p.xLiii).

### **Contemplative Prayer**

In moving and personal language, Gwen describes the experience of Christ "dwelling" in her. (Greene 1929, p.70). Writing in the third person, she tells us, "Christ *encloses* her in himself, and he *abides* in her, and thus we are *lifted out of ourselves into Christ...* without our contact with Christ we become inflated...full of pride"(Greene 1929, p.42, italics added). Similarly, she writes "...we must be *contained in God, in Christ*, even as we can *contain Them*, and let us seek both to be contained *in Them* and to *contain Them*, *that we may escape from the imprisonment of ourselves*" (Greene 1929, p.91). This sense of being completely "enclosed" and "contained" in Christ is further reinforced when she describes "*immersing*" herself into the ocean of God's love for us through Christ. She writes, "We can immerse ourselves, *forget ourselves in His love*; fall into God, as it were, in our prayer" (Greene 1929, p.203).

### **The True Self**

The effect of "plunging ourselves" into "this ocean of love," of being "in Christ," is death to the sinful, *false* self as the *true* self emerges. When we are in Christ, Gwen argues, "...Christ's sword enters, and divides us, *putting our false selves away from our true*; but his touch is as gentle and as healing as a mother's with her child" (Greene 1929, p.91). In a way reminiscent of Teresa of Avila's image of the butterfly in the *Interior Castle*, Gwen writes "...we are like the chrysalis, gradually emerging - *we shed our false selves...* as we see Christ" (Greene 1929, p.210). Similarly, "...*we go towards our true selves...* our eyes are suddenly opened..." (Greene 1929, p.47). In the encounter with Christ, in truly seeing and beholding Him, we move towards "the true self" and become authentically human.

### **The Real World**

Alongside this movement from the false to the true self, Gwen argues that when we are indwelt by Christ, the soul "embraces another world..." (Greene 1929, p.210). She writes, the soul begins "...to live thus ever mysteriously on the lighted edge of another world, another country, the *invisible* country that shines beneath our *visible* world" (Greene 1929, p.203, italics added). Gwen writes that in contemplative prayer, "...the unrealities in which we are surrounded fall away from her of themselves, because they are unreal; and the only real remains... in the light of His gaze she is absorbed..." (Greene 1929, pp.150-151). So in contemplative prayer, it is the *invisible* world, the *spiritual* reality, that truly is the *real* world.

One effect of living on the edge of eternity is that she can let go of worldliness and materialism. Gwen writes that as her "...eyes are fixed upon Him," she can "involuntarily drop the worldly or material desires that have previously occupied" her; "However tightly" she "held to things," her "fingers open and let these treasures slip... *she sees her self-occupation*, her stupid desires...so clearly..." So for Gwen, those who *are* authentically human are the mystics who live on the edge of that *real*, eternal world, who are not ruled by worldly desires.

### The Mixed Life

But being authentically human of course, also involves living within the tangible, physical world. Gwendolen Greene is a mother of three! Say no more! I know what that's like! Gwen doesn't simply live in a state of contemplative prayer in her prayer cell. She lives the *mixed* life of prayer and service, contemplation and action. She lives out Christ's two-fold command to love God and love neighbour. von Hügel encourages Gwen in this mixed life as a mother: He writes "From prayer and solitude back to them, and from them again back to it... *there* is a fine rich tension for you" (Greene 1928, p.116). He repeats this blend of contemplation and action when he writes: "...love and help as many souls - do all this. Yes - but remember: Be alone, be remote, be away from the world, be desolate. Then you will be near God" (Greene 1928, p.xii). Thus it is her contemplative prayer that enables the authentic service of others, including her children. Writing again in the third person, Gwen says "...her activity is so much increased in richness and reality by this gazing... In her daily life she finds her love... [is] fed by this contemplation of God..." (Greene 1929, p.152).

Gwen lived out von Hügel's words to her: have "...continuous self-oblivion... absorption in God, and yet... *amazingly large attention to others, especially to the poor...*" (Greene 1928, p.170, italics added). Gwen's "caring" for others goes beyond her three children, to helping the poor. She became more authentically human, through internalising von Hügel's words to her, concerning death to self so we can be *in* Christ, and from this place loved others more selflessly.

### Testimonies

Finally, we can see that Gwen applied and embodied von Hügel's words, but did *he* live out these truths himself, or was it merely theory? Did he "walk the talk"? Or was he like one of those theologians that Gwen critiques as being like musicologists, who she writes "...know all about music but have no musical sense, for these always tell us how everything should go, they explain music to us; though they have no music *in themselves*, they *talk of it* most of all" (Greene 1929, p.57, italics added). These academics, Gwen writes, "...speak of our Lord as though he were some dear memory; they do not seem to connect him with our lives here and now" (Greene 1929, p.71). Well Gwendolen Greene emphatically states that von Hügel doesn't fit into that category.

She tells us of how von Hügel repeatedly told her "I try to live this, I try to work this into my life.' Gwen adds "These words of his were made actual in one's sight, for in his life how moved one was to see this effect of his living faith!" (Greene 1930, p.114). Further she writes, "My uncle never hesitated to relate his own experience: he never left out himself, but spoke with a warm and natural sincerity of his own experience and life" (Greene 1930, p.139). In one letter von Hügel describes his own life as "...requiring immensely that daily, hourly, death to self" (Greene 1928, p.110).

Alongside his dying to self, Gwen describes von Hügel's prayerful depth describing him as having "...a thousand and one ways of thought, of prayer, of deeply conscious concentration on, and absorption in the Spirit of God;" (Greene 1930, p.183) and that "He lived in a deep interior world - where few, perhaps, can follow..." (Greene 1930, p.101). When Gwen writes to von Hügel about her "Prayer of Quiet", von Hügel describes his own experience of contemplative prayer: the "...peace, power and presence [of Christ], right in the midst of this rose of spiritual fragrance" (Greene 1928, p.140). And if *fruit* is the test of intimate prayer, Gwen tells us von Hügel was "...full of a touching humility and understanding..." (Greene 1928, p.xLi). and displayed "a love... unself-occupied, unself-regarding, absorbed in things outside of itself" (Greene 1930, p.103); that "He loved and he wanted to teach us to love..." (Greene 1928, p.ix).

We know that von Hügel wasn't perfect. He tells his niece about having over-strained his daughter Gertrud, "...presuppose[ing] too much maturity...", describing this error as "the biggest cross" of his life (Greene 1928, p.122). Even in his direction with Gwen, he makes mistakes. On one occasion he apologises to her writing, "...there was a double-seeking about me that evening. I was thinking of my own case, instead of yours..." (Greene 1928, p.129). However, despite these faults, and others, I believe that von Hügel endeavoured to die to self and be enclosed by Christ, and was on a trajectory of becoming more authentically human, able to love others more freely. He not only tried to embody what he taught, but he endeavoured to help others become more real, more authentically human.

Perhaps it's not primarily what von Hügel wrote in his letters that influenced Gwendolen Greene. When von Hügel writes of his own personal debt to *his* spiritual director, the Abbe Huvelin, von Hügel makes it clear that it was *who Huvelin was*, not just what he *said* that impacted him for life. He writes, "*There sanctity stood before me in the flesh...*" He tells his niece: "I learnt all that I know from Huvelin. What I teach you is him, not me. I learnt it from him. *What a great saint he was!* and what he taught me!" (Greene 1928, p.xv, italics added). Just as it was Huvelin's embodied sanctity that influenced von Hügel, it was von Hügel, *the person*, modelling how to be authentically human, that influenced Gwendolen Greene. Gwendolen Greene writes, "It is a double picture, *a picture of him* teaching, and a picture of what he taught"(Greene 1928, p.ix, italics added).

Gwen is unreserved about the impact von Hügel had on her life. She writes:

When I look back on all these talks, the letters and this companionship, I know them to be the greatest privilege and joy I shall ever receive. If I have learned anything, it is from him that I learned.. (Greene 1928, p.xLiii).

To my Uncle I owe, under God, all I see. Perhaps only he could have opened the door into the world that is so real, but is hidden; to that love which is so close which we seek to find (Greene 1929, p.xi).

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## CHAPTER NINE

### Conversations About God: Does Skills Training Make a Difference?

by  
Lyn Daff

#### Introduction

It is easy to recognise it when it happens. You are at a function and find yourself sitting next to a complete stranger. You introduce yourself and a conversation starts, it is hesitant at first but then you discover a common interest and the conversation becomes absorbing. Someone who was a total stranger half an hour earlier is no longer one. You leave the function feeling good, this wasn't just a superficial conversation but you connected. Is this an everyday occurrence for most Christians or is it an all too infrequent occurrence?

Ragsdale (1994) comments that, "one might logically expect a committed Christian to exhibit relational communication skill". Why would one expect Christians to have such skills? What are these skills? How does one develop these skills? This paper will address these three questions. It seeks to explore the importance of relationship skills for Christians and the role skills training can play in skill development which may change our interactions with others. A survey is undertaken of participants from Christian leadership training program that included interpersonal skills development. Participants evaluate their skills prior to and after training as well as commenting on how and why their interaction with others changed. Consideration is also given to the application of skills.

#### Why We Need Relationships

Relational communication skills focus on others' rights, needs and desires, as is the focus of mainline Christian religious traditions. Ragsdale (1994) describes this saying, "self-disclosure is necessary for fellowship. Empathy, interaction involvement and listening would be anticipated because they reflect concern for one's neighbour". God created humans for relationship with Himself and with one another (Ge 2:18). The hunger for connection is one of the most fundamental desires of the human heart. But it is not just connections in general that we seek, rather at the core of our being we yearn for intimacy (Benner, 2004). There is strength in relationships (Ecc 4:12). Relationships come in many guises, parent and child, spouses, siblings, extended family, friends, co-workers, fellow church members, acquaintances. When Jesus says, "Love your neighbour" he does not distinguish between the various relationships we have instead He explains our neighbour through a parable, as being the one who we have an opportunity to show mercy (Lk 10:25-37). We are told we should love others because He loves us and so that others may know Him (Jn 13: 34-35, 1 Jn 4:11). God created us for relationships and He commands us to have relationships (Jn 13:34, 1 Jn 3:11). While there are numerous Bible passages<sup>1</sup> about relationship skills, two specifically mention the need to be prepared when opportunities arise (Col 4:5-6, 1 Pe 3:15). The need to listen (Pr 10:19; 29:20, Jas 1:19) and saying the right thing at the right time are also mentioned (Pr 10:32, 15:1, 22:11). Christians are also urged to be active in sharing their faith (Phil 6).

All of the above give ample support for the study of interpersonal skills in a Christian context. The next section considers the impact interpersonal skills development may make on being prepared for personal interactions, including those with an explicit spiritual dimension.

#### Skills Development, Will it Make a Difference?

Do perceptions about one's level of skill, influence interactions, or do the outcomes of interactions influence one's perceptions of one's level of skills? This question was examined in Nezelek's (2001) study where participants described their day-to-day social interactions as well as their social skills. The majority of these participants were able to repeat the study two years later. He explains the sociometer hypothesis, that is feedback from the environment influences self-evaluations and it is proposed that the quality of interactions would be expected to influence participants' evaluations of their social skills. Looking at this from another angle, improving one's perception of their social skills would then lead to enhanced quality of interactions. Nezelek's study found without any intervention the quality and frequency of interactions and social skills did not change for the group as a whole over a two year time period. This study proposes that as a result of training, these factors will change.

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<sup>1</sup> Some other texts to consider are: Pr 10: 11, 22:11, Ecc 3: 1 & 7, Mt 12:36-37 and Tit 2:7-8.

If what we are, communicates far more eloquently than whatever we say or do (Covey, 1989), then if we just change our behaviour without any internal change in character we will come across as insincere and sooner or later the contradiction will become apparent. Covey (1989) contrasts this with what he terms the *inside-out approach*. He describes the need to start with the inside part of ourselves, that is: our paradigms, character and motives as it is futile to try to improve relationships with others before improving ourselves. So will improving our interpersonal skills improve our relationships in the long term? After describing how to listen empathetically, Covey (1989) comments that skills are important in any habit but for skills in empathy to be effective they must come out of a sincere desire to understand, as people resent any attempts to be manipulated. Research from teaching doctors communication skills has shown both improvements in patient satisfaction (Roter et al., 1998) and the ongoing retention of skills (Jenkins and Fallowfield, 2002). Crabb (1999) urges Christian to get what training they can but also to realise that training without character will not do any good, but character plus training might add a little. He states, “Spiritual community develops only among people who seriously value personal holiness” (p.167). This paper seeks to evaluate a training program that addresses relationship skills from a Christian perspective.

### **Relationship Skills Defined**

Definitions of relational communication competencies abound and finding agreement is difficult (Greene and Burleson, 2003). While relationships are much more than just conversation, this paper limits itself to relationship expressed through dyadic interactions (conversation). What skills are needed to communicate well in conversation? Someone must initiate the conversation and if there is not a breadth of topics, conversation can dry up. Listening is just as important, if not more important than speaking. For conversation to move beyond the superficial empathy and connecting are required. These skills can be summarised as follows:

1. initiating conversation
2. listening
3. keeping conversation going
4. empathy
5. connecting.

These five skills (hereafter referred to as the interpersonal skills set) form the basis of this study.

### **Background to this Study**

This study sought to obtain information from 77 people who had completed a Christian leadership course. The *Caleb Leadership Institute* is a three week course in which participants have the option of registering for accreditation to complete four units towards Certificate IV in Christian Ministry. The course is run by Caleb Leadership Ministries, a Melbourne-based inter-denominational Christian leadership training group. Participants undertake three non-consecutive weeks of formal training as well as assignments between the different weeks. Those who completed the courses held in Melbourne in 2006, 2007 and 2008 were sent a questionnaire. Participants come from a variety of backgrounds, such as pastors, youth workers, school chaplains as well as business people and those working with non-profit organisations. A spectrum of denominations are represented, for example in 2007, participants came from Baptist, Brethren, Church of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist, Assemblies of God and Christian and Missionary Alliance. The first week of the course addresses relationship and communication skills while the later weeks focus on such areas such as: management, leadership, training and spiritual growth. The focus of the survey was the relationship training component. Previously participants had expressed that since undertaking the training they were more proactive in conversations generally and also moved into the spiritual domain more often (Anonymous, 2007, Woodall, 2006). This paper seeks to explore this anecdotal evidence in a structured way to answer the following questions:

1. How did participants rate their interpersonal skills prior to training?
2. How often did participants exercise their interpersonal skills prior to training?
3. Did participants rate their skills differently after training?
4. Did participants exercise their interpersonal skills more frequently after training?
5. Did participants have more conversations with a spiritual dimension after training?
6. Did participants offer to pray more with others after training?
7. What factors influence participants increasing the frequency of their spiritual conversations?
8. What factors influence participants increasing the frequency of their offers to pray with others?

### Designing the Questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed with the above questions in mind to determine participants' perceptions of their skills and the use of their skills prior to and after training. The skills to evaluate were derived from the five interpersonal skills listed above which were matched to the outcomes listed on the Caleb course outcomes web site (2008), as shown in Table 1. Questions were then formulated to ask participants about their skill level and application both prior to training and currently. Participants were asked to evaluate their skills using a five-point scale from poor to well developed. Participants rated their skills in listening, initiating conversation with a stranger, maintaining a conversation and connecting. The frequency in the application of skills was evaluated using a five-point scale from never to frequently. Applications included: initiating conversations with strangers and acquaintances, moving conversation beyond the superficial, encouraging others, discussing spiritual matters and offering to pray with someone. The application of offering to help someone if they expressed a need, was evaluated using a unique five-point scale from unlikely to highly likely. Table 2 illustrates the relationships between skills per the skills set, questions that addressed skills level and application of skills. Due to the small population and in order to maintain anonymity, demographic data was only collected on: age, gender, if in a ministry role (paid or voluntary), hours per week spent in that role and year the course was completed. The questionnaire was pre-tested prior to being administered.

<b>Table 1 Expected Outcomes Extracted from the Relationship Matters Course<sup>2</sup> and Links to the Expected outcomes of the <i>Relationship Matters</i> course (Caleb Leadership Ministries, 2008)</b>	<b>Interpersonal Skills Set and Number</b>
a. Skills that will help in forming better relationships with family, friends and workmates	The entire interpersonal skill set
b. How to initiate a new relationship at any time or place	1. Initiating conversation
c. Skill and confidence in the art of turning strangers into friends	5. Connecting
d. How to listen effectively and make conversation easy	3. Keeping conversation going, 2. Listening
e. To understand how to make your relationships more meaningful	5. Connecting
f. How to best encourage others	4. Empathy
g. How to pray with strangers you've just met	3. Listening, 4. Empathy, 5. Connecting
h. Ways to create opportunities to minister to others	3. Listening, 4. Empathy, 5. Connecting
<b>Interpersonal Skills Set</b>	

**Table 2 Skills and Application as Outlined in Questionnaire**

Skill Descriptor	How skill/application was addressed in the questionnaire	
	Skill Addressed (How would you rate your skills at ..?)	Application (How often do you/does?)
1 Initiating conversation	- Initiating a conversation with a	- Initiate a conversation with strangers

<sup>2</sup> The Caleb Leadership Institute Course incorporates this two-day stand-alone course.

	stranger	- Initiate a conversation with acquaintances
2 Listening	- Listening	(1)
3 Keeping conversation going	- Maintaining a conversation with either a stranger or an acquaintance	- Conversation move beyond the superficial (2)
4 Empathy		- Encourage someone - If a need is expressed, how likely would you be to offer help?
5 Connecting	- Connecting	- Conversation move beyond the superficial (2)
6. Spiritual	(3)	- Conversation move to a discussion of spiritual matters - Offer to pray with someone

Notes:

1. There was not an application question that addressed listening as it was difficult to ask "How often do you listen?"
2. The frequency of conversation moving beyond the superficial directly addresses connecting and it also implies conversation was maintained to move it to that place.
3. Conversations with a spiritual dimension were viewed as an application of skills.

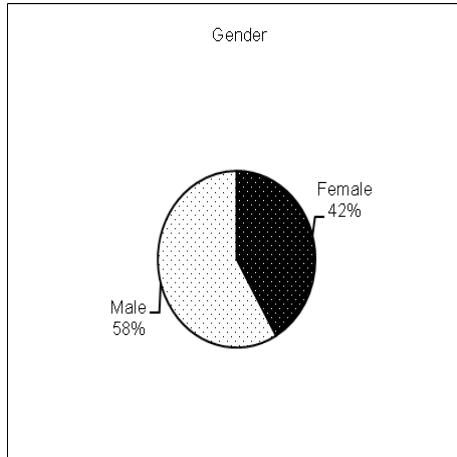
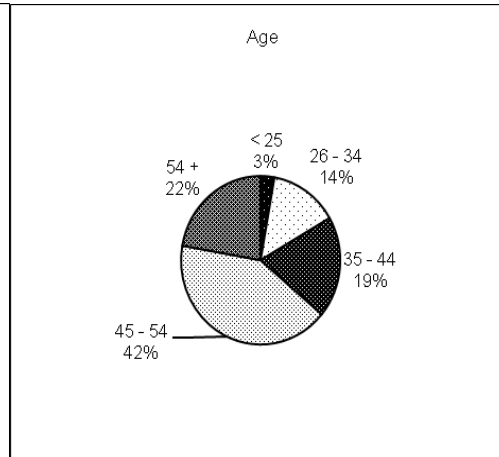
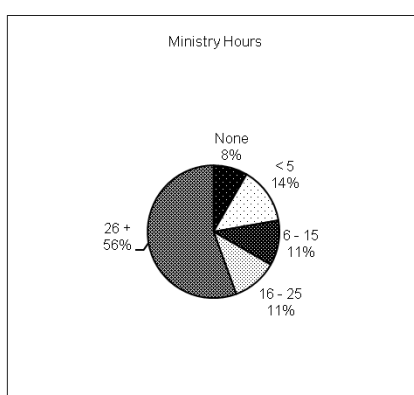
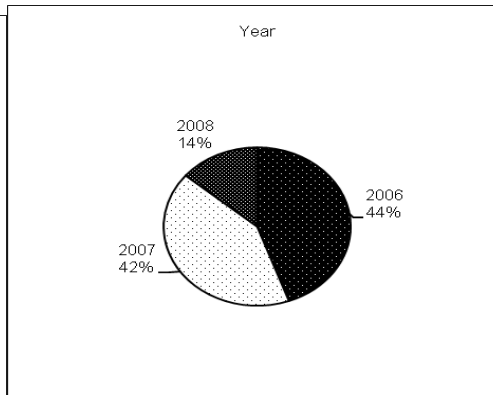
### Demographics of Population and Respondents

The population of 77 people who had completed the course over the last three years were sent a questionnaire, 36 were returned and this gives a response rate of 47%. Table 3 shows the population and response rates from participants over the prior three years broken down by gender.

**Table 3 Population and Response Rates By Gender**

	Population			Respondents		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
2006	11	16	27	64%	56%	59%
2007	10	24	34	60%	38%	44%
2008	6	10	16	33%	30%	31%
	27	50	77	56%	42%	47%

While there was a lower response rate from males, no segment was less than 30% and participants from earlier years participated at a higher rate than those from later years. The demographics of respondents are shown in Charts 1 to 4 below. Chart 1 shows the gender of respondents and Chart 2 shows the age of respondents when they completed the questionnaire. Chart 3 shows the hours (in a typical week) the respondents were engaged in ministry either in a paid or voluntary capacity. Fifty six percent of respondents spent the majority of their working week in a ministry role. Given the diverse background of those undertaking the course, respondents whom identify a ministry role were not necessarily involved in church pastoral work, as the population included people working in business, schools, aid organisations, health and consultancy. Those undertaking the course in 2006 represented the largest group of respondents (44%), while the smallest group was from those attending in 2008 (14%) (Chart 4).

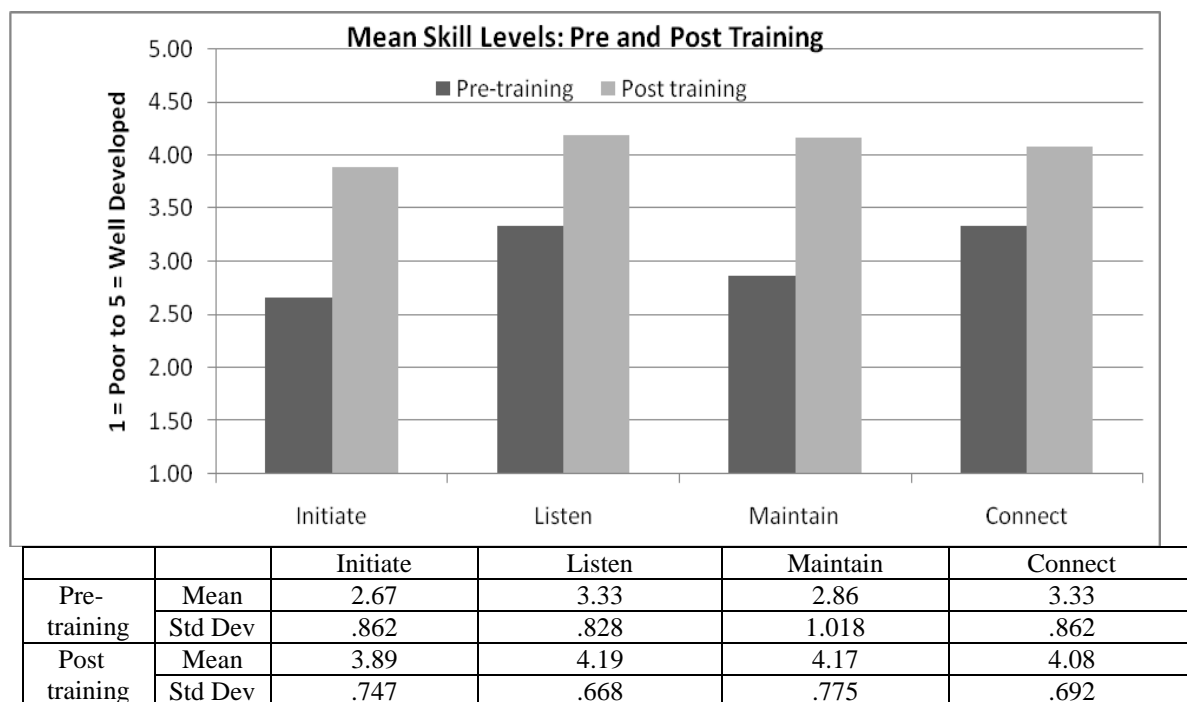
**Chart 1****Chart 2****Chart 3****Chart 4**

### Analysis and Discussion of the Data – Quantitative Analysis

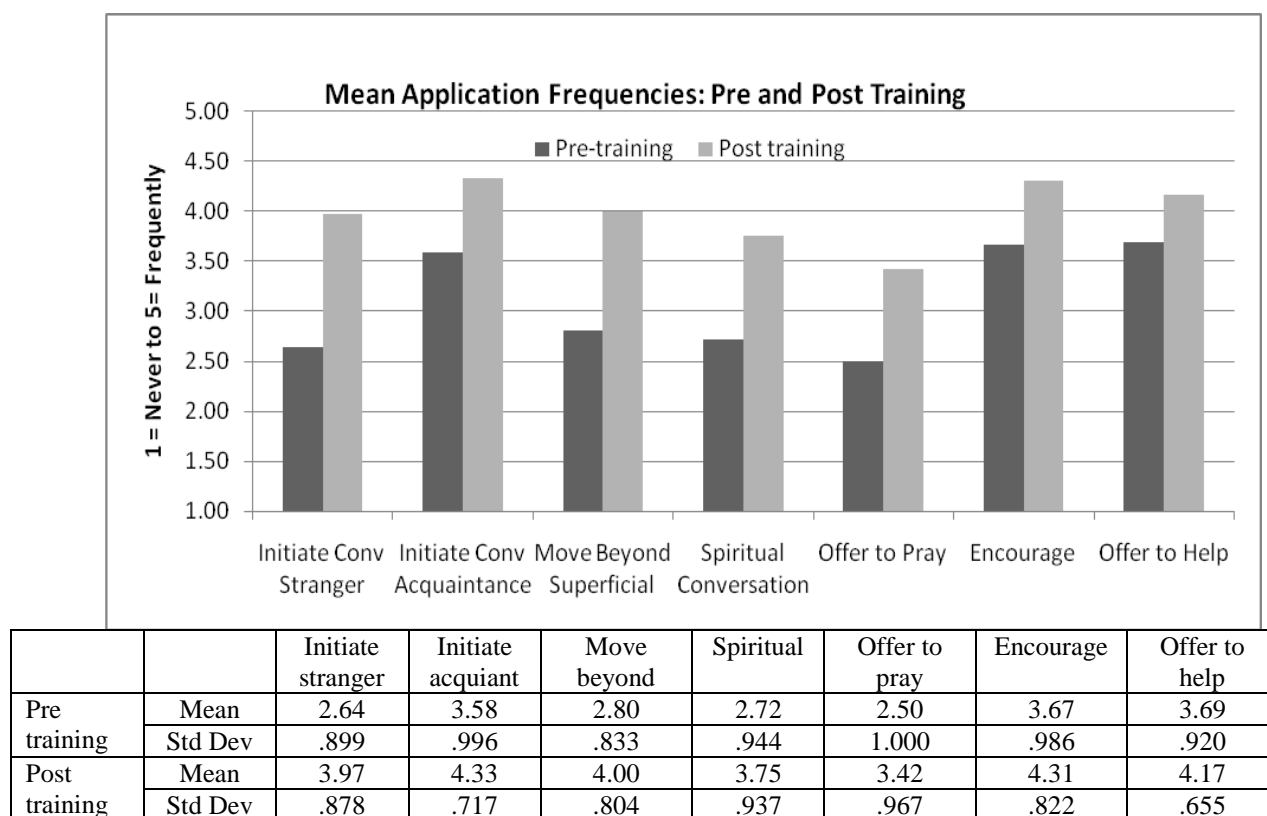
#### *Skills and Applications Pre and Post Training*

The survey questionnaire contained pre and post training self-perception questions for four skills and seven applications. Participants varied in the factors they reported as changing, while four participants only reported a change in one factor, five participants reported changes in all 11 factors. The average number of factors changing post training were 7.36. To determine if skills and the application of skills had changed significantly between pre and post training, the mean of each skill and application was calculated and the pre and post means for each were compared using paired samples t tests. This revealed significant changes for all skills and applications at the .01 level and these statistics are shown in Appendix 1. The results of these paired sample statistical tests indicate that the training led to significant increases in self-perceptions of skills as well as in the frequency of their application.

**Chart 5**



**Chart 6**

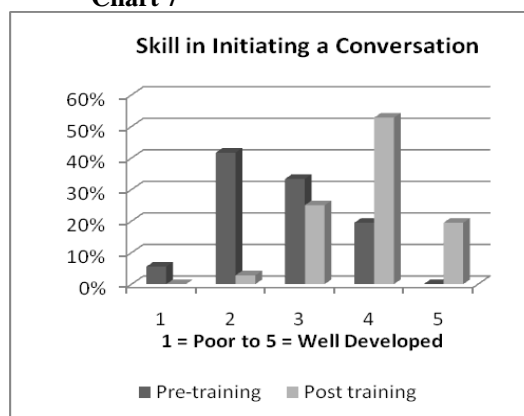


Mean levels of skills and applications before and after training are shown in Charts 5 and 6. From Chart 5 it can be seen that initiating a conversation with a stranger was the lowest skill prior to training and both listening and connecting were rated as the highest skill levels. Post training, listening was rated as the highest skill level, closely followed by maintaining a conversation. The skills that showed the greatest mean improvement post training were maintain a conversation (1.31) and initiate a conversation with a stranger (1.22).

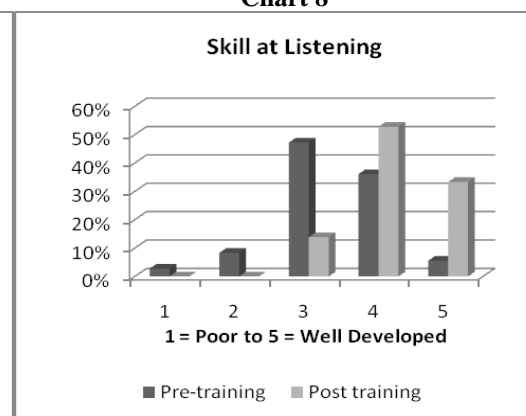
Chart 6 shows that the frequency of offering to pray with someone was the lowest application pre-training and offers to help and encourage were the highest pre-training. The highest mean application post training was initiate a conversation with an acquaintance followed by encouraging. The applications that had the greater increase in the mean frequency post training were initiate a conversation with a stranger (1.33) and move beyond the superficial (1.20). The likelihood of offering help if a need is expressed had the smallest increase (0.47) and this may be due to its relatively high pre-training frequency.

The standard deviations for each item were smaller post training and this indicates greater homogeneity of the respondents' ratings of skills and the frequency of their application post training. The skill of maintaining a conversation and the frequency of offering to pray had the greatest standard deviations pre-training (1.018 and 1.0 respectively), in contrast the skills of connecting, initiating a conversation with a stranger and the frequency of encouraging had the lowest standard deviations pre-training (0.862, 0.862 and .822). Post training the skill of connecting and the likelihood of offering help had the smallest standard deviations, being .692 and .655 respectively.

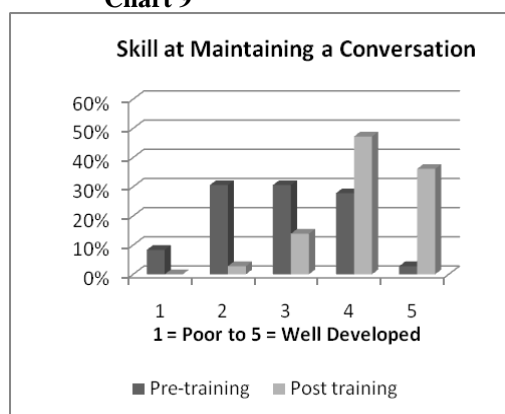
**Chart 7**



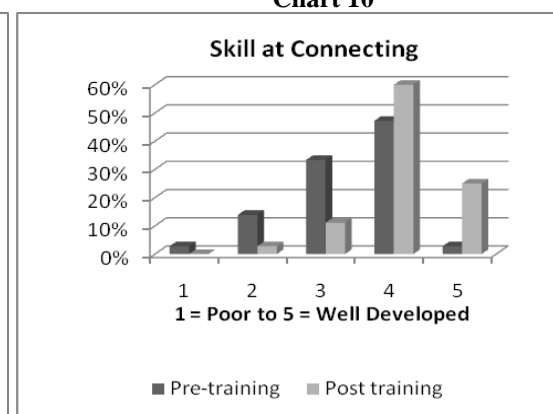
**Chart 8**



**Chart 9**



**Chart 10**



A review of the percentages of responses on each scale for the skills and applications reveals further insights into how they changed post training, this is shown in Charts 7 to 10. To describe this, the questionnaire's five-point scale for skills can be collapsed into a three-point scale so responses 1 and 2 are joined to get a new scale – below average, response 3 is specified as average and responses 4 and 5 are joined together to create above average. For listening pre-training 11% rated themselves below average and at the upper extreme only 5% as well developed. Post training all respondents rated themselves as average or above with 33% rating their listening skills as well developed. For maintaining a conversation pre-training only 30% rated their skills as better than average and post training the figure rose to 64% .With regard to connecting, 50% rated their skills as average or below pre-training, while after training only 14% regarded their skills average or below. Initiating a conversation with a stranger was the area with the greatest skill improvement for many as 20% rated their skills average or above pre-training and 97% rated their skills as that post training.

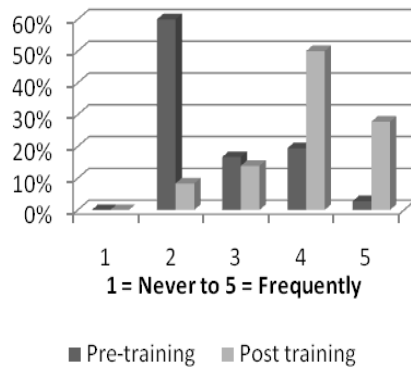
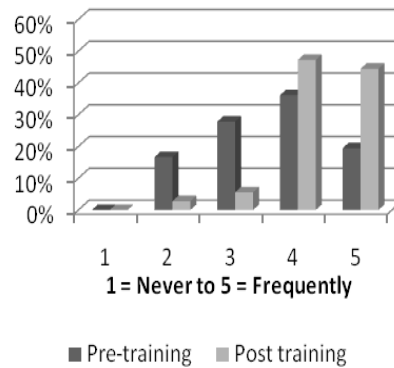
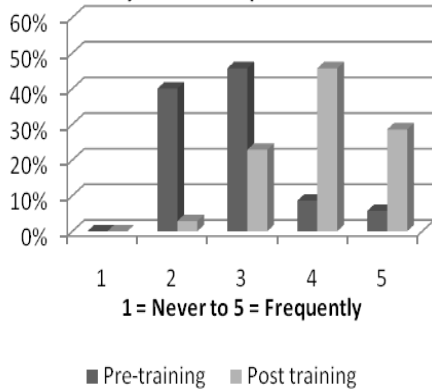
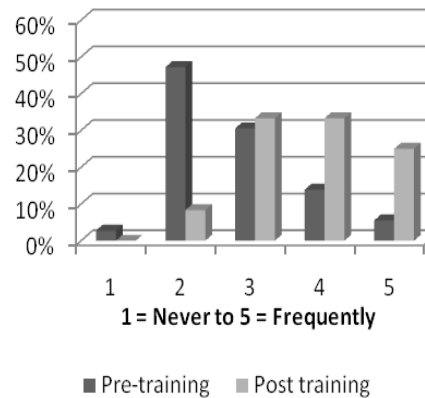
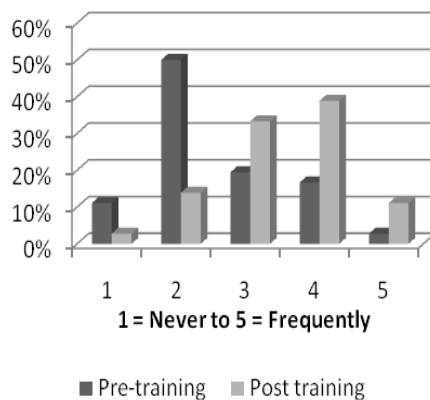
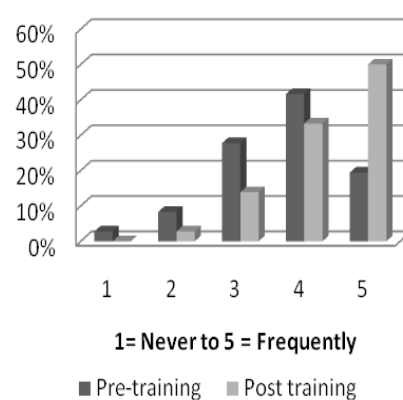
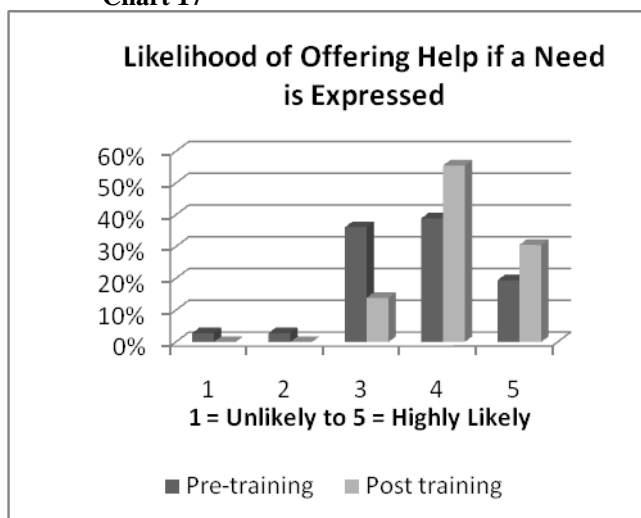
**Chart 11****Frequency of Initiating a Conversation with a Stranger****Chart 12****Frequency of Initiating a Conversation with an Acquaintance****Chart 13****Frequency of Conversation Moving Beyond the Superficial****Chart 14****Frequency of a Spiritual Conversation****Chart 15****Frequency of Offering to Pray****Chart 16****Frequency of Encouraging**

Chart 17



Application of skills shows similar movements to skills. For the following discussion the questionnaire's five-point scale will be collapsed into a three-point scale with responses 1 and 2 described as less than moderately, the mid-point 3 will be described as moderately while 4 and 5 will be described as more often than moderately. Prior to training 22% noted initiating conversation with a stranger occurred more often than moderately but post training this figure became 72%. For initiating a conversation with an acquaintance pre-training 52% reported this as occurring more often than moderately, while post training the figure was 91%. Only 14 % of participants reported conversation moving beyond the superficial more than moderately pre-training, this moved to 74% post training. Fifty percent of respondents stated spiritual conversations occurred less than moderately pre-training, however post training only 8% reported this. Offering prayer moderately or more was reported by 39% before the training and by 83% after the training. Encouragement and offering help when a need was expressed had the highest mean frequencies pre-training but still showed improvement, with 61% encouraging more than moderately pre-training and 83% post training. For the likelihood of offering help, 58% responded more than moderately pre-training and 86% responded that way post training.

#### ***Relationships Between Skills and Applications***

Correlation analysis was performed between all skills and applications for both pre and post measures. Pre-training, maintaining connecting and initiating a conversation with a stranger all correlated significantly at the .05 level with the frequency of a spiritual conversation (respectively .345, .468 and .585). Post training the skills of maintaining a conversation and connecting (respectively .610 and .562) showed increased correlation at the .01 level, while initiating a conversation decreased in correlation (.571) to the pre-training data. For offering to pray, pre-training, connecting was the only skill that showed significant correlation (.365 at the .05 level). Post training, the skills of maintaining, connecting and initiating a conversation with a stranger (respectively .4, .461 and .571) were all significantly correlated with offering to pray. The reason more skills are correlated with prayer post training may be explained in terms of a skill threshold and until skills move above a certain point then their impact on applications is not significant.

Regression analysis was performed for each application with the four skills as the independent variables for both pre and post data. Some differences were noted in the pre and post training results. Pre-training three skills were shown to be related to three applications (at the .05 level):

1. The skill of initiating a conversation with a stranger and the frequency of initiating a conversation with a stranger ( $R^2 = .433$ );
2. The skill of initiating a conversation with a stranger with the frequency of a spiritual conversation ( $R^2 = .352$ );
3. The skill of listening with the likelihood of offering help ( $R^2 = .199$ ).

Post training the following significant relationships (at the .05 level) were revealed from regression analysis:

1. The skill of initiating a conversation with a stranger and the frequency of initiating a conversation with a stranger ( $R^2 = .392$ );

2. The skill of maintaining a conversation and the frequency of conversation moving beyond the superficial ( $R^2 = .43$ );
3. The skill of initiating a conversation with a stranger and the frequency of offering to pray ( $R^2 = .323$ ).

### ***Relationships Between Changes in Skills and Applications***

As well as performing regression analysis on the pre and post actual data, it was also performed to build models for the change in frequency of spiritual conversations and the change in frequency of prayer. Factors related to the change in the frequency of spiritual conversation were change in connecting skills, change in the frequency of conversation moving beyond the superficial, and change in the likelihood of offering help. The model accounted for 72.9 % of the variation in the change in frequency of spiritual conversations. For the change in the frequency of offering to pray, change in the frequency of moving beyond the superficial and age accounted for 46.9% of the change in the frequency of prayer. As moving beyond the superficial seemed relevant, regression analysis was performed to derive a model here also. This model explained 84.9% of the change in moving beyond the superficial was due to the change in listening skills, the change in frequency of initiating a conversation with an acquaintance, the change in frequency of spiritual conversations and the change in frequency of encouraging.

Correlations of the change pre and post training were also examined to further explore relationships, these are shown at Appendix 2. All eleven change factors, other than change in the skill of maintaining a conversation were correlated to a change in the frequency of prayer. Three change correlations were greater than .7 (at the .01 level) being: change in the frequency of moving beyond the superficial correlated with the change in the frequency of spiritual conversation (.771), and also the change in the frequency of initiating a conversation with an acquaintance correlated with change in the frequency of moving beyond the superficial (.781). The third correlation was noted between change in initiating conversation skills and change in connecting skills (.704). Comparing the results of the regression analysis and the correlations indicates the inter-relatedness of factors showing that clusters of skills and applications come together to influence the frequency of the other applications.

### **Analysis and Discussion of the Data - Qualitative Analysis**

The questionnaire contained two open questions:

1. How has your relationship skills training changed the way you interact with others?
2. Why do you believe the relationship skills training has changed the way you interact with others?

Thirty two respondents answered the open questions. Fifteen participants commented specifically about increased levels of confidence in relation to either how or why their interactions with others had changed. Other themes to emerge were greater awareness of faith sharing opportunities and being more proactive and looking for opportunities to talk to others. Participants noted they were more others focused and interaction was easier as they were able to ask the questions that kept conversation flowing and also moved it beyond the superficial. Some commented they now know what to do if they are stuck for conversation. One respondent commented they do not feel so lonely anymore. In relation to why interactions with others have changed, one respondent commented, their heart was in the right place as they had a motivation to bless others and so motivation plus skill lead to the right sort of success. Focus on skills development and time to practise those skills were mentioned by several respondents as reasons why their interactions had changed. Some noted they identified with others and were more intentional in encouraging and showing people they were valued.

### **Limitations of This Study**

The population was small and although a good response rate was achieved, the sample was not large enough to perform factor or path analysis. All data was collected after the completion of the course and participants were asked to reflect on their skills and applications pre and post the training. As a varying time period had passed since respondents had done the training, other factors that had impacted their relationship skills and applications were not taken into account. Measuring pre-training skill levels before participants had actually taken the training and then measuring them again after the training may have revealed different results. There is however, an advantage when all measurement occurs post training as only after skills and applications have improved, participants may be able to adequately assess their pre-training skills as they recognise they have improved. Participants self-evaluated and different results may have been obtained if external evaluation had been used, however self-perceived

competence rather than actual competence is the basis for many of the most important decisions that people make concerning communication (McCroskey and McCroskey, 1986).

### **Conclusion**

Skills training did make a difference to participants' evaluations of their skills and the frequency that they applied their skills. All skills and applications increased significantly from those stated pre-training. Participants reported having spiritual conversations and offering to pray more frequently post training. While the mean level of all skills and applications increased post training the largest average increases were in the skills of initiating a conversation with a stranger and maintaining a conversation. The applications which had the greatest average increase in frequency were initiating a conversation with a stranger and moving beyond the superficial.

Regression analysis of changes showed significant relationships between several factors and, both changes in the frequency of conversation moving beyond the superficial and the frequency of spiritual conversations. Change in the frequency of conversation moving beyond the superficial could be explained in part by changes in listening skills and changes in the frequencies of initiating a conversation with an acquaintance, spiritual conversation and encouraging. Changes in the frequency of spiritual conversations could be explained to a large degree by changes in connecting skills and the frequency of conversation moving beyond the superficial and changes in the likelihood of offering help if a need was expressed. Changes in the frequency of prayer was partly explained by changes in the frequency of conversation moving beyond the superficial. Strong correlations between and within the various skills and applications demonstrates the interconnectedness of the various skills and their application. Differences in the significant regression items pre and post training may indicate threshold levels which when exceeded lead to changes in applications. The approach to relationship skills training in a Christian context taken in this study, did produce changes in both participants' skills and their application. Further research may identify factors that influence the effectiveness of such training and how they might be applied to other training situations to produce meaningful long-term change. In conclusion, for conversations about God, skills training can make a difference.

## Appendix 1

### Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t	d f	Sig (2 tailed)
Pair 1	Skill Initiating Pre	2.67	36	.862	-8.815	35	.000
	Skill Initiating Post	3.89	36	.747			
Pair 2	Skill Listening Pre	3.33	36	.828	-7.570	35	.000
	Skill Listening Post	4.19	36	.668			
Pair 3	Skill Maintaining Pre	2.86	36	1.018	-9.532	35	.000
	Skill Maintaining Post	4.17	36	.775			
Pair 4	Skill Connecting Pre	3.33	36	.862	-6.148	35	.000
	Skill Connecting Post	4.08	36	.692			
Pair 5	Freq Initiating Conv Stranger Pre	2.64	36	.899	-8.117	35	.000
	Freq Initiating Conv Stranger Post	3.97	36	.878			
Pair 6	Freq Initiating Conv Acquaint Pre	3.58	36	.996	-5.582	35	.000
	Freq Initiating Conv Acquaint Post	4.33	36	.717			
Pair 7	Freq Beyond Superficial Pre	2.80	35	.833	-8.182	34	.000
	Freq Beyond Superficial Post	4.00	35	.804			
Pair 8	Freq Spiritual Conv Pre	2.72	36	.944	-6.778	35	.000
	Freq Spritual Conv Post	3.75	36	.937			
Pair 9	Freq Prayer Pre	2.50	36	1.000	-6.068	35	.000
	Freq Prayer Post	3.42	36	.967			
Pair 10	Freq Encouragement Pre	3.67	36	.986	-4.600	35	.000
	Freq Encouragement Post	4.31	36				
Pair 11	Freq Offering Help Pre	3.69	36	.920	-3.848	35	.000
	Freq Offering Help Post	4.17	36	.655			

**Appendix 2 Correlations of Changes in Skills and Applications**

		Initiating conv skills	Listening skills	Maintain g conv skills	Connecti ng skill	Freq initiating conv wirh stranger	Freq initiating conv with acq	Freq beyond superfici al	Freq spiritual conv	Freq prayer	Freq encourag ing	Freq offering help
Initiating conv skills	Pearson Corr	1	.257	.483(**)	.704(**)	.639(**)	.639(**)	.539(**)	.596(**)	.480(**)	.284	.477(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.130	.003	.000	.000	.000	.001	.000	.003	.093	.003
	N		36	36	36	36	36	35	36	36	36	36
Listening skills	Pearson Corr		1	.231	.214	.198	.299	.588(**)	.420(*)	.443(**)	.160	.362(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.176	.209	.247	.077	.000	.011	.007	.350	.030
	N			36	36	36	36	35	36	36	36	36
Maintaing conv skills	Pearson Corr			1	.558(**)	.400(*)	.464(**)	.481(**)	.370(*)	.227	.374(*)	.321
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000	.016	.004	.003	.026	.183	.025	.056
	N				36	36	36	35	36	36	36	36
Connecting skill	Pearson Corr				1	.515(**)	.569(**)	.491(**)	.654(**)	.398(*)	.363(*)	.384(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.001	.000	.003	.000	.016	.030	.021
	N					36	36	35	36	36	36	36
Frequency initiating conv wirh stranger	Pearson Corr					1	.539(**)	.496(**)	.531(**)	.480(**)	.255	.486(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)						.001	.002	.001	.003	.133	.003
	N						36	35	36	36	36	36
Frequency initiating conv with acq	Pearson Corr						1	.781(**)	.633(**)	.440(**)	.457(**)	.349(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)							.000	.000	.007	.005	.037
	N							35	36	36	36	36
Frequency beyond superficial	Pearson Corr							1	.771(**)	.633(**)	.587(**)	.585(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)								.000	.000	.000	.000
	N								35	35	35	35
Frequency spiritual conv	Pearson Corr								1	.592(**)	.390(*)	.620(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)									.000	.019	.000
	N									36	36	36
Frequency prayer	Pearson Corr									1	.337(*)	.532(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)										.044	.001
	N										36	36
Frequency encouraging	Pearson Corr										1	.472(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)											.004
	N											36
Frequency offering help	Pearson Corr											1
	Sig. (2-tailed)											
	N											

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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## CHAPTER TEN

### An Exploration of Ken Wilber's Integral Post-Metaphysical Spirituality

by  
John O'Neill

#### Synopsis

I will give a brief history of the life and work, of Ken Wilber, especially his major works, the 5 stages of the development of his thought and the Integral Institute founded by him. This will include an exposition of Wilber's framework, his integral map, which includes 4 quadrants, states, and stages. I regard Wilber as one of the world's greatest living philosophers. He discusses the great chain of being as a description of levels of being (ontology) as well as levels of knowing (epistemology). He takes it that metaphysics assumed that these levels of reality existed and then went about using them to explain the world, with concepts such as God, the soul, liberation and suffering. He asserts that with the critical turn in postmodern philosophy these assumptions can no longer be defended. His claim is that an integral post-metaphysics can account for all the necessary ingredients of metaphysics without these assumptions and baggage.

For him the great chain (or great holarchy) of being and knowing was a way various philosophers and sages used to interpret their mystical experiences. For Wilber these levels of reality are not pre-existing structures waiting to be discovered but in part are co-structures of the knowing subject, of human consciousness. He claims that the verification methods for the existence of these structures of consciousness can no longer involve merely asserting their existence because tradition says so, nor base their existence on introspection or meditation. Instead they will need to involve some version of both modernity's demand for objective evidence and post-modernity's demand for inter-subjective grounding. Otherwise we have either merely a given mythology or the myth of the given (claims that pretend to be free from culture). He asserts that the structures of consciousness cannot be conceived as ones that are given eternally or timelessly. Rather, these post-metaphysical levels of being and knowing would have to be conceived as forms that have developed in time, evolution and history. He sees that the forms that have been around the longest are more rigid and set in their ways, while the newer and more emerging forms still leave plenty of room for creativity, freedom and novelty as Kosmic (his term) habits or memories. His appealing Grand Canyon analogy is relevant here. He provides an explanation for the existence of levels or structures of consciousness that relies minimally on metaphysical thinking. He does rely on some involuntary givens. I will provide a mild critique of his use of the term post-metaphysical. Wilber's thoughts about God, human development and evolution have much to contribute to our understanding of the relationships between God, freedom and nature.

#### Ken Wilber

Ken Wilber is a great American philosopher, mystic, and writer born in Oklahoma in 1949. After gaining a Master's degree in biochemistry in 1972, he left university to concentrate on his personal researches and writings. Since then, he has written about 25 books. His overall project has been to understand and bring together the best of all available human knowledge from the widest possible range of traditions and disciplines from traditional Eastern and Western religions, to modern science, to philosophy, history, psychology, sociology, and cultural studies into an overall integral framework, or map. He has spent many years practicing, experiencing and applying the meditative methods and psychological insights from some of these fields.

This paper is based mainly on his book "Integral Spirituality". His own development has gone through several stages:

Phase 1 – his insight into the spectrum of human consciousness

Phase 2 – an account of the cultural evolution of human development

Phase 3 - a deeper understanding of integral psychology

Phase 4 - his four quadrants

Phase 5 - post-metaphysical spirituality.

One name for his model is the AQAL framework – which stands for all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states, all types.

He puts forward that every human being, object, event or occasion can be considered as in the light of his 4 quadrants, the interior and exterior of the individual and collective. He further has it that each

quadrant has both an inside and an outside, generating 8 zones, perspectives and methodologies, within which can be brought most mot forms of human knowledge. This is his integral methodological pluralism.

A key component of his thought is his idea of stages of development, which he also calls levels or structures. He has combined several conceptions of this e.g. Jean Gebser's, into 10 levels, based on the colours of the rainbow:

1. infra-red – archaic, sensori-motor
2. magenta - magical – animistic
3. red – egocentric, power, magic-mythic
4. amber – mythic, ethnocentric, traditional
5. orange -rational, world-centric, pragmatic, modern
6. green – pluralistic multicultural, postmodern
7. teal – beginning integral, low vision-logic, systemic
8. turquoise – global mind, mature integral, high vision-logic, higher mind
9. indigo – trans-global,illuminated mind
10. violet - meta-mind, over-mind, (Wilber, 2006. P.251)

Another key feature of his model is that of states of consciousness, which are temporary, such as waking, dreaming and deep sleep. He explores how states and stages are related. Wilber now has an expanding Integral Institute, which actively promotes his integral vision through a strong on-line presence, seminars and conferences. This institute encourages the application of his framework in a wide range of fields.

He defines metaphysics as the branch of philosophy that deal with issues of ontology (what is being or reality) and epistemology (how do we know it). He asserts that it started with Aristotle and ended with Kant with the latter's critical philosophy replacing ontological objects with structures of the subject. This means that we do not perceive objects in a realistic, given fashion: but rather structures of the knowing subject that then appear to belong to the object but really don't: instead they are co-creations of the knowing subject. Various a priori categories of the knowing subject help to fashion or construct reality as we know it. Reality is not a perception but at least partly a conception. He describes metaphysics as the type of thinking that can't figure this out, that accepts the myth of the given (Wilber 2006, p. 231).

For spirituality this means that metaphysics needs to be either thrown out or at least completely re-thought. He reckons that the traditional categories of metaphysics – including God, immortality and the soul, can't stand up to the scrutiny of critical thinking , at least in their pre-critical forms. He also describes metaphysics as assertions without evidence (Wilber 2006, p.232). Wilber claims that the metaphysical systems of the great wisdom traditions typically involve something like the Great Chain of Being - the idea that there are levels of being and knowledge – “such as the levels of Plotinus, which became the default levels of Neo-Platonism throughout the West, from Dionysius to Eckhart, the Sephirot of Kabbalah and the 8 stages of consciousness of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism” (Wilber 2006, p.238).

He claims that “the traditions believed that the Great Chain was given all at once,and thus exists, in its entirety right now, even if parts of it are not realised or awakened to. This understanding becomes unraveled, when it is realised that the Great Chain actually unfolded over vast stretches of astronomical and geological time”(Wilber, 2006, P. 238).

For Wilber:

the lower 4 or 5 levels of the Great Chain are usually given as matter, sensation, perception, concepts, impulse,emotion, symbols, concepts etc. but those levels actually evolved over 14 billion years: matter arose with the big Bang, sensation with the first life forms, impulse with the first reptiles, emotion with the first mammals, symbols with the first primates, concepts with the first humans (Wilber, 2006. p.238).

Wilber (2006, p.238) credits Arthur Lovejoy for pointing out that a way of salvaging the great chain of the western traditions is to say that the levels of the great chain aren't given all at once but actually have unfolded over long periods of time.

If we get rid of the metaphysical interpretations, Wilber contends, the levels of being or reality and knowledge or self-hood ( eg the 10 Sephirot, the 7 chakras) need to be converted from preexisting ontological levels or planes of reality into into levels that have themselves evolved. He agrees with Charles Pierce's concept of natural laws as being more like natural habits. Wilber calls them Kosmic

(Kosmos being his term for the totality of manifest reality including matter, body, mind, soul and spirit) habits or Kosmic memories, which is how the levels of being and knowledge (of being and knowing) can be re-interpreted. When they first emerged, the form they took was relatively open and creative but once a particular response occurred time and time again, it settled into a Kosmic habit harder and harder to shake, a “morphogenetic” field using Sheldrake's term. Wilber (2006, p.239) uses the levels of value structures, as an example.

About 50,000 years ago the magenta value structure (magical-animistic) was about the highest that evolution had evolved at that time. But some highly evolved individuals began to push into higher and creative modes of being and knowing, and they began responding from a higher level of complexity and consciousness. As more and more individuals shared these responses, the red value structure (egocentric, power) began to be laid down as a Kosmic habit. The more it was laid down, the more of a fixed habit it became.. Around 10,000 BC, as the red value structure dominated humanity's responses, a few heroic individuals began pushing into a response that involved more consciousness, more awareness, more complexity, - and so the amber value structure (absolutistic, ethnocentric) began to be laid down for the first time.

He (2006, p.239) goes on to explain how, in terms of world views, the move from red magic to amber mythic involved the creation of extensive systems of mythology, that allowed the creation of much more complex social systems. Magic could only socially unite humans based on blood lineage and kinship ties but one of the functions of myth is that, in claiming to be descended from a god not of blood and genetics but of values and beliefs mythology could unite vast numbers of humans and non-kinship tribes if they all adopted belief in the same mythic God in which everyone can believe even if they are not blood related.

Around 6,000 years ago, humans had evolved from archaic ape to magenta magic to red power to amber mythic – membership. These levels of consciousness or levels of knowing and being would have been mistaken by great chain theorists as fixed and given.. Everyone is born at square one and has to develop through these now “fixed” levels, fixed only because they have settled into Kosmic habits. All that would be required to account for the creation of ever-higher levels of being and knowing is a tendency towards growth or complexity - which Wilber also calls eros. He quotes Whitehead's “creative advance towards novelty”. This minimalist metaphysics can generate a great chain and all that goes with it without having to postulate preexisting independent ontological structures.

He (2006, p.240) then explains that

after this, a few creative and heroic individuals would be pushing into orange rationality and a bit beyond. But none of these levels are Platonic givens, they are not preexisting ontological structures in some eternally given Great Chain – they evolved and were laid down over time and became Kosmic habits of humanity, habits available to all future humans – in fact handed to all future humans as deeply set habits that, for all practical purposes, are then fixed (as Kosmic habits, not as Platonic archetypes) and thus levels that, to a Great Chain theorist writing 2000 years ago, would appear eternally given. No metaphysical baggage, no archetypes, no ontological planes of reality, no independent levels of being that are lying around waiting to be seen by humans - none of that is needed in order to get the same results and explain the existence of these fixed levels. Moreover, the levels are then independent of any particular human that is born and thus they cannot be reduced to psychology.. Everything that is required can be derived post-metaphysically.

Around the same period (6,000 ago), human beings also “had waking, dreaming and deep sleep states of consciousness, which could be peak- experienced in various forms of mysticism - nature, deity, formless and non-dual” (Wilber 2006, p. 241). Although these states are ever-present, humanity as a whole seemed to learn to master them in roughly the same order as meditators do today; moving from exterior gross immersion (paganism) to deity mysticism, to formless mysticism to ever-present non-dual. During the great mythic (amber) era around the world, humanity as a whole was exploring the heavenly realms of the subtle dream worlds: humanity not only moved from red power tribes to amber mythic -membership societies structurally, their most evolved religious figures moved from states of nature pagan mysticism to interior deity mysticism and prophetic vision (Wilber 2006, p.241). Somewhere around the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC the next major level of consciousness, orange, began to that emerge as the creative response to problems that could not be solved at amber. While orange was being laid down as a Kosmic habit, or the sedimentation of creatively emergent choices of humanity, in the face of new challenges, humanity as a whole was also pushing its mastery of states from subtle-dream to causal-formless. This combination of world-centric structures and causal state access caused a

worldwide explosion of growth in consciousness, known as the Axial Age, epitomised by both the Buddha and Christ, new realizations as humanity continued its creative evolution. Nowadays, 3 or 4 new major universal structures have been laid down since then (orange, green, teal and turquoise). Wilber claims that there are at least 3 or 4 structures/stages/ levels higher than turquoise. These are not preexisting ontological or metaphysical structures already existing somewhere, but are the first very tentative structures being laid down by highly evolved individuals pushing into new territory – and co-creating them as they do. Wilber thinks that only a few thousand people worldwide have started moving into these higher structures. Wilber suggests that if you think of these structures /levels as Kosmic habits, then the older the level, the more deeply it has become etched into the Kosmos. I like his analogy of the Grand Canyon, mainly because I've been there and seen its magnificence.

It is so old that it is cut several kilometres deep, which would be like the red level, which began around 50,000 years ago and is cut very deeply into the Kosmos. Amber, which began round 10,000 years ago, would be a Kosmic canyon maybe 500 metres deep. Orange which began around the Axial period but really flowers with the Western Enlightenment, is perhaps 100 metres deep. Green, which began in the 60s as a significant percentage of the population, is only 10 metres deep. Teal and turquoise, are really just being laid down, and are maybe 1 metre deep. Structures higher than turquoise are like people dragging sticks across the ground, starting to cut Kosmic habits into the universe., which will begin as they all did, as small trickles, then small streams then raging rivers cutting canyons into the Kosmos, canyons which are then actual structures in the Kosmos (and then appear as ontologically preexisting. But today, structures higher than turquoise are indeed like people dragging sticks across the ground. Indigo is maybe 3 or 4 centimetres deep and ultraviolet is little more than a scratch on the surface (Wilber 2006, p.241).

As more people push into post – turquoise levels of development, those levels,/structures will be created or enacted and laid down; those structures which mesh with reality at that altitude will be selected and carried forward, and then increasingly sedimented as sturdy Kosmic habits which will then be, in effect, given structures of consciousness, whose deep structures are no longer negotiable by individuals. We can, in other words, generate all of the essential ingredients of the great metaphysical systems but with little of their metaphysical baggage.

He defines enlightenment as being one with emptiness and form (a classic Buddhist definition). He asks how this is compatible with evolution. He (2006, P.247) goes on to define Enlightenment as “the realisation of oneness with all of the major states and stages that are in existence at any given time” in history. If this is so then to be fully enlightened today would be to be one with at least the indigo stage and with non-dual states. He considers that once one identifies with all states and all available stages, then one stands at the leading edge pushing into new and higher territory, tetra-creating as one goes along.

He considers that that

someone today who is at mythic – membership amber, even though they might have fully mastered gross, subtle, causal and non-dual states, would not be fully enlightened. Horizontally, yes; Vertically, no. The world has moved on; Spirit has unfolded more of its own being; there are more structure – stages one must be one with in today's world in order to be fully enlightened (Wilber 2006, p.247).

He puts this in other words –

the same structure that 6000 years ago could be said to be fully enlightened, is no longer so today, somebody at mythic-membership today is no longer one with the totality of all form, because there are structures over the head of amber, such as orange, green, teal and turquoise. Those are now real,” ontological”, actually existing structures in the Kosmos, as real as if they were Platonic eternal givens, (except that they aren't). If a person has not transcended and included those levels in their own development, then there are major levels of reality that an individual at amber is not one with (Wilber 2006, p. 247).

And yet back in the mythic/amber era, the same realisation was indeed oneness with the entire Kosmos and thus counted as full enlightenment. So this definition of Enlightenment “can explain enlightenment today as well as yesterday; it allows for a timeless component, but also includes a temporal, evolving, historical component. It honors the timeless, unchanging, ever-present, transcendent aspect of God or Spirit as well as the temporal evolution of the ever fuller and fuller world of form, the immanent Spirit in action” (Wilber 2006, p. 247 ).

There are other aspects of his post-metaphysical spirituality not covered in this paper, except for the following brief mentions. He gives an account of how the meaning of spiritual statements is enacted

by injunctions, experienced and then confirmed or validated with what he calls communities of the adequate (the three strands of good knowledge acquisition). One of his main points is that the meaning of a statement is the means of its enactment. He advocates an integral life practice, bringing together various practices for exercising body, mind and spirit, in self, nature and culture. He also gives an account of how the Kosmic address of an object or statement can be located by specifying the altitudes and perspectives of both the perceiver and the perceived.

I have some criticisms of his post-metaphysical spirituality. He gives too narrow a definition of metaphysical philosophy and contemporary debates in this field. His system has a number of metaphysical elements e.g. his involutory givens, which he illustrates in the following myth: As Spirit throws itself outward (which is called involution) to create this universe, it leaves traces of its Kosmic exhalation. These traces provide little in the way of actual contents, forms or levels but rather a vast morphogenetic field of potential that exerts a gentle pull (or agape), towards higher, wider occasions. This shows up in the universe as a drive towards greater unity and wholeness, through evolution, called eros. He has several other involutory givens, e.g. mathematical laws, which you must have before you have anything else, and which must have existed at or before the Big Bang. His system may be minimally metaphysical but it is still more metaphysical than he acknowledges. His suggested post-metaphysics is too specific, technical and abstruse to gain general acceptance, although he does provide a strong theoretical foundation for his approach. It also goes too far in its claims. For Wilber, the great metaphysical schemes of the world's great wisdom or religious traditions held that reality is multi-dimensional with levels of being ('levels of reality') and levels of knowing ('levels of self-hood'), some of which are beyond the ordinary, empirical, terrestrial physical plane of existence (literally meta-physical'). He argues that this idea badly needs re-construction. This is not to say that there are no trans-physical realities but that most of the items taken to be trans / meta-physical by the ancients, have at the very least physical correlates. When modernity discovered this, it rejected the great wisdom traditions almost entirely. It collapsed the levels of reality into just levels of knowing or self-hood so that items previously thought to be levels of metaphysical reality e.g. angels, devas, were said to be just psychological emotions. Modernity also reduced the levels of self-hood to just that of the body, or physical realities. Modernity and post-modernity threw out the baby with the bathwater, by throwing out the enduring truths of the wisdom tradition.

He re-constructs the idea of "levels of reality" not as ontological levels of preexisting being but as co-created or co-constructed by the knowing subject. Levels of reality are actually constructions of the levels of self-hood (and knowing). There are no celestial realms etc as levels "up there" or out there". Rather these levels of reality are intimately tied to levels of self, consciousness or knowing (Wilber 2006, p.272). He explains that

those levels of self-hood are not preexisting levels, but rather ones that have evolved. But because they have evolved for the species, they are not merely levels of psychology, because once a level has evolved, it is a very real structure existing in the universe, independently of any particular human and becomes something that every human develop through. At that point it takes on all the ontological status required by any spiritual philosophy. So these "levels of self-hood" are not merely "within" one. They are, rather, tetra-enacted structures of the Kosmos so that both "up there" and in "in here" become outdated metaphors (Wilber 2006, p.272).

He goes on to argue that

in the metaphysical traditions, an object existed in or on a plane or level of reality. So that the referent of a spiritual statement was a reality existing in one of those planes or realms. The subject or knower existed on a corresponding level of self-hood and simply perceived the preexisting object. But in post metaphysics, after Kant, objects exist in world-spaces that are enacted in part by the knowing subject, and both subject and object of any variety are defined by evolutionary or developmental altitude (not preexisting ontology) and the perspective doing the enacting (not a perception of epistemology). Nor are these structures merely subjective, because once evolved, they are trans-individual or collective Kosmic habits, which push against any human psychology and guide its growth. Both "up there" and "in here" disappear into tetra-enacted structures of the Kosmos (Wilber 2006, p.272).

Wilber aims to bring together the best of pre-modern (traditional) wisdom, modernity and post-modernity. From pre-modernity he brings the wisdom of the great chain of being and knowledge, from modernity he brings the insights of science, objectivity and the need for knowledge verification. From post-modernity, he brings the insight that reality is not just given as an objective fact, but always appears as perspectives which must be interpreted and in that sense reality is co-created according to the level of understanding of the perceiver.

He introduces the concept of the 1-2-3 of God, that God can be approached from 3 perspectives: God as 1st Person as the Great I Amness, the Supreme Identity, God as 2<sup>nd</sup> Person, as the Great Thou, which can be loved and worshiped, and God as 3<sup>rd</sup> Person as the entire Kosmos. He sees God or Spirit as both beyond all manifestation, and as acting in and through all manifestation, particularly through the evolving universe. He has a dual notion of freedom as being both the formless, un-manifest aspect of reality beyond limitation and suffering, and as increasing within manifestation as consciousness develops, at the leading edge of evolution. He sees Spirit as present in and working through nature, as the entire Kosmos. He supports a very crucial role for religions as the only human institutions capable of carrying human beings on a kind of conveyor belt from birth to the higher stages of development, if only they would remove some of the barriers which keep their adherents at certain levels.

Wilber concludes that humanity may be entering the beginning of a post-metaphysical, integral age. He claims that when one considers what an integral post-metaphysics discloses, it becomes clear that most things written about spirituality are fairly meaningless. He thinks they are mostly a series of ontic assertions about spiritual realities, without injunctions, enactments, practices, perspectives or the Kosmic address of either the perceiver or the perceived. He argues that they are meaningless metaphysics, with both myths of the given and many claims without justification.

He goes on to posit that many of the spiritual realities referred to by these writers have the requisites for converting them from meaningless metaphysics to meaningful post-metaphysics, which can assist men and women to explore our deepest and highest potentials. He and colleagues associated with the Integral Institute are working on refitting and updating spiritual traditions and philosophies in a more integral direction (Wilber 2006, p.273).

What I have presented here is just a brief taste of some of the richness, depth and complexity of Wilber's thought. There are many other aspects which I could have introduced and elaborated on. My main aim in presenting this paper is to make the case that Wilber is an important philosopher, worth paying serious attention to. He has much to contribute to a more integral understanding of how reality works and hangs together, including the topic of this conference, "God, Freedom and Nature".

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### Evil – Its Beginning and End

By

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In this paper, I argue for some adjustments of the propositions constituting the Problem of Evil. I argue that the existing explanations for the existence of evil fail, and offer an alternative resolution of it that is based on the tenet that the existence of evil was not explicitly intended by God. I argue a position on how and why evil came into existence, and on the reason for the existence of the physical creation. I then attempt to explicate evil's appearance and defeat.

#### Introduction

The Problem of Evil admits of a number of subtle variations. I shall be arguing the Moral Problem of Evil, with Christian presuppositions. I shall be presenting a theodicy — an account of why evil exists. The implications for the Logical Problem of Evil will be apparent. Having concluded that the physical creation exists to address the existence of evil, I shall argue that Satan expected to succeed in defining a domain apart from God, and that God countered by extending His love to even His enemies.

I shall assume, herein, a libertarian view of free will. It seems to me that a deterministic conception of free will has two significant implications. One is that the acts that we regard as evil are not punishable, since punishment implies culpability, and a machine is not culpable. The other is that, given that human beings are body and spirit to deny that it is possible for them to have free will would imply that God cannot both have free will and interact with the physical realm. Beyond that, I shall leave it as a stipulation.

#### *PART 1. EVIL AND THE END OF THE WORLD*

##### *The Problem of Evil*

Our starting-point, then, is the following premises.

- God exists.
- God is omnipotent (all-powerful).
- God is perfectly good.
- Evil exists.

##### **“God is Good.” → “God is Holy.”**

There is the question of whether the tenet that God is good implies that He is proactively opposed to evil. It is generally accepted that it does not (see, e.g., Moreland and Craig 2003, p538, citing Plantinga, McCloskey 1974, p7, citing Plantinga) — that additional premises are required. There are many things that God has done, that one might consider to be evil, at face value — such as instructing one of His prophets to marry a prostitute (Hosea 1: 2, 3: 1). I venture that the Biblical view of such things is that they issue from God's holiness. This is strikingly different from how God would behave, if He was merely good, and not holy. I shall short-circuit the above debate, then, by conceding that it is in the nature of God to be proactively opposed to evil — to be holy. Arguably, God could not be holy but not good. I shall thus substitute, “God is holy.”, for, “God is good.”, and leave the latter as understood.

##### **“God is Omnipotent.”**

The point of the premise, “God is omnipotent.” is that God is definitely able to destroy evil. Consider, however: if there is a being who is evil... and God possesses the power to annihilate that being, or to make it do the right thing... and God is motivated to do that because He is holy... but God has no authority over that being... then God acting against that being would be wrong. Of course, we know that God does, indeed, have authority over all beings. My point is that this is not expressed (adequately) by the proposition that He is omnipotent. The conclusion that evil would not exist requires the further tenet that God be absolutely sovereign. This is accepted as true of God, by Christians. The premises of The Problem of Evil — given the modifications for which I have argued — are thus as follows.

- God exists.

- God is absolutely sovereign over all that exists.
- God is omnipotent.
- God is holy.
- Evil exists.

The idea of the Problem of Evil is that, if the premise is included, that evil exists, the description of God to which Christians subscribe is incoherent; God is physically (so to speak) and morally able to annihilate evil, and He necessarily purposes this, but He has not.

### Accepted Theories

Let us begin with the existing popular explanations for the existence of evil. Evil is intrinsically evil, by definition. If one defines evil in such a way that it is not intrinsically evil — such as by appealing to social convention — it ceases to be what we would call evil. I submit that God considers evil to be intrinsic, by definition. Arguably, if evil has intrinsic disvalue, it must have superior instrumental value — otherwise, it would not exist... the only question being what its instrumental value is. I venture that this represents the standard Christian view.

I shall argue that this approach is untenable. There are two widely-accepted theories.

#### (1) The Free Will Defence (or “God Wants to be Loved”)

One theory runs as follows. I present it as a theodicy, with an opening premise that I have heard it from many lay Christians. Beyond that, it is the *Free Will Defence* (see Moreland and Craig 2003, p539-541, citing Plantinga).

- God desires to be loved.
- The capacity for genuine love requires free will. (A sophisticated analogue of a doll that says, “I love you.”, when you squeeze it will not do.).
- Free will, in turn, implies the possibility of evil.
- Thus, in creating beings with free will, so that they might love Him, God runs a risk that evil will result.
- God — desiring to be loved — chose to run this risk, and, unfortunately, evil did result.

I suggest that this line of thought fails to accommodate the next stage of human existence. Heaven involves beings who have free will, and who love God, but who will never sin. Conversely, on Earth almost everything is the same, but we do sin. The one difference that this theory entertains is that we will have been delivered from our sinful natures through death. However, sin entered the spiritual creation through a being who (I venture) did not already have a sinful nature, and Adam and Eve did not have sinful natures before the Fall. The position in question maintains simply that the existence of free will implies the possibility of evil. This would, in turn, imply that evil might arise in Heaven... which I suggest to be an unacceptable implication.

#### (2) The Means-to-an-End View

The root premise in the other widely-known view is that God is absolutely sovereign over everything. It follows (it is argued) that, if evil is to exist, God must have explicitly intended it. The question, then, is why. It is necessary to draw a distinction between this tenet and the idea that God explicitly and directly wills evil events (by which I mean the idea that God does evil), as the latter would be unacceptable. Free will is thus included in the picture, although it plays only an incidental role. I shall treat C. S. Lewis’s defence, in *The Problem of Pain*, of this view. We begin with a sinful human being. We observe that this person builds character through enduring suffering (Romans 5: 3-5). In other words, evil has a beneficial effect. However, if this is only that it purges one of evil (which seems to be argued by C. S. Lewis in *The Problem of Pain* — Lewis, pp95, pp105-107, 114, 115, p118), this would not explain why God brought evil into the picture in the first place. In fact, the Bible tells us that even Jesus was made, “perfect through suffering” (Hebrews 2: 10). Thus, there is the intrinsic disvalue of evil, and the instrumental value of character-building; the latter must outweigh the former.

Consider, however: what does the work is not being evil oneself, but merely suffering the effects of evil... actually, just suffering. Evil is only involved if suffering requires evil agency, or is intrinsically evil. If suffering is not intrinsically evil, and it requires a moral agency, the latter is not implied to be evil. The scenario would then fail to account for the existence of evil. Thus, suffering would have to be intrinsically evil.

We have observed that this account involves weighing intrinsic disvalue against instrumental value. If suffering is intrinsically evil, the instrumental value must outweigh this, too. It follows that a being who inflicts suffering, under this system, in order to bring about the benefit is not implied to be doing evil; that being is doing something that involves an ethical conflict, but is the right thing to do morally.

Thus, again, no evil agency is implied. By the same token, if God were to take it upon Himself to inflict the required suffering, this would not count as an evil act, which makes this a real alternative. Conversely, there is a relevant difference between God inflicting suffering Himself, and God bringing autonomous evil agency into being to achieve the same outcome. Arguably, God would intend the same amount of suffering across the two alternatives. The only moral difference, then, is the presence of evil agency. I suggest, then, that God would necessarily choose the alternative without this, which would leave evil unexplained.

### **The Source of Evil**

I venture that the notion that God explicitly intended that evil exist is untenable, for two reasons. One is that it is radically opposed to the nature of God — specifically, His holiness. The other is that the entire history of the universe, as the Bible tells it, is about God getting rid of evil, at fantastic expense to himself. Conversely, nothing exists that was not created by God, or created by a being who was created by God. Of course, evil is not a thing; it is action (or thought) with some particular characteristics, performed by a personal being (viz., with free will). If God is to create personal beings, He can neither know nor control the immediate moral outcome. It is a matter of historical fact that He did create such beings, and that evil did follow.

It would be possible to have a rich discussion about whether or not God should not have created personal beings, given the possibility of evil. However, my considered opinion is that, in the end, it boils down to two points. One is that the decision to create or not would have been a decision of the sort with which we are all familiar, where the outcome, once known, would have made the decision simple, but, nonetheless, the original decision itself is a step into the dark. The other is that it seems to me that it genuinely was (that is, would have been) fantastically unlikely that any being would be [with apologies] stupid enough to swap a life of perfect fulfilment and bliss for war with an absolute God. If my neighbour decides to work on the engine of his V8 just as I lie down for my Sunday afternoon nap, I will feel annoyed, but the concept of me punishing him is inapplicable. The same applies (hypothetically) to God. If He were to create a being, and to give it complete autonomy, in the strongest sense — to set it free — He would thereby forfeit the right to punish it. God has not done this; He has created beings with free will, but He has retained authority over them. So we come to my theodicy. The following is not an argument, but merely a description of an argument.

### **When Did Evil Come into Existence?**

The Bible tells us that things are running according to a plan of God that goes back to *before* the creation of this world (John 17: 24, Acts 2: 23, Rom 8: 29, 1 Cor. 2: 7 – 8, Eph 1: 4 – 5, Eph 3: 8 – 9, Eph 3: 10 – 11, 2 Tim 1: 9 – 10, 1 Pet 1: 20, Rev. 13: 8, Rev 17: 8). This plan revolves around the Cross, and the Cross was the addressing of evil. It follows that evil existed before the world was created. Since God's plan mentions evil, it must have been formulated after evil came into being. Thus, the chronology is as follows: • God created Satan, • Satan fell, • God formulated a Plan, • God created the world.

### **The Timing Viewpoint**

This gives rise to two questions: “Why did God not instantaneously destroy evil at the moment of its coming-into-existence?”, and (given that He did not), “Why — given the presence of evil — did God create the world?”. We will consider the possibility of a connection between evil and the creation from the point of view of *when* God might deal with evil. There are three possibilities: instantaneously, never or, something between those two. Never is not an option, because God is holy, because He has declared that He most certainly will destroy evil, and because, in a sense, He already has. The first option — instantaneously — does not obtain, but is the interesting one, because it is what we would have expected. In both the first and third cases, God annihilates evil; why did He not do so immediately?

### **The Reason**

God is holy; His will is to annihilate evil but He did not do so. We can be certain that this requires a Reason. We can deduce something else, as well. Failing Him being able to instantaneously annihilate evil, because of a certain Reason, His course is set: He must address the Reason. When the Reason has been addressed, He will immediately annihilate evil. (We must assume that this is possible, since we know that evil will be destroyed.)

### **The Creation in a Context of Evil**

The scenario, then, is that evil will have existed for a limited time. So why did God not make this creation in the next stage, after evil had been annihilated? It is inescapable that God's making this creation within a context of evil must have been necessary — that is, there must have been a Reason.

### **Reconciling the Plan and the Reason**

Ephesians 1: 9 - 10 tells us that God's purpose was a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in the Christ, things in heaven and things on earth. Colossians 1: 20 says that, through the Christ (by the blood of His Cross), God has reconciled all things (on earth and in heaven) to Himself. This creation was made through and for the Christ (John 1: 3, 1 Corinthians 8: 6, Colossians 1: 15 - 20, Hebrews 1: 2). All this is according to a Plan of God that was formulated before the foundation of the world.

However the Cross is not, itself, the means by which God brings about the annihilation of evil. This follows from the fact that evil exists for a significant time both before and after the Cross; God's holiness would require that there be no delay. The Cross is certainly the centrepiece of the annihilation of evil. However, it is as a part of this creation that it achieves its purpose. Revelation 12: 11 tells us that the accuser is conquered by the saints, by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. Ephesians 3: 1 - 12 talks about the mystery of Christ; we see in verses 9 - 11 that the hidden mystery of God's plan was that His manifold wisdom, "might... be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places", "through the church". Verse 11 tells us that this was according to the eternal purpose which God has realised in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is to bring about the destruction of evil that we exist (hence Colossians 1: 24).

## **PART 2 THE CONQUEST OF EVIL**

### **Morally Noble**

Morality is generally discussed as though it has two states — morally wrong, and not morally wrong (being morally neutral). I suggest that there are, in fact, three moral states — the third being what I call the "morally noble". An example of this is a man offering a seat on a bus to a woman. There is a moral obligation to do what is morally noble, but not such that failing to is wrong in the same way as (e.g.) murder is wrong. I shall call prohibitions against moral evil "negative", and exhortations towards the morally noble "positive".

### **The Content of the Conquest**

Although originally, free will implied the possibility of evil... in Heaven there will be free will, but no evil. It follows that God has changed the moral rules governing free will. What is secured is not the punishment of evil-doers, since God has punished human beings. Thus, I venture, what God secures through the Physical Creation Scenario (henceforth: "PCS") is that evil persons are banished from the universe, forever (henceforth: "HLL").

### **Hell and the Substantive Fall**

The punishment for a given evil deed is a function of how evil it is. A punishment is unjust if it is too small or too great. We are used to the idea that the punishment for sinners is suffering and also HLL. I offer two objections to this picture. If the just penalty for taking out someone's eye is to lose an eye, then being excluded from the universe forever would not be just unless it were of commensurate severity — which (I submit) it definitely is not. Further, an arbitrary, large number of finite punishments does not add up to an infinite one. The other objection is that HLL is not a punishment for evil deeds — one nor many. If it was, then Jesus would have had to suffer this penalty when He was paying for our sins, and He did not. [The following observation is not original with me, but I could not possibly locate the source.] What the Bible teaches is that Jesus took on our sins, suffered pain for them, and died crying, "It is finished." (John 19: 30). (See also Mark 15: 38.) Conversely... ostensibly, being "forsaken" (Mark 15: 34) by God would be equivalent to being excluded from His universe. However, Jesus was in that state only very briefly, and there is a reason, present in the situation, for God to forsake Him... being that He had been, "made... to be sin" (2 Cor 5: 21). I suggest, then, that we are not required to understand it as part of His bearing our punishment... and that if it was, our punishment of exclusion would be similarly short. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6: 23); Jesus paid this, and I suggest that His being infinite is expended on the fact that this is adequate for everyone. (The fact that He was sinless is expended on the fact that He could do this.)

Further, I suggest that, if the two were equivalent, and Hell is the punishment for sinners, then Jesus would not have had to also die... whereas arguably it is His death that is definitive of His substitution. Thus... what God will have brought about through the PCS has to do with, not the punishment for evil deeds, but the person. The fact that a Fall is substantive must be fundamental, therefore. Otherwise, a sinner might spontaneously repent at any time... and HLL would therefore be both unjust and misguided. The core feature of the substantive Fall (henceforth: “sF”) is that the person is no longer capable of choosing to repent, in spite of having free will.

### **The Nature of the Revolt**

There are three possible alternatives for the content of Satan’s intention in revolting. One is that he merely wanted to go his own way — to have complete free will, so to speak. This implies rejecting morality. The second is that he wanted to be like God, in having his own domain and being sovereign over it. I take it as given that this includes rejection of all external authority, including morality. The third possibility is like the second, but with him seeking to take over God’s domain. It would be radically unlikely that several angelic beings all spontaneously Fell at exactly the same instant. If there were a small temporal difference, then it would still be fantastically unlikely. In fact, however, it is not practically possible for a second angelic being to Fall spontaneously and independently, if a first has recently done this. Given this hypothetical: no individual one of them would be the leader, unless they chose one — arbitrarily to their having Fallen. However, if the content of their revolt were that they each wanted only complete freedom, then appointing a leader would be contrary to this. Thus, Satan is the leader because it is his revolt. The first possibility is ruled out; Satan desires godhood over some domain. All the other Fallen beings participate in his revolt. (Their objective is slightly different, but we shall gloss over this.)

I venture that outright war on God is simply not what Satan is doing and that, if he was, he could not hope to win. Even if Satan strongly desired to have a domain over which he was the god — and even if this led to and constituted a Fall — he would still know that he could not actually have what he wanted. It could be argued that he began with a desire for something that he could not have, and the desire became strong enough and evil enough to lead to and constitute a Fall... and then, being Fallen, he was driven to pursue the idea even though it was quite hopeless. However, that progression does not work, given that there are other angels involved. It follows, then, that it is the second possibility that obtains — that Satan wanted to be a god and indeed he was able to persuade a number of other angels to defect to his new domain.

### **The Nature of the Resolution**

I have argued that God desired to expel Satan from the universe, but could not (immediately) do this. The resolution of this conflict could not be theoretical. The obvious reason is that God’s solution has been practical, of course, but... if the resolution was theoretical, it would not take time. In fact, God would have resolved it before ever creating beings with free will. Thus, the resolution must be practical. It must pertain to the special conditions and circumstances of the PCS; otherwise, it would be unnecessary. Thus, through the PCS, it must be established that Satan and his followers are in violation of moral truth. If God wants the PCS to show, ineluctably, that they must inevitably do something evil, He must provide a reason for them to abstain from doing it. That is implicit; His objective is HLL for Fallen persons. This rules out the possibility that, through the PCS, Fallen persons condemn themselves unwittingly. (Indeed, that would constitute deception). This might seem questionable, since in fact the Bible tells of a mystery, hidden for ages, and revealed in the Christ. Satan knew about Jesus’s death and resurrection on the behalf of sinners, from prophecy. However, that was not the mystery; the mystery was something beyond Satan’s corrupt imagination — that the Gentiles can now become, “members of the same body [as Israel]” (Eph 3: 6). I suggest that this is precisely what 1 Cor 2: 6-8 is about — “None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” Far from being something that Satan could not refrain from doing, killing Jesus was something that he would have refrained from if he had known its full implications.

### **Satan’s Participation**

The foregoing shows that Satan could thwart God’s purpose in the PCS. Since the PCS is a particular scenario, it is also theoretically possible for Satan to thwart the scenario itself, by compromising its definitive elements. The obvious way for them to achieve this, however, would be to decline to participate in it at all.

It seems to me that God could not ensure their participation by force, since it would be unreasonable to claim that some particular aspect of someone’s behaviour within a scenario was unavoidable, if their

overall participation was involuntary. Their participation must be voluntary, then, and I submit, then, that the PCS is a contest of sorts; if God wins, He gets the outcome He wants, and the same for Satan if he wins. What does Satan get if he wins? The prize must be adequate to entice him to participate. He would get to keep the physical realm; God could hardly set up the PCS so that Satan became the god of the physical realm, and then take it away from him if he won. However, whereas that would no doubt be attractive, Satan in fact already had a realm of sorts — the angels who revolted with him. Originally, there was adequate motive for him to revolt, even without the physical creation.

### **Satan's Artifice**

I venture that Satan revolted with the belief that he could get away with it. There is the fact that God indeed could not expel them from the universe forever — at least not without the PCS. Further, God indeed has not punished Satan, pending His endeavour to address the other point. I venture that Satan would have been able to broadly deduce these constraints on God. Finally, there is the fact that God's winning move has caught Satan by surprise. Conversely I have argued that Satan was subject to punishment. Since that does not amount to getting away with it, I submit that Satan expected to not be punished. One reason is that getting away with the revolt would imply this. The other reason has to do with his participating in the PCS. The picture was as follows. Regardless of whether he participates or not, he will be punished for every violation of God's will, and of morality. The differences are that if he lost, he would be cast into Hell, and (presumably) his godhood would be voided; and, if he won, his godhood would now include the physical realm.

In summary, his godhood might be significantly augmented or he might lose everything.

I have argued that Satan originally thought to get away with his revolt. However, now, God has introduced the PCS, and seems (one imagines) to expect to be able to win the scenario. Thus, even though he still could see no reason why he would not himself win, Satan would have to entertain the possibility that God indeed would win (somehow). His best option, then, would arguably be to decline to participate. If, however, God includes, amongst what Satan stands to gain, immunity from punishment, the contest would be irresistible, given that it is inconceivable to him that God could win. God could not offer Satan immunity from punishment if that were morally wrong, even if there were no theoretical possibility of having to do it. I suggest, then, that how it works is as follows. In revolting, Satan becomes Fallen — his person is evil. In turn, this means that God will have nothing to do with him. This is why and how he hopes to get away with his revolt; his becoming evil effectively secures his objective of independence. This must be about the final outcome, pending the PCS; otherwise, God would have to immediately reject both the Fallen angels and the whole human race. Similarly, (if the point obtains, then) whatever the explication, it would have to allow for God punishing human beings now.

### **God's Artifice**

The resolution secured through the PCS is, not that Satan inevitably violates existing moral law, but that God introduces new moral truth, on the positive side. This truth is that now God will have communion with those who are not His own people — those whose very person is evil — in virtue of imputed righteousness, won by the precious blood of his own Son.

This voids the fact of Satan's alienation; if God had failed to do this, Satan would have won his independence. (If the point was that Satan would violate existing morality, in a particular situation that was generated through the Cross, then Satan could have simply bowed out at that point.) Revelation 12 tells of a war in heaven, temporally around the events of Jesus' life. I have argued that Satan's "rebellion" was not explicitly conflict with God, because he could not hope to win. It seems to me, then, that outright war is a startling eventuality. I wonder if this was not triggered by Satan's defeat. It says in Rev 12: 12 that, "he knows that his time is short."

There is a converse question. I have claimed that there could be no delay before nor after the Cross, if it was itself the resolution of evil. I suggest that the effect of what the Cross achieves is that it changes the rules, such that it now does obtain that Satan will condemn himself, by inevitably warring with God, given only that God has made reconciliation possible. I submit that he has one last, corrupt objective — to rid his world entirely of God's people — that it is thus that we see in Rev 12: 11 that, "they ["our brethren" (v10)] have conquered him ["the accuser" (v10)] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death". I suggest that the idea is not that Christians damage Satan's cause, as such, but that it is in actualising the new moral truth that they conquer Satan — not merely by being reconciled to God, but, further, by becoming His body. The new moral truth is that God can love, even to the point of adopting as sons and daughters — as Jesus' brothers and sisters (Heb 2: 11-12, 17) — those who are by nature opposed to him, and have a sinful

nature. The very concept of what it is to be the people of God has changed. Satan, on the other hand, now has the chance to desperately try anything he can, to compromise this somehow.

### **Conclusion**

The position for which I have argued is that Satan indeed expected to succeed in revolting against God, in virtue of placing himself outside of His love, but that God voided this through the measure of extending his love to even this class destined for destruction. My starting point was that human beings exist to redress the existence of evil; those who are saved now instantiate God's new moral truth.

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## CHAPTER TWELVE

### Freedom, Nature and Slavery in Aristotle's *Politics*

by

Andrew Murray

#### Introduction

The intention of this paper is to examine the two themes, freedom and nature, as Aristotle used them in the *Politics*. During preparation, it emerged that the critical issue that brought the two themes into relationship with one another was that of slavery or servitude and in Aristotle's terms of the existence of those who are naturally free and those who are naturally slaves.<sup>1</sup> Hence, the paper will deal with all three notions. It is clear that Aristotle's understanding of freedom and nature differs from that of the modern world and of those who live in a liberal democracy and espouse the theory that supports it.

The paper will first examine Aristotle's understanding of freedom, as it occurs in the *Politics* and then distinguish and elaborate the two major kinds of freedom that he discusses – democratic freedom and the freedom of the best possible city. Contrast to be drawn with modern views by touching briefly on the thought of Thomas Hobbes. The paper will then turn to the notion of nature and, after a brief exposition of the breadth of issues around nature in the *Politics*, focus on the notion of slavery and, in particular, the claim that there can be slaves by nature. As unsettling and as contrary as this might be to our own expectations, a brief allusion to the work of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke will show that the modern arguments are not necessarily that strong and that difficulties remain unresolved in the modern account. Finally, the paper will attempt a resolution of the issues raised by Aristotle, suggesting that, whatever the political form that we adopt, his analysis was attuned to some of the deeper realities of the human condition.

#### Preliminaries

Before proceeding, I will note an important interpretive tool for the *Politics*. In Book IV, Aristotle indicates that his study will investigate the best constitution. He immediately gives four senses of 'the best': the best possible, the best that circumstances might allow, the best that a particular people may be able to achieve, and the best practicable for most peoples in most places. These four senses of 'the best' are at play throughout the book (*Politics* IV; 1, 288b20-40).

#### Freedom in the *Politics*

Aristotle begins the *Politics* with a discussion of the origins of the *polis* or city. He is clearly fascinated with this not so old form of life and with the possibilities for human excellence that it offers. He sees it as having emerged from natural communities, namely families and villages, and from the relationships that are found there: husband and wife, parents and children, master and slave. The ordering of these relationships and of the communities in which they are found calls for appropriate forms of rule. Aristotle argues against those who claim that all rule is the same and insists on essential differences between household management, the mastery of slaves and political rule.

It is evident from these things as well that mastery and political rule are not the same thing and that all the sorts of rule are not the same as one another, as some assert. For the one sort is over those that are free by nature, the other over slaves; and household management is monarchy (for every household is run by one alone), while political rule is over free and equal persons. (*Politics* I, 7; 1255b16-20; Lord, p. 43)

I take this to indicate the primary sense of freedom in the *Politics*. Those who are capable are able to become free from servitude, which means free from being subject to a master but also free from labouring for the necessities of life. Those who gain this freedom are called citizens and find a life outside the household and village, a life that enables them to engage with persons who are not family

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<sup>1</sup> There is no terminological distinction in classical Greek between 'slave' and 'servant', though the distinction itself may well be found in Aristotle's distinction between conventional slaves (slaves by violence) and natural slaves (especially those who are an essential part of the household). In the discussion, I will maintain the usual term, 'slave', but in the resolution and conclusion, where I attempt some interpretation, I will shift to the term, 'servant', but only for the more restricted meaning.

members or slaves but who are similarly free. It is a life in which citizens are able to participate in moulding their own futures and the future and well-being of the community.

Who the citizen is, then, is evident from these things. Whoever is entitled to participate in an office involving deliberation or decision is, we can now say, a citizen in this city; and the city is the multitude of such persons that is adequate with a view to a self-sufficient life, to speak simply. (*Politics* III, 1; 1775b17-20; Lord p. 87)

Freedom is lost, when the city or its constitution fails. Despotic rule imports the mode of the domestic management of slaves into the city of nominally free persons.<sup>2</sup> Tyranny is a political form seriously flawed by its perversion to the sole interests of the tyrant. Aristotle deals with two manifestations of freedom – democratic freedom and freedom as it occurs in the best possible city. We will consider each of these in turn.

### **Democratic Freedom**

Aristotle gives much space to his considerations of democracy in its different kinds. He sees both its strengths and its weaknesses. It is, however, freedom that drives a democracy.

Now the presupposition of the democratic sort of regime is freedom. It is customarily said that only in this sort of regime do [men] share in freedom, for so it is asserted, every democracy aims at this. One aspect of freedom is being ruled and ruling in turn. (*Politics* VI, 2; 1317a40-1317b1; Lord p. 183)

The fact that people learn to rule and be ruled is in itself a positive feature of democracy. It is what makes the city possible. Under a constitution in which freedom is prime, elections will be made on the basis of a majority vote, because all are equal. Aristotle acknowledges that often the majority together will achieve a better judgement than the few on their own. The more radical democratic way, which is not without precedent, is that offices be distributed by lot (*Politics* IV, 15; VI, 2).

The democratic position is not, however, uncontested. Aristotle recognises that three conditions of human life lead to claims of justice: freedom, wealth and virtue. Here we see the conflict that arises between democrats, oligarchs and aristocrats (*Politics* IV, 8; 1294a8-25). Each holds to a partial form of justice. While true aristocrats (the virtuous) are likely to stay out of factional disputes, it is the contest between the poor and the wealthy that drives politics. It also gives rise to a degree of instability (*Politics* V, 1; 1301a26 – 40). Though each of the claims has some merit, complete justice will require a balance of proportions.

Ultimately, Aristotle is critical of unmitigated democracy and the kind of freedom that it espouses.

In those democracies which are held to be most particularly democratic, what has become established is the opposite of what is advantageous. The cause of this is that they define freedom badly. For there are two things by which democracy is held to be defined: the majority having authority, and freedom. Justice is held to be something equal; equality requires that whatever the multitude resolves is authoritative, and freedom and equality involve doing what one wants. So in democracies of this sort everyone lives as he wants and 'toward whatever [end] he happens to crave', as Euripides says. But this is a poor thing. To live with a view to the regime should not be supposed to be slavery, but preservation. (*Politics* V, 9; 1310a25-35; Lord, p. 167)

The ability to do what they want or simply to enjoy themselves is more than likely to lead to a decline in virtue, which, for Aristotle, is contrary to the ends of the city and damaging to human life, and in the end to freedom, when, as is likely, tyranny takes hold.

### **The Freedom of the Best Possible City**

The kind of freedom that Aristotle promotes is found in Book VII of the *Politics*, where he deals with the best possible regime, a kind of aristocracy in which the virtuous are plentiful and only they rule. The question that he is pursuing is that of what constitutes the best life both for an individual and for the city (*Politics* VII, 1; 1323b40-1324a1). This gives rise to a discussion about whether the active political life or the studious life of contemplation is best (*Politics* VII, 2; 1324a23-28). In contrast with

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<sup>2</sup> See *Politics* III, 4. See especially *Politics* IV, 11; 1295b13-23.

*Nicomachean Ethics* X, 7, Aristotle concludes that the active life is best, because it is there that virtue can be exercised.

But if these things are argued rightly and happiness is to be regarded as [the same as] acting well, the best way of life both in common for every city and for the individual would be the active one. (*Politics* VII, 3; 1325b13-15, Lord; pp. 202-203)

Nevertheless, the kind of action praised is thoughtful action, and the freedom sought is the freedom to act in relation to other persons, but with limits. Again, Aristotle insists that mastery is an inappropriate form of rule over those who are free by nature, and that the appropriate mode of governance is 'ruling and being ruled'.

In the first instance, therefore, this freedom is freedom for action and for participation in political activities that lead to the flourishing of the city. But, it is also a freedom from the drudgery proper to slaves engaged in catering to human needs and from the vulgar work of artisans, craftsmen and merchants, who, though they may be free, live lives directed away from the highest things.

The citizens should not live a vulgar or a merchant's way of life, for this sort of way of life is ignoble and contrary to virtue. Nor, indeed, should those who are going to be [citizens in such a regime] be farmers; for there is a need for leisure both with a view to the creation of virtue and with a view to political activities. (*Politics* VII, 9; 1328b38-1329a2; Lord, pp. 210-211)<sup>3</sup>

What eventuates is a life in which leisure is both an end and a necessity. It is the end of work, just as peace is the end of war (*Politics* VII, 15; 1334a12-16). It is necessary in order that citizens will have the opportunity for action. It is dependent on a liberal education that will make the best life possible (*Politics* VIII, 3; 1338a30-32). Aristotle is adamant that leisure is not play but is rather the availability of time and resources to put one's energy into the noblest activities (*Politics* VIII, 3).

We might conclude this section with a quotation from Chapter 21 of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* that shows how different is his view of freedom.

Liberty, or freedom, signifieth (properly) the absence of opposition; (by opposition, I mean external impediments of motion;) and may be applied no less to irrational, and inanimate creatures, than to rational. For whatsoever is so tied, or environed, as it cannot move, but within a certain space, which space is determined by the opposition of some external body, we say it hath not liberty to go further. (Gaskin, p. 139)

Here liberty is simply the absence of physical constraint. This is a view with which Aristotle has little sympathy as when he says, 'For to be under constraint and unable to do everything one might resolve to do is advantageous. The license to do whatever one wishes cannot defend against the mean element in every human being' (*Politics* VI, 4; 1318b38-40; Lord, p. 187).

### **Nature in the *Politics***

When we turn our focus to nature in the *Politics*, there are a number of issues that arise immediately and that prick modern sensibilities: the insistence that political communities arise from natural communities (*Politics* I, 2); the notion that man is a political animal, one both sociable and able to engage in the ordering of a community (*Politics* I, 2; 1253a3 et al.);<sup>4</sup> the claim that the city is prior by nature to the individual (*Politics* I, 2; 1253a19); the acknowledgement that there are some human beings who are slaves by nature (*Politics* I, 4-6 et al). A city arises *according to* nature because human beings have the potential to form such communities and because the earth provides suitable resources. It comes about not *by* nature but by means of human agency and is, therefore, dependent on human thought and achievement. Nevertheless, the development, successful or unsuccessful, is guided by a final cause, which I take to be expressed in the best possible city of Book VII.<sup>5</sup> While all of this is part

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<sup>3</sup> See also *Politics* III, 4 – 5.

<sup>4</sup> On sociability see III, 6; 1278b15-1278b30.

<sup>5</sup> It is clear that 'nature' is being used in different senses here, which is part of Aristotle's readiness to use language analogically (*pros hen* equivocation). Richard Kraut (2007, p. 213) summarises, 'We should therefore recognise at least three ways in which Aristotle talks about nature. As first nature, it is what is already present in us prior to habituation. As second nature, it is what grows into us, as a result of a process of habituation. And, as perfected nature, it is the goal at which we should arrive when the process of habituation has worked well and we achieve something that is good.'

of the overall picture, it is the topic of slavery that will bring out issues relating to freedom and nature and show significant differences between Aristotelian and modern sensibilities.

### Slaves by Nature

There is no question but that Aristotle accepts that there are human beings that are free by nature and others that are slavish by nature.<sup>6</sup> The more quoted justification for this position is based on a difference in quality of mind and is found in Book I. The natural slave is one 'who participates in reason only to the extent of perceiving it, but does not have it' (*Politics* I, 5; 1254b23; Lord, p. 41). In other words, the slave does not have the ability to know ahead of time what is to be done, yet is capable of understanding commands from a master and acting on them. This is identified with deficiency in the ability to deliberate and so a lack of practical wisdom (*Politics* I, 13; 1260a12). Aristotle has, however, another justification in Book VII, which should also be taken into account. Here, it is spirit that accounts for the difference. Human beings will not be free, unless they have the passion to be free. In a somewhat dubious argument, which one can still hear in the Mediterranean, Aristotle argues that the *polis* arose in Greece because its people shared both the spirited nature of the northern Europeans and the intelligence of the Asiatic peoples. They were, therefore, both driven to freedom and able to command (*Politics* VII, 7). These differences are natural in the sense that they are there at birth (*Politics* I, 5; 1254b123) and that deficiencies are not simply overcome by habituation or education.<sup>7</sup>

Before we criticise Aristotle's position, we need to note two points. Firstly, he completely rejects conventional slavery, which is most commonly slavery imposed on those who lose in war, but could be recognised in other institutional forms of slavery. His grounds are that it is unjust to treat as a slave one who is not naturally slavish. He also proposes a form of manumission to rectify unjust enslavement (*Politics* VII, 10; 1330a33). Secondly, the form of slavery that he envisages is in the household and is seen as a relationship in which the master provides direction and the slave provides labour. Each does what he is good at, and there are benefits for both. A slave shares in and enjoys the excellence and achievements of his master, something that is lacking for freely living artisans (*Politics* I, 13).

Nevertheless, there are serious difficulties with Aristotle's position. Where do slaves come from? Or, more particularly, need the son of a slave be himself naturally slavish? There is a hint that Aristotle recognises this problem, but he does not pursue it (*Politics* I, 5; 1254b27-33; 1255b1-2). While he acknowledges the possibility of natural slaves and situates them in relationship to a master in the household, he does not investigate how they might come to be there or to be selected. If such an arrangement were to work in the long run, it would have to be institutionalised and, almost automatically, birth rather than capacity would become a prime instrument in determining people's futures.

Thomas Hobbes explicitly rejected Aristotle's distinction of 'master and servant', but not on the grounds we have just noted. He does it rather in terms of equality and the kind of equality necessary for the political institution he is inventing.

If nature therefore have made men equal, that equality is to be acknowledged: or if nature have made men unequal; yet because men that think themselves equal, will not enter into conditions of peace, but upon equal terms, such equality must be admitted. (*Leviathan* Chapter 15, n. 21, Gaskin, p. 102)

Yet, it is clear from the text that he understands Aristotle's argument as based on a 'difference of wit'. His argument against it is that there are none so foolish that they would not wish to govern themselves

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A rejection of many of Aristotle's positions can be found in Thomas Hobbes. In the Introduction to *Leviathan*, the Commonwealth is solely a product of human art; Chapter 13 allows of no natural communities in the state of nature; in Chapter 27 final cause is identified with human design.

<sup>6</sup> The main discussion is in *Politics* I, 4-7, but see also VII, 7. For an explicit statement see VII, 3; 1325a27-29.

<sup>7</sup> 'Now the master is so called not according to a science [he possesses] but through being a certain sort, and similarly with the slave and the free person' (*Politics* I, 7; 1255b20-22; Lord, p. 43).

and that those who call themselves ‘wise’ are rarely strong enough to subdue the rest. The argument is pragmatic at best, but points to a fundamental disagreement about differences in human capacity.

Before we attempt a resolution, it is worth looking at how John Locke dealt with these issues within the context of a modern ethic of human rights. In Chapter Four of the *Second Treatise*, Locke accepts a form of conventional slavery, which he describes as ‘nothing else but the state of war continued between a lawful conqueror and a captive’ (Macpherson, p. 17). Nevertheless, Locke does make some helpful distinctions. In the same chapter, he notes that people may sell themselves into drudgery without accepting a condition of slavery. Later on, he says, ‘A freeman makes himself a servant to another, by selling him, for a certain time, the service he undertakes to do, in exchange for the wages he is to receive’ (Macpherson, p. 45).

### **Resolution**

In drawing all of this together, it seems to me that Aristotle’s insight is that there is in the human condition an impetus towards servitude. He gives three grounds for this. First, human beings are dependent on the fruits of the earth for survival, and their perishability places heavy demands on human labour. Secondly, human beings have different given capacities, which are not reducible to differences of opportunity for upbringing and education, and this puts them into unequal relationships with one another. Thirdly, in many, particularly the strong, there is a drive to dominate others. Might not these been seen in different forms in contemporary life? We have overcome the difficulties of the perishability of crops, but are we not subject to the demands of capital and the volatility of the financial markets? The term ‘slave’ is offensive to us, but how different is the relationship between employee and manager in corporations and bureaucracies? Does the master – servant relationship still function in some settings, and are we able to distinguish it from other sorts of subordinating relationship such as political rule? And surely, the desire to dominate is still around.

The achievement of the *Politics*, which is in many ways a reflection on the success of Greek politics, is that Aristotle is able to carve out a space in which people are free and free to act in relation to one another in the best possible ways. The *Politics* targets wilful domination not by confrontation but by proposing structures of governance that allow citizens to participate in the decision-making and judgements of their city in ways corresponding to their different abilities. It is, nevertheless, mindful also of human differences and hence of differences in the ways in which different human beings can participate both in mapping out their futures and in doing things that are worthwhile.

When Aristotle outlines his best practicable constitution in Book IV in distinction to the best possible constitution of Book VII, he describes it as a balanced mix of oligarchy and democracy. This form, often translated ‘polity’ but better translated by Sokolowski (2006) as ‘republic’, is designed to allow maximum participation in rule of the city at the same time as it recognises differences of wealth and capability. It is a sign of Aristotle’s realism and practicality that this ‘best’ constitution is composed of two of the deviant constitutions of Book III. It is true, however, that it does not cater well for those at the extremes, neither the truly virtuous, the aristocrats, nor those that labour, the slaves.

### **Conclusion**

The argument of this paper, viewed now in reverse, has been to take one of the most difficult and in modern times controversial claims in Aristotle’s *Politics*, namely, the claim that there are people who are naturally slaves, and to try and make sense of it, both in relation to the criticisms and alternative views of the moderns and in relation to the problem of how to best constitute a human community. The gift that all seek is freedom and a well-formed state will offer this freedom. But for Aristotle, the freedom sought is not just a freedom to do whatever one wants but a freedom to excel. Clearly not all are able to excel. Some may be scoundrels, but many will simply find themselves bound to manual work in a community that may be harsh, and so they will suffer, or in a community that is just, in which case they will live with some contentment.

The early moderns rejected this sense of freedom for something more radical than Aristotle’s democratic freedom. They also refused to recognise differences of human capacity, and political structures were built on these principles. Difficulties, however, have not gone away. All are free and all participate at least by voting, yet those worst done by are those without work often due to lack of adequate skills, but for a percentage, the normal thing in a modern economy. When our modern societies act justly, these are supported at the expense of the state. At other times, they become

homeless and destitute and even refugees.<sup>8</sup> Underneath all of this, it is not the case that servitude has disappeared and certainly not the case that the kind of rule known as the master-servant relationship is no longer with us.

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<sup>8</sup> See Arendt (1958) for detailed analysis of these differences.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### Pope Benedict XVI and Human Freedom

by

Anthony Maher

#### Synopsis

First I will sketch the Bavarian mind which is Benedict XVI; this includes three important subsections: (I) the Bavarian context, including the Nazi shadow, which in a Jungian sense has never left Ratzinger (II) the Augustinian antithesis (III) the rise of radical liberalism in the 1960's infected with Marxism and large scale civil unrest, culminating in the world wide anti-authoritarian disturbances of 1968. Second, drawing upon Eric Erikson and Uri Bronfenbrenner I will briefly consider the Bavarian mind through the lens of developmental psycho-theory in an attempt to understand both Benedict's personal history and his personal perception of reality. Appropriating David Schultenover's work I will also contrast the Bavarian mind with Schultenover's study of 'Mediterranean Anthropology'. The third section of the paper will look briefly at the contemporary situation with regard to Benedict's understanding of human self-determination and address a particular urban myth in relation to Benedict's liberal peccadilloes leading into the Second Vatican Council.

#### Introduction - The Bavarian Context

John Santrock reminds us that 'each of us develops partly like all other individuals, partly like some other individuals and partly like no other'<sup>1</sup>. In this sense I believe one may talk of a Bavarian mind or an Irish heart or the Maori spirit or a Basque preponderance for liberation and indeed the Australian sense of humor! This is not to advocate a hard deterministic worldview, or to deny a basic belief in human self-determination, but rather to explore the significance of scientific, psychological, biological and religious determinism in relation to the more traditional Christian understanding of human freedom. I hope this contribution will have significance both for our conference and the consideration of Benedict XVI. A new book seems to appear almost every week on Benedict XVI. In a certain sense he is the one Pope in history who needs no introduction, his reputation goes before him, it is perhaps his and the curia's greatest challenge.

Bordering on Austria and southern European leaning, Bavarians have always maintained a strong traditional national identity, distinctly different in culture and mentality from the rest of Germany. It is a common joke in Germany that Bavaria is not part of Germany. The Bavarians emerged in a region north of the Alps, originally inhabited by the Celts, which had been part of the Roman provinces of Raetia. Unlike other German groups they did not migrate from elsewhere, but seem to have been left behind by the Roman withdrawal late in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century. In his memoirs Ratzinger is proud of his cultural roots<sup>2</sup>. There remains evidence of Roman roads, and many towns can refer to their former Latin names with pride in a longer history. Ratzinger is convinced that it was Roman soldiers who brought Christianity into the region in pre-Constantinian times; this early Roman influence has helped shape the cultural history of Bavaria.

Politically, at the time of Ratzinger's birth, a Catholic party governed Bavaria. The Bavaria People's Party held power up until the Nationalist Socialists took office in 1933. Today the Christian Social Union (CSU), a Christian conservative party, continues in the traditional line of the BVP, although Bavaria has a multi-party system, the CSU has dominated politics since 1957 and won every election since then. As with traditions in general, language cultivation including dialect and regional accent is considered a strengthening of Bavarian identity. The Bavarians take great pride in their culture. Traditions are taught to the children and descendants of Bavarian citizens through literature, music, costume, food, and other cultural-ritual activities. Today they continue to cultivate these traditions, holding festivals, dances and religious events. The majority of the population professes to be Catholic. The basic elements of Bavarian family life revolved around a strong conservatism, a deep faith in the Roman Catholic Church, a belief in strict discipline, and the ideal of having many children.

#### Ratzinger's Family & Early Childhood

Joseph Aloysius Ratzinger was born on Easter Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1927, at Marktl an Inn, Bavaria, he always considered the date of his birth to be providential, his parents were appropriately called Mary

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<sup>1</sup> Santrock, J. (2006), *Life Span Development*, Tenth Edition, 17ff.

<sup>2</sup> Ratzinger, J. (1998), *Milestones, Memoirs 1927-1977*, p.7

and Joseph. Joseph Ratzinger senior was a policeman, with roots deep in the Bavarian farming community. His wife Maria Ratzinger (nee Peintner), worked as a domestic, Mary Peintner's family were originally from Bolzano-Bozen part of modern day Italy<sup>3</sup>. Joseph was the youngest of three children; his brother Georg also became a priest, a medievalist, a musician and former director of the Regensburger Domspatzen choir. His sister, Maria Ratzinger, who never married, managed her brother's household until her death in 1991.

Reading numerous accounts of Ratzinger's early childhood, including his own memoirs, one is struck by a number of initial observations: first, how very little detail is actually recorded about his early life; and second, that the portrait despite the Nazi shadow, is one of an idyllic earlier childhood in a loving home with a devoted mother who compensated for a rather austere father. I am also struck by the great affection Ratzinger has both for his Bavarian home and his immediate family, mother, father brother and sister. What seems clear from my reading is that these childhood experiences are foundational to the man who would be Pope.

Thus Ratzinger's childhood is nurtured within this Bavarian context, in an expanding nationalistic Germany, a divided Christendom and a war-ravaged Europe. It is also clear that the Nazi shadow had a profound effect on Ratzinger. In retrospect Ratzinger believes "that an education in Greek and Latin antiquity created a mental attitude that resisted seduction by a totalitarian ideology."<sup>4</sup> He lived in a precise, well-ordered beautiful world, one in which everything had its place, even the evil of Hitler's brown shirts. It also seems clear that the young Joseph gained his opposition to the Nazi regime from his father, who believed "a victory for Hitler would not be a victory for Germany but rather a victory of the Antichrist, one that would surely usher in apocalyptic times for all believers."<sup>5</sup>

From the time of Ratzinger's birth to the present day, despite Hitler's interjection, the defining characteristic of the Bavarian mindset is the emphasis on cultural and intuitional continuity and unity. Thus Church not only occupied the center of Joseph Ratzinger's town – but also the mind and heart of his life. It regulated everything and gave meaning to his existence. In his memoirs it becomes apparent that Ratzinger fell in love with the Church (c.f. pg. 19-20), everything was encompassed by the faith, he recalls: "the church year gave the time its rhythm and I experienced that with great gratitude and joy"<sup>6</sup>. It is also clear that Ratzinger developed a deep love for the traditional liturgy; Liturgy, with its beauty, hidden richness, and greatness that transcends time, as the vital center of the Church and of Christian life. The liturgy should be celebrated in an 'essential' manner, "every new step into the liturgy was something precious to me, I could not dream of anything more beautiful, it was a riveting adventure to move by degrees into the mysterious world of the liturgy."<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, Catholicism served him as a something of a refuge as he was forced to join the Hitler Youth organization in 1941, and was drafted into the army and assigned to guard a BMW factory where prisoners of war worked. Although he never saw combat, he later was sent out to set tank booby traps in eastern Germany. During this mission, he saw a trainload of Hungarian Jews on its way to a concentration camp. As German resistance dissolved in 1945, Ratzinger deserted his post. He was captured and briefly held as an American prisoner of war camp.

### Academic Formation

Aidan Nichols reminds us that Ratzinger is also Bavarian by intellectual formation<sup>8</sup>. His theological work constitutes a microcosm of the Munich inheritance:

His insistence on the context of theology in ecclesial life is reminiscent of Sailer. The interest in metaphysics, mysticism and social philosophy reflects the peculiar combination of concerns of the 'Munich circle' of Baader and Gorres. His belief that Systematic theology must be nourished at all times by historical theology, not least for the sake of organic continuity of the Church tradition, echoes Dollinger. Detailed investigation of the patristic corpus (chiefly Augustine) continues the efforts of

<sup>3</sup> The Province of Bolzano-Bozen is an administrative entity the origins of which go back to World War I. Formerly part of the Austro-Hungarian county of Tyrol; it was annexed by Italy at the end of the war and incorporated into the region Venezia Tridentina. The province as it exists today was created in 1926 after an administrative reorganization of the Kingdom of Italy.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, (1998), *Milestones, Memoirs 1927-1977*, p.23.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, (1998), *Milestones, Memoirs 1927-1977*, p.27.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, (1998), *Milestones, Memoirs 1927-1977*, p.18.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, (1998), *Milestones, Memoirs 1927-1977*, p.20.

<sup>8</sup> Aidan Nichols OP, (2005) *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, New Edition, p.1.

Bardenhewer. Enquiry into the thought of the medieval builds on the achievements of Grabmann and Schmas<sup>9</sup>.

The writings of St Augustine are perhaps one of the most influential factors upon Ratzinger's academic and religious formation. His doctoral thesis examined Augustine's contention that the Church is at once both the 'people and the house of God'. Ratzinger's analysis of the idea of Church in Augustine's early writings is nuanced and complex<sup>10</sup>. Ratzinger was deeply impressed with Augustine's understanding that the Church proposed to mediate to the many what was to the philosophically minded a completeness of salvation attainable only by the few. Augustine's acceptance of this way of the common life of the Church, a way of faith, rather than the way of the individual's metaphysical search, a way of insight, was made possible by his realization how many truths of human living come from faith, most notably through our parents. For example, 'A mother's authority brought him a deeper understanding of authority in the realm of wisdom'<sup>11</sup>.

Ratzinger's exploration of Augustine confirmed him in his Bavarian understanding of faith. Augustine leads him from a metaphysical theology to a more historical understanding of Christianity growing out from his personal Bavarian history and context. Moving from a purely pedagogical account of the value of historical order to the realization of the intrinsic meaningfulness of concrete form in human history, this form is personified in the Church, specifically the Church of Ratzinger early childhood, which is the concrete historical form of Christian reality. In this sense the Church became the rock upon which Ratzinger built his faith, the Church of his childhood remains his continuity and unity with his family, his theology, personal religiosity and Bavarian tradition. Although Ratzinger took up successive academic appointments across Germany: Bonn in 1959, Munster in 1963, Tübingen in 1966, he returned to the Bavarian cloister of Regensburg in 1969 to teach dogmatic theology until he became the archbishop of Munich in 1977.

## Vatican II

Before I move on to the second stage of the paper and the application of certain aspects of the social sciences, I must first make a passing reference to the Second Vatican Council in the earlier to mid 1960's and the student disturbances towards the end of that decade. During Vatican II Ratzinger served as a peritus or theological consultant to Josef Cardinal Frings of Cologne. Ratzinger's interpretation of the Council is also complex. In *The Ratzinger Report* he is at pains to show that Vatican II is an integral on going component of Vatican I and the Council of Trent.

Whoever accepts Vatican II, as it has clearly expressed and understood itself, at the same time accepts the whole binding tradition of the Catholic Church, particular also the two previous Councils. And that also applies to the so-called progressives at least in its extreme forms.<sup>12</sup>

He goes on to draw the same conclusion with regard to the traditionalism of the opposite position, 'every partisan choice destroys the whole (the very history of the Church) which can only exist as an indivisible unity'<sup>13</sup>.

In *The Ratzinger Report* (1985) the Cardinal must conclude that Vatican II is not the problem, rather it is the subsequent interpretations that have led to many abuses in the post-conciliar period<sup>14</sup>. The Cardinal explains that the Council Fathers were expecting a new Catholic unity, instead, appropriating the words of Paul VI, he laments that 'the time has passed over from self-criticism to self-destruction. The new enthusiasm has ended in boredom and discouragement. There had been an expectation of a step forward, and instead one found oneself facing a progressive process of decadence that to a large measure has been unfolding under the sign of a summons to a presumed 'spirit of the council' and by so doing has actually and increasingly discredited it'<sup>15</sup>. Furthermore, 'a reform of the Church presupposes an unequivocal turning away from the erroneous paths whose catastrophic consequences are already incontestable'<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Nichols p.14

<sup>10</sup> Nichols p.20

<sup>11</sup> Nichols pp.20-21

<sup>12</sup> Nichols, p.28

<sup>13</sup> *The Ratzinger Report*, (1985 ) p.29

<sup>14</sup> *The Ratzinger Report*, p.29

<sup>15</sup> *The Ratzinger Report*, p.30

<sup>16</sup> *The Ratzinger Report*, p.30

Evidently the Bavarian Cardinal is in the dubious position of authenticating the significance of the Council within the tradition stemming from Trent and Vatican I, while at the same time condemning the great majority of ecclesial commentary on the documents. Diachronic perceptions dominate the Bavarian mindset, Ratzinger's defense of the Council is therefore axiomatic 'to defend the true tradition of the Church today means to defend the Council'. This perception is reminiscent of Pius X's 1907 denunciation of modernism, as the 'heresy of heresies,' Pius also perceived the real threat as the challenge from within. Hence Ratzinger is 'convinced that the damage that we have incurred since the Council is due, not to the true Council, but to the unleashing *within* the Church of the latent polemical and centrifugal forces.' Surprisingly adopting Marxist terminology the Cardinal understands the decline in Church influence to be the result of 'a cultural revolution in the West: the success of the upper middle class, the new tertiary bourgeoisie, with its liberal-radical ideology of individualistic, rationalistic and hedonistic stamp'<sup>17</sup>. Overall the Cardinal must insist that there was no 'rupture at Vatican II but continuity', continuity above all things.

### **1968 Student Riots – “It is forbidden to forbid”.**

In 1967 the Faculty for Catholic Theology at Tübingen celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the theology of Rudolf Bultmann still dominated the theological climate in the particular variation given to it by Ernst Käsemann. Then almost overnight according to Ratzinger, Bultmann's theology and Heidegger's philosophy that had determined the frame of reference for thinking collapsed and was replaced by the Marxist model introduced by Ernst Bloch. Bloch now teaching at Tübingen ridiculed Heidegger for being petty bourgeois. According to Ratzinger, existentialism fell apart, and the Marxist revolution kindled the whole university with its fervor, shaking it to its very foundations. Ratzinger believed that the 'destruction of theology was occurring through its politicization as conceived by Marxist messianism'. At Tübingen Ratzinger's loathing for all things Marxist found expression, he considered Marxism so radical because it 'took biblical hope as a basis but inverted it by keeping the religious ardor but eliminating God and replacing him with the political activity of man. In his memoirs for this period we see the final synthesis of Ratzinger's later opposition to Liberation Theology. The Bavarian mindset unified the Augustinian temporal antithesis while inhaling strongly upon the Marxist caricature in the form of atheistic totalitarianism which was being depicted around the world in the form of mass civil disturbance. For Ratzinger the immanent Parousia must have seemed nigh. For Ratzinger, Marxism utilizes Christian hope, but the party takes the place of God, and, along with the party, a totalitarianism that practices an atheistic sort of adoration ready to sacrifice all humanness to its false God. Ratzinger emotionally declares:

I myself have seen the frightful face of this atheistic piety unveiled, its psychological terror, the abandon with which every moral consideration could be thrown overboard as a bourgeois residue when the ideological goal was at stake. All of this is alarming in itself; but it becomes an unrelenting challenge to the theologian when the ideology is presented in the name of faith and the Church is used as its instrument. The blasphemous manner in which the Cross now came to be despised as a sign of sadomasochism, the hypocrisy with which some still passed themselves off as believers when this was useful. As Dean of the faculty and academic Senate, I experienced all of these things at very close range indeed.<sup>18</sup>

In 1968 Ratzinger witnessed mass protest erupt across the globe. 'In history it is always imprecise to attribute fundamental shifts to one moment,' writes Kurlansky. 'But 1968 was the epicentre of a shift, of a fundamental change, the birth of our post-modern media-driven world. It was in many respects the dawn of a new geopolitical order.' 'There was not one '68, as popular myth would have it,' says the historian Dominic Sandbrook, author of *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*. 'The riots in Chicago were different to the protests in Mexico and Madrid, Paris to Prague which in turn differed from the events in Belin, Munich and Tübingen.

In France De Gaulle was fighting for his political life and the French capital was paralysed after weeks of student riots followed by a sudden general strike. The French felt they were at an abyss. The events were preceded by the announcement, in the United States that President Lyndon B. Johnson would choose to withdraw from the 1968 presidential campaign. This was soon followed by the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. on 4 April and a student-led occupation and closure of New York's Columbia University on 23 April. His murder shocked an already traumatised America and provoked

<sup>17</sup> *The Ratzinger Report*, p.30

<sup>18</sup> *Memoirs*, 137/8

two nights of rioting in several major cities. The National Guard were mobilised, and Chicago's infamous Mayor Daley issued a 'shoot to kill' order as fires raged. Twelve black people were killed during riots in Washington DC. Stokely Carmichael, founder of the Black Panthers, a black power militia which preached violent revolution, grabbed headlines when he said: 'Now they've taken Dr King off, it's time to end this non-violence bullshit.'

April 1968 brought highly organised rioting in Berlin following the attempted assassination of left-wing figurehead Rudi Dutschke by a right-wing loner. The anarchy continued on 5 June with another assassination, that of Senator Robert Kennedy, the Democratic heir apparent to the presidency, and the younger brother of the late President John F Kennedy. A traumatised world watched as Soviet troops rumble into Czechoslovakia, and the American air force dropped more than two million tons of bombs on Vietnam, most killing the civilian population. Anthony Lewis wrote that this "was the most appalling episode of lawless cruelty in American history." In Warsaw the government closed down eight university departments, and imprisoned nearly 1,000 students after protests against state censorship. In Italy the University of Rome was shut down for two weeks after violent demonstrations against police brutality. In Spain students marched against the Fascist regime of General Franco, who closed down Madrid University for a month. In Brazil three protesters were killed during marches against the military junta and in Mexico hundreds of students were massacred just weeks before the commencement of the Olympic games.

In each case the causes were different. However, due to the new widely available technology of television, student protesters in Berkeley and Columbia cheered their TV sets as footage from the Paris barricades made the American news in May, while French students took heart from images of the huge anti-war demonstrations now occurring across Europe and America<sup>19</sup>. 'We met through television,' Cohn-Bendit later said of his counterparts in other countries. 'We were the first television generation.' Indeed, the radicals had a much better grasp of the galvanising power of television than the politicians they were trying to overthrow. 'A modern revolutionary group headed for the television, not for the factory,' at the Chicago Democratic convention. As the police attacked them, the protesters chanted: 'The whole world is watching!' And, for the first time, it was. Joseph Ratzinger was also watching.

And yet the protesters in each country had much in common, including an often instinctive espousal of radical leftist politics, a shared sense of idealism that often bordered on naivety and had its roots in the previous year's hippy Summer of Love, and a distrust of all forms of established authority including parents, police, college administrations, Church and government. Above all they shared what Sandbrook calls 'the common spirit of youthful rebellion'. 'Youth was a new thing in the Fifties, and by the Sixties you had young people who, for the first time, were self-consciously generational,' he says. 'In America, Britain and Europe the growth of education and affluence meant that young people were suddenly defining themselves as separate from, and indeed, against the beliefs and values of their parents.'

The 'Enragés' (angry ones), as the Paris protesters came to be known, were emblematic of the spirit of that year. Kurlansky quotes a veteran of the Paris uprising, Radith Geismar, who remembers not the violence of the barricades but the sense of community they brought. 'The real sense of '68 was a tremendous sense of liberation, of freedom,' she says, 'of people talking on the street, in the universities, in theatres. It was much more than throwing stones. A whole system of order and authority and tradition was swept aside. Much of the freedom of today began in '68. May '68 was a political failure for the protesters, but it had an enormous social impact. In France, it is considered to be the watershed moment that saw the replacement of conservative morality (religion, patriotism, respect for authority) with the liberal morality (equality, sexual liberation, human rights) that dominates French society today. Although this replacement did not take place solely in this one month, the term *mai 68* is used to refer to the shift in values, especially when referring to its most idealistic aspects<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Sean O'Hagan, *The Observer*, Jan. 20 2008

<sup>20</sup> In its place came darker forms of violence and terror: the Baader-Meinhof cells in West Germany, the Red Brigades in Italy, and the rebirth of the IRA in Northern Ireland. All had their roots in the turbulent events of 1968. By the Eighties, both America and Britain had elected ultraconservative leaders whose belief in the market above all else seemed to make a mockery of the utopian idealism of 1968. 'We are reaping what was sown in the Sixties,' Margaret Thatcher thundered in 1982. 'Fashionable theories and permissive claptrap set the scene for a society in which old values of discipline and restraint were denigrated.' Yet 40 years on from 1968 the meaning and the legacy of that volatile year is still being contested. Many on the Right still view it as the epitome of all that was irresponsible, idiotic and dangerous about the Sixties, while many on the terminally fractured Left still mourn 1968 as the last great moment of revolutionary possibility. The truth probably lies somewhere in between, but there is no doubting that something unique and potentially revolutionary happened around

What was the impact of the Paris uprising? Most of the backward-looking analysis, as well as the evidence, suggests that 1968 changed French society in some respects unalterably, and in much the same way that the 1960s changed U.S. society. In the ethical, sexual, cultural and intellectual spheres, it broke apart a rigid groupthink. It set in motion political forces that brought French Socialists to power, in 1981. It installed the street demonstration as a permanent part of modern French political theater. An onlooker in Paris recalled: "I was in Paris during " La contestation de Mai " which followed California's Berkeley demonstrations. You know that quote 'Il est interdit d'interdire' ('It is forbidden to forbid'.)" Today of course France prides itself on being the most secular county in the world.

Finally in an ecclesial context the Latin American Bishops held their famous 1968 conference in Medellín, Columbia and resolved to proclaim a 'preferential option for the poor', going so far as to acknowledge that those "who set their hopes on violence, in view of the gravity of the injustice and of the illegitimate resistance to change in society, are frequently motivated in the last analysis by noble ideas of justice and solidarity"<sup>21</sup>. Ratzinger considered Tübingen had also become a Marxist 'battle zone,' he longed for the academic tranquility of the south: 'the exhausting controversies I experienced during academic meetings had changed my attitude.'" Thus when a second Chair was set up in Dogma at Regensburg University, Ratzinger accepted it willingly<sup>22</sup>.

### Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Development

In 1977 at the age of fifty the exceptional Bavarian professor of theology was called by Paul VI to become the new archbishop of Munich. Appropriating Erikson and Bronfenbrenner's developmental theories it is possible to understand how the famous Bavarian mind came to be set in the direction of Rome. Eric Erikson (1902-1994) is often referred to as the "father of psychosocial development" and the architect of identity. His special interest was the influence of society and culture on child development. Uri Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological study of childhood development builds upon and enhances Erikson's 'identity' research. Both psychologists agree that early experiences and family relationships are crucial for conscious and unconscious identity development. The two come together to shape the adult, assisting in identity formation and future crisis negotiation. Bronfenbrenner's system focuses upon the quality and context of the young person's environment. Obviously as the child matures, the interactions with the other layers of the system become more complex, even to the extent of influencing physical and cognitive structures. Urie Bronfenbrenner stresses the significance of the environmental system of development in what he has called the "Bioecological theory. It consists of five environmental systems ranging from precise target based programmes, such as initiatives found in the home and school, through to wider cultural interactive dynamics"<sup>23</sup>.

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the world, something that continues to shape the present in ways that those involved in the protests could not have not foreseen, and that the majority of today's globally-connected younger generation are probably utterly unaware of. Feminism entered a new phase. '1968 deepened the politics of the Sixties,' says Professor Lynne Segal of Birkbeck College. 'Women had been involved in all the struggles, Vietnam, anti-colonialism, Civil Rights. Everyone's liberation was suddenly on the table in 1968. By 1969 women had found a way to articulate it that resounds to this day. Women's Liberation became inevitable because of the radical politics of the Sixties but specifically because of the huge surge towards self-empowerment that happened in 1968.' Dominic Sandbrook agrees: 'The Women's Liberation movement turned out to be the most influential of all the late-Sixties movements. It has had an abiding influence that no other cause from that time has had.' And yet, the spirit of '68 endures, perhaps mythical, perhaps as a lingering sense of the possibilities that mass activism once had. 'If '68 does not matter, as the Right claim,' says Tom Hayden, one of the Chicago activists, 'then why does it remain so symbolic? People ask me why did it happen when it happened. My emphasis would be on consciousness. It was entirely possible that the American people would have accepted the Vietnam war with all its casualties and all its taxes, just as they supported the Korean war. So, you have to conclude that it was a shift in consciousness that helped bring about its end. That's what happened when people marched for Civil Rights and against the war, that's what happened in 1968 when people united in activism: the consciousness of America shifted.' Perhaps that, in itself, is legacy enough.

<sup>21</sup> John Allen, (2005) *Benedict XVI*, p.16

<sup>22</sup> *Memoirs*, p.140

<sup>23</sup> Santrock, 52. **The Microsystem** is the environment in which the person interacts on a daily basis. This is the layer closest to the young person. These contexts include family, friends, teachers; The Microsystem is considered to have the most influence upon the development of young people. **The Mesosystem** includes interrelations between Microsystems or connections between contexts. This

In the light of Erikson and Bronfenbrenner a number of observations seem apparent: first, the primary years of Ratzinger's life are pivotal to understanding the man. Second Joseph Ratzinger's identity is unquestionably linked to his faith in Roman Catholicism; it is the Catholicism of his 'happiest of times.' Bronfenbrenner's research with regard to the bioecological theory confirms Erikson's hypothesis of developmental stage negotiation. The childhood years are pivotal; it seems axiomatic to say they are foundational to Ratzinger. Thus Ratzinger at fifty is the man who negotiated his Bavarian childhood, the Nazi shadow, academic formation, in particular the influence of Augustine, together with the turmoil that was the 1960's, including Vatican II and the student riots of 1968. Undoubtedly these four pivotal experiences shaped Ratzinger's persona, personal identity and theological agenda. There is one further aspect of research from the social sciences (anthropology) that will complete this picture of Joseph Ratzinger. David Schultenover in his celebrated *View from Rome* focuses on what he calls the 'perceptions of the Mediterranean mind – an anthropological brief'<sup>24</sup>. In view of the evidence I have presented so far, it appears that Joseph Ratzinger is inclined towards this particular perception of the world. Comparable factors include the close cultural links between Bavaria and northern Italy, including Ratzinger's mother, Maria, whose family originate from northern Italy, together with the Italian heritage that is foundational to Ratzinger's Bavarian consciousness.

Schultenover outlines the basic principles of the Mediterranean mind they virtually dovetail with the formation of Joseph Ratzinger. For example, the organising principle of Mediterranean society is belongingness. The primary social structure of belongingness is the family. A person's identity depends on belonging, in Ratzinger's case this belonging is both to the Church and his family. Belonging and acceptance is contingent on the person's adherence to the traditional rules of order. Order is a complex, socially transmitted template to which each family member is expected to conform in order to belong. For Ratzinger one can be a Christian only in the Church, not along side it. Order in the Mediterranean family is maintained by the complementary codes of honor and shame. Honor is the conferral of public esteem; shame the deprivation of public esteem according to whether or not a person upholds the traditional mores of the family. All of reality is dyadically defined and organised into male and female categories: there are 'male' times and 'female' times, 'male' spaces and 'female' spaces, 'male' functions and 'female' functions within the social grouping.

Shame occurs whenever someone disrupts the purity system, that is, rigidly defined and learned hierarchical ordering of persons and roles. The disruption shames who ever is responsible for maintaining order. Put another way, Schultenover reminds us that subordinates are always potential threats to superordinates – therefore insubordination is the generic disruption of hierarchical order. The Mediterranean concept of authority has little to do with personal talent or charisma but is almost entirely defined in terms of the right and power to command, enforce laws, exact obedience, determine and judge. Authority is exercised by both men and women in their perspective spheres, so for example it may well be considered the female's role to care for the children etc.

One effect of male-female polarization is a high degree of ambiguity in relationships, often leading to emotional confusion, anxiety and defensiveness. The majority position among ethnologists and anthropologists on male ambiguity in this context begins with the post-Freudian view that all infants, male as well as female, in the pre-oedipal stage identify with their mothers, not pace Freud their fathers. This early identification with the mother renders subsequent ego-identification for males more

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system involves the relation of family experiences to school experiences or school experiences to parish experiences. It also includes the relation of family experiences to peer group experiences, life balance of parents or community based family resources. **The Macrosystem** is often described as the culture or sub youth culture in which the young person lives. This level operates at the outmost layer of the environment, and comprises of cultural values, customs and laws. The effects of the Macrosystem cascades through the previous layers to influence the life development of the young person; for example, the belief that it requires the work of the entire village to raise a child in comparison to the view that it is the sole responsibility of the parents. This in turn effects both societies attitudes towards resources and the parents ability to earn a living, pursue a career and bring up children. Government support for childcare is a contemporary illustration that outlines the significance of the Macrosystem on the Microsystem. Bronfenbrenner emphasises the importance of both in supporting the development of a young person. **The Chronosystem** encompasses the dimension of time and historical events that may impact on a young person's life. World War Two is a prime example, resulting in separation, trauma and death. The influence of these events passes down through the generations and directly impact upon relationships within the Microsystem. **The Exosystem** describes the larger social setting, in which the young person does have an active role. This level impacts on the child through interaction with the Microsystem. For example work-life balance of parents or community based family resources.

<sup>24</sup> David Schultenover SJ, (1993), *View from Rome*, 168ff

problematic than for females, because males must first dis-identify with the mother, then counter identify with the father. This process is difficult because of the often physical and emotional absence from the domestic scene and the mother's compensatory behavior of keeping her son attached to her through an intense, indulgent, smotheringly affectionate but simultaneously aggressive style of mothering. The aggressive style of mothering is traumatic for the child. It often produces a dual consciousness of women that ever after rules the male psyche: he perceives women as a dichotomy of Madonna (the ideal female) and the whore or demon in pursuit of his power<sup>25</sup>. If this construct has validity and can be applied to Benedict XVI then we have further insight into the man.

The model of family and gender roles outlined above, also have application for considering Benedict's understanding of Church. Operative roles with the family are taken by principle figures within the Church. Since from ordination the male assumes the title of "father" their relationship to the Church as institution is that of husband to wife – not wife as person and partner, but as signifying patrimony, possession to be guarded – and their relationship to Church as community is that of husband to wife and father to children. As they ascend the hierarchical ladder from priest to bishop to pope these responsibilities become even more sharply defined as responsibility increases for guarding the "wife" and children" and "patrimony against shame and dishonor.

The exercise of strong authority is relatively simple because it is dictatorial according to the purity system, and discussion is not in order when one exercises authority by invoking the system rendered sacred by age. Hence authority originates from the enforcement of socially accepted mores rather than individual gifts or charisms. Indeed such a notion as the 'personal' has little place in the Mediterranean mind and would be seen as a serious threat to order. According to Schultenover an important aspect of the hierarchical ordering of Mediterranean authority in which roles are always dyadically gender-defined, the ascendant role is always considered male relative to the descendent role, regardless of biological sex of the role-players. In other words subordinates are always considered female. Thus the pope would be considered male relative to the bishops, the bishops male relative to the priests, the priests male relative to seminarians and their parishioners.

Schultenover maintains that this perception of social order leads to overwhelming feelings of ambiguity, vulnerability, and thus defensiveness, which in turn leads to power struggles with accompanying cross-accusations of domination on the one hand and disobedience on the other. The ecclesiastical implications offer insight into the current polarization within the Church between dominant clerical centralists and progressive contextual movements<sup>26</sup>.

The circumstances of Ratzinger's birth, formation and above all his particular Bavarian-Italian influence molded him into the man we see today. Evidence suggests that there are two concrete tensions in Ratzinger's life: the one between the Church and the world the other between his particular Bavarian *pace* Schultenover Mediterranean perceptions and his Germany analytical mind. In this sense Benedict's Regensburg address is semi autobiographical.

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<sup>25</sup> For an in-depth development of this position see Schultenover, 176ff.

<sup>26</sup> Perceptions of the Mediterranean Mind, David Schultenover SJ: (1) All that is needed for life (truth) is contained within the boundaries of the social unit (the Catholic Church), which are secured by gender-defined and shame-based rules of order; (2) The order is perceived as natural, that is, originating with creation, therefore divinely ordained, and therefore to be followed without question; (3) The divinely ordained order is hierarchical, with superiors perceived as male and subordinates as female; (4) But social (and ecclesiastical) order, security, and identity are always tenuous and needing to be guarded against threats from within and from without; (5) Extreme vigilance is therefore always required; (6) Therefore there must always be resolute concern for rules of order; (7) Order is secured by submission to external authority; internal, personal authority is discounted; (8) Indeed of primary consideration is not personhood or personality but divinely ordained roles and rules of proper procedure; (9) Threats are perceived as either male or female, depending on whether they come from above or below the threatened person on the hierarchical social scale. Thus superiors generally perceive threats to their authority as female; subordinates perceive threats as male; (10) Since self sufficiency is guaranteed within the enclave, and since personal authority is discounted, challenges to change are perceived as coming from outside; (11) Further, due to the perception of Self- sufficiency, anything new or different is either forthrightly rejected or belittled as trivial, faddish, and a novelty unworthy of consideration; (12) What pertains as threats from within the enclave is projected without. Thus, because threats within are perceived as female, external threats are also perceived as female, as coming from effeminate wiles and threatening to gain entrance by stealth and seduction; (13) Thus all threats are perceived as stemming from A single source: seductive insubordination – a feminine attribute; (14) Security is maintained by the feminine virtues of humility and obedience to divinely constituted male authority.

The Mediterranean mind construct so described, synthesized with an Augustinian anthropology, would find the post-enlightenment and post-revolutionary technological age fraught with uncertainty. A world to withdraw from. This is in contrast to Vatican II's dialogue agenda, one that was intent upon engaging with that world. In the light of Schultenover's research we have an insight into Benedict XVI. Like all models it is imperfect, a model will never be more than a tool. It should be obvious that while every representative of the Mediterranean mind is indeed representative, *pace* Santrock, he or she is uniquely representative<sup>27</sup>.

## Conclusion

HJ Fischer claims that no German since Luther as had such an impact upon the Catholic Church. When Ratzinger published the precise 'Instruction on Some Aspects of the Theology of Liberation' (1984), he unleashed a storm of protest around the world. He provoked the entire communist world to fury when he called it "the shame of our time" and dismissed its concepts of revolution and class struggles as an illusion. The significance of *Libertatis Nuntius* (1984) and the more conciliatory Instruction *On Christian Freedom and Liberation* (1986) could not have been more poignant in the Latin American context. Ratzinger described liberation theology as 'A perversion of the Christian message as God entrusted it to His Church' and 'a disastrous confusion between the poor of the Scripture and the Proletariat of Marx'. 'In this way they transform the rights of the poor into a class fight within the ideological perspective of the class struggle. For them the 'Church of the Poor' signifies the church of the class which has become aware of the requirements of the revolutionary struggle as a step towards liberation and which celebrates this liberation in the liturgy"<sup>28</sup>.

In his book on Ratzinger, John Allen Jr., the acclaimed Vatican correspondent, drawing upon Hans Küng, claims that Ratzinger switches sides on a number of issues. 'Ratzinger has executed an about face in his views from the time of the Council, all of them concerning the central questions of theology and Church life. Kung has even suggested in the past that Ratzinger had sold his soul for power'<sup>29</sup>. In his expansive memoirs, which make an interesting contrast with the more humble version that Ratzinger produced, Hans Küng explains how he secured the theological post at Tübingen for Ratzinger. He goes on to explain that Ratzinger does not believe the Church needs to be reformed at all. Only its members need to be reformed. The Church itself is holy and immaculate. Only its members are sinners, it is not itself sinful. Karl Rahner points out how completely abstract this distinction is and consequently wants to talk not of a Church of sinners but also a 'sinful Church'. Pope Benedict clearly outlined his agenda for the future on 18 April 2005, at the mass for the election of the new pope, then-Cardinal Ratzinger said the following regarding the modern decline of the Roman Catholic church:

How many winds of doctrine we have known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many ways of thinking... The small boat of thought of many Christians has often been tossed about by these waves – thrown from one extreme to the other: from Marxism to liberalism, even to libertinism; from collectivism to radical individualism; from atheism to a vague religious mysticism; from agnosticism to syncretism, and so forth. Every day new sects are created and what Saint Paul says about human trickery comes true, with cunning which tries to draw those into error. Having a clear faith, based on the Creed of the Church, is often labeled today as a fundamentalism. Whereas, relativism, which is letting oneself be tossed and 'swept along by every wind of teaching', looks like the only attitude (acceptable) to today's standards. We are moving towards a dictatorship of relativism which does not recognize anything as for certain and which has as its highest goal one's own ego and one's own desires.

Benedict XVI in many respects is 'a kind simple person', as Augustine DiNoia a Dominican priest who served under Ratzinger in Rome asserts. This study found a deeply religious, humble man, almost from birth, who loves the church and its ancient liturgy, loves music, fearful of violence, doesn't like sports, nervous in crowds and so forth. I also find agreement with Giuseppe Alberigo, who has known Benedict since the 1960's. In his estimation Ratzinger 'has a shy character, rather mild, but with a rigidity on important questions.' Alberigo adds: "I don't think that a Pope with such a pessimistic vision will be able to deal with the great social problems of the world, or the issue of Islam.

<sup>27</sup> Schultenover, p.188

<sup>28</sup> *Libertatis Nuntius* (1984) p.22, p.24, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the 'Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith'

<sup>29</sup> Allen, p.47

The evidence suggests that Ratzinger's critics are presuming too much when they claim that he sold his soul following Vatican II. Ratzinger was born a conservative, steeped in own traditions stemming from the Bavarian Church. Furthermore the indications are that Ratzinger now Benedict has been consistent throughout his life to the Mediterranean construct of Church illustrated by David Schultenover. From a young boy Ratzinger wanted to be a Cardinal, he realized his life's ambition and then some. Ratzinger's other great master, other than Augustine, was Guardini, he confirmed Ratzinger in his thinking that only harmony with the Church leads to freedom, and above all, makes theology possible. Thus Benedict's subsequent articulation of charity in later works like *Deus Caritas Est* (2005) '*Spe Salvi*' is not his turn to activism, on the contrary, Benedict remains an academic at home in abstract ideas and theories<sup>30</sup>.

The Church remains Joseph Ratzinger's rock, and on it he has built his academic career, it remains his continuity and unity. He will no doubt spend the remainder of his life defending this particular Bavarian reality. Ratzinger's searing experience as a Nazi conscript during World War II left him with an abiding distrust of nationalism and socialism, along with a passionate belief in holding firm to enduring truths. He was 6 when Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933 and 18 when the war ended in 1945. Ratzinger's personal experience left him convinced that the Church was the only institution that could stand up to false ideologies including the dictatorship of relativism.

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<sup>30</sup> Nichols, p.33

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### Without God, Truth or Nature: Richard Rorty on the Primacy of Freedom

By  
John F. Owens

#### Rorty's General Project

One of the more interesting debates in contemporary philosophy concerns the status of the thesis the Medievals called "the truth of things", the view that not only are there things in the world, but there is also a preferred view of them, a way they should be seen if they are to be seen rightly. The thesis connects with the Aristotelian position that some things are examples of natural kinds, having an intelligible identity which is in principle independent of humans and their ways of classification. In recent decades Richard Rorty has mounted a significant challenge to these views, seeing them as fundamentally dependent on a belief in God, and losing their force and plausibility once this belief declines. In his view, Western culture should aim at a certain kind of hope, rather than the sort of knowledge which has preoccupied philosophers (Rorty, 1999, p.24). This paper will examine the main lines of this controversy, suggesting that Rorty's position overlooks the key place of teleology in the Aristotelian account, and that the older tradition looks more promising once this notion is recovered.

Rorty's ultimate aim is to get rid of a certain sort of religious attitude, along with its metaphysical adjuncts. Surprisingly, this does not mean that he is necessarily against belief in God. In his later writings he finds ways to accommodate a qualified theistic belief, which he views as a particular narrative according to which religious-minded people can usefully arrange their lives. For such a belief, the theistic question no longer concerns God's existence, but rather asks "whether it is a good idea for us to continue talking about Him..." (Rorty, 2007, p.16). Within this understanding, a religious narrative can perhaps be justified pragmatically, as giving an interesting shape and purpose to human endeavours. What Rorty is against is a further aspect of religious belief which has traditionally loomed very large, the view that there is something large and non-human that bears in on us immediately, in such a way that we are beholden to it, owing it something like obedience. The object of Rorty's dislike here is broadly defined, so that it also takes in various metaphysical attitudes, which Rorty sees as ultimately religious in inspiration. Kant's ethics offers a prime example of the sort of tendency Rorty has in his sights. In an essay on William James published in 1997, (Rorty, 1999, p.148; James, 1979, p.148) Rorty says that James

deplored the fact that philosophers still followed Kant rather than Mill, still thought of validity as raining down upon a claim 'from some sublime dimension of being, which the moral law inhabits, much as upon the steel of the compass-needle the influence of the Pole rains down from out of the starry heavens'.

Rorty's dislike of religious attempts to correspond to something large and non-human, places him in a line of thought which goes back to Nietzsche. Thinkers in this line are unhappy with the tendency to see time as an offshoot or by-product of eternity, so that it is always beholden to something beyond it. Nietzsche's portrayal of the philosophical journey away from such obedience is large and dramatic. Rorty's version is more low-key, and merely tries to persuade us that the religious-metaphysical view of the world is not very interesting, and we will not lose anything if we let it go (Rorty, 1982, pp.3-18). So far as overt religious positions are concerned, the battle is largely won, with such positions banished from the public sphere. But Rorty thinks the religious urge to obedience lingers on in philosophical views which still appeal to a call to be discerned in the order of the world, or in human nature, or in the idea of goodness, or in the command which reason necessarily gives to itself. Along with these, strong correspondence notions of truth fall under Rorty's ban. All these positions see humans as beholden to something large and non-human, which requires a sort of obedience. The alternative that Rorty promotes is a kind of pragmatism, though it departs considerably from most classical statements of pragmatism. It gives up the aspiration to a strong correspondence, and settles for what he calls "coping", adopting a "hopeful, melioristic, experimental frame of mind" (1999, p.24). While we have to take note of the causal effects of things in the world, we do this as a mere tactical decision, which gets its value from interests of ours, and does not go back to any requirement of correspondence that we owe something or someone. Even Rorty's own approach is not put forward as "corresponding" better to the permanent structure of human life than other approaches (1989, p.8).

He wants to encourage a frame of mind in which such questions no longer move us. We leave them behind not because we have resolved them, or defeated them, but simply because we have lost interest in them.

### **The Theoretical Situation**

Rorty holds that while there are things in the world in the ordinary sense, there is nothing out there that tells us how we are to think about them or conceive them. Whatever there is in the world, there is no truth out there as such. The world does not tell us what we are to make of it, what connections or disconnections we should affirm. As Rorty says, the world does not split up on its own initiative into sentence-shaped chunks called “facts” (Rorty, 1989, p.5). It first gets its contours in light of the words we use and the life-practices behind them. A cosmology that works with concepts of heavenly bodies administers a different set of similarities and differences from a cosmology that has a modern concept of planets. Rorty is happy with contemporary planet-talk, which works well. But we should not give it any large justification, as though it does not just work better, but also represents reality more adequately (1998, p.86). We should see a way of talking as getting us ahead, and proving useful to us, albeit in a somewhat problematic sense of “useful”. When viewed like this, vocabularies cannot appeal to conclusive arguments that would justify them. The only criteria they could use come with the vocabulary that is in question, and cannot therefore justify the vocabulary itself (Rorty, 1989, p.9). Aristotle thought that his ethics articulated a general ideal against which humans can be judged. Rorty thinks he just generalizes the best habits of a fourth-century Athenian gentleman, and that criteria are never more than “the platitudes which contextually define the terms of the final vocabulary currently in use” (1989, p.75).

Rorty has a useful example here, which concerns our identification of an animal like a giraffe. He insists that needs and interests of ours always lie behind our projection of a world in which giraffes can appear. Use of the word “giraffe” gets us ahead in some way, more or less as our adoption of vocabularies involving words like “organ”, or “cell”, or “atom” gets us ahead in other contexts. We should resist the Aristotelian temptation to go further, to where we say that such advances are advances in correspondence, progress towards descriptions which pick out natural kinds, and “cut nature at the joints” as Rorty says (1999, p.xxvi). The line between a giraffe and the surrounding air is clear enough for a human hunter. But it would look quite different to a language-using ant or amoeba, or to a space voyager looking from space. Probably none of these would include the word “giraffe” in a vocabulary. The argument is designed to show that calling a piece of space-time a “giraffe” is no closer to the way things are in themselves than is any other description. Rorty does not want to put the argument forward as an alternative theoretical position. Rather it is designed to show that it is pointless even to set about asking questions about the ultimate correspondence of our vocabularies with the world, because there is nothing to be gained here. Our interest should be limited to asking whether a competing description might be more useful for our purposes (Rorty 1999, p.xxvi). Questions about ultimate correspondence should remain not only unanswered but also unasked. Rorty agrees that there were giraffes long before the human race talked about them. But such talk presupposes our use of the word. What he denies is that this radical use corresponds to something that already was that way, so that we finally get part of reality “right” when we come up with this word. We cannot give any sense to “rightness” here, for the reason that correspondence arises only within language, once the word is already in use. Our choice to use the vocabulary in the first place does not correspond to anything. Rorty (1998, p.90) describes the view that he wants to criticize in terms which paraphrase the ontology developed by Aristotle. It holds that “there was a world, consisting of a multiplicity of objects differentiated by intrinsic, non-descriptive-relative features, waiting for somebody to come along and develop a language that cut it at the joints by assigning a word to each object...”

Rorty sees the world that is being farewellled here as ultimately *religious*. He says that we want to hold there is a language out there because we think that in the last analysis reality is personal. There is someone behind it who named the things so that they carry their names within them, and show themselves as already having an identity, an essence perhaps, so that they are constructed according to an intelligible blueprint of some kind. Someone has set up in advance a right way of knowing these things, and our knowledge has to correspond with this. Rorty thinks such commitments to “correspondence” go back to an original religious intuition. He says (1989, p.21): “For as long as we think that ‘the world’ names something we ought to respect as well as cope with, something person like in that it has a preferred description of itself, we shall insist that any philosophical account of truth save the ‘intuition’ that truth is ‘out there’.”

Rather unexpectedly, Rorty agrees here with Thomas Aquinas, who also holds that the ideal of correspondence connects with the belief in an eye of God, the thesis of the *veritas rerum*, the view that

reality itself is “true” in some deep sense. Aquinas suggests a parallel between the eye of an artisan determining the measure of an artefact like a table or chair, and the eye of God which is the measure of a natural object. Where Rorty says that human needs and interests offer the ultimate measure of things, Aquinas agrees that this is true of artificial things like tables and chairs, but not of natural things like giraffes. Here the determining mind is the mind of God. Aquinas (1952, p.11) puts it this way: “things are themselves measured by the divine intellect, in which are all created things – just as all works of art find their origin in the intellect of an artist.” Our knowledge does not correspond, as in the Kantian view, to a set of materials which it has formed into objects of knowledge, but to an original identity that has been inscribed in things by a creative knowing glance. And for Aquinas (1952, p.58), “the forms of things are the impressing of the divine knowledge in things,” a position that presumably expresses the New Testament doctrine of “creation through the Word”. Rorty helps show what this familiar thesis really means. The objects of our knowledge should not be seen as materials that have been formed into objects by the conceptual frameworks or vocabularies which are brought to bear on them, but rather there is a way that they are, to which our knowledge should correspond. Rorty agrees with Aquinas on the major premise that natures, or natural kinds, depend on an effective concept of God. But the paths of the two thinkers then diverge radically, with Aquinas developing an ontology based on the connection between correspondence and divine knowledge, and Rorty wanting to banish both terms from philosophy.

### **A Peculiar Freedom**

This view of things opens up a peculiar heady freedom, in that whatever constraints apply within a vocabulary, there are no constraints on the choice of the vocabulary itself. At a philosophical level, all final vocabularies, and the worlds whose emergence they facilitate, are equal. Rorty calls the people who exercise the freedom to engineer new final vocabularies “strong poets” (1989 p28). The activity of forging a new vocabulary is mysterious, because it is not governed by everyday criteria, but brings into being ways of associating and dissociating we had never thought of before, and with this, the possibility of living in a new world. Copernicus and Galileo forged a vocabulary which showed it was possible to associate Mars with earth, and not with the sun or moon, as the previous vocabulary had insisted. Freud instituted a vocabulary which challenged the traditional dissociation of rational convictions and convictions brought about by causes (Rorty, 1989, p.47).

It is important that the appearance of new vocabularies is not part of a teleological process that fulfils some larger goal. Rorty thinks that such vocabularies are the product of a peculiar moment of dissociation, which arises when someone says “maybe we don’t have to talk the way we do” (Rorty, 1991, p.43), and says this not for any particular reason, but simply because they sense boundaries to their language, even though they cannot yet articulate what lies beyond them, because they are still situated in their current vocabulary, which of its nature suppresses the other possibilities. For a certain kind of person, whom Rorty calls the “ironist”, this arouses an urge to explore other worlds. Rorty insists that this process has no *telos*, so that there is no deeper reality behind the vocabularies which they are all trying to uncover, and which some of them uncover better than others. This does not mean we cannot be strongly committed to certain forms of life, and the vocabularies that go with them, and even commend them to others. But such commendations are always to some degree circular. A Westerner might relish the freedom of the West, and want to commend it to others, along with its vocabulary. But such freedom could well look decadent unless a person first exists within the kind of world it creates, at least to some degree. The circularity of such commendations looks more respectable once we give up the thought that there might be a possibility of metaphysical grounding, and accept that everybody who is arguing on fundamental matters is doing this sort of thing, presenting a circular argument that tries to jolt others into an appreciation of a different world. Rorty usefully compares the process whereby strong poetry produces new final vocabularies to the process of emergence of new species or life-forms, which bring their own new standards of excellence. He says (1999, p.27):

Pragmatists – both classical and ‘neo-’ – do not believe that there is a way things really are. So they want to replace the appearance-reality distinction by that between descriptions of the world and of ourselves which are less useful and those which are more useful. When the question ‘useful for what?’ is pressed, they have nothing to say except ‘useful to create a better future’. When they are asked, ‘Better by what criterion?’, they have no detailed answer, anymore than the first mammals could specify in what respects they were better than the dying dinosaurs.

### **Rorty’s Criticism of Aristotle**

Rorty can be seen as attacking two key Aristotelian positions. The first is the view that there are natural kinds. Rorty sees this as the thesis that there is a kind of language inscribed in things

themselves, giving them a privileged description, as though it were the description they somehow use of themselves. He regards the thesis as nonsense, given that nothing talks outside of human beings. Given that the only vocabularies are human ones, objects spring up as a result of the connections and disconnections such vocabularies bring into play. It is striking that for this view, an object like a giraffe emerges in much the same way as does an object like a mountain, rising out of cognitive materials viewed from a set of human interests (e.g. an interest in climbing). Rorty proposes that we try a broad pragmatic description for all of our knowledge. After we have determined the part that a concept plays in our coping, there is no interesting further question to ask, about whether it might be “true” in some larger sense. Rorty says (1998, p.72) that “(w)hat people like Kuhn, Derrida, and I believe is that it is pointless to ask whether there really are mountains or whether it is merely convenient for us to talk about mountains.” He says more or less the same about an animal like a giraffe, whose concept belongs in a taxonomy, a grid that situates the animal in relation to what is around it, telling us that a giraffe is a mammal, to be associated more with a zebra than with an emu. Rorty insists there is nothing behind such connections except the accidents and interests of history, which arise as humans cope with the world around them. We gain nothing by asking whether a particular vocabulary cuts reality at the joints, and grasps the way “things really are”, beyond the connections and dissociations which our vocabularies bring into play. We have to forget the old theological or philosophical ideal of corresponding with the things, and to get down to coping with them, putting a narrative round their causal impact.

The second Aristotelian position that Rorty attacks is the view that choice is always a choice of means, and that fundamental ends are always already given, so that freedom is a secondary thing, beholden to the primary notion of the “end” or “good”, and liable to be judged according to whether it attains the good or not. In other words the concept of freedom brings a duty of conformity or correspondence. By contrast, Rorty proposes that the most interesting choices, the ones that make human history, are radical, putting together new forms of human life that bring their own goals with them. The Aristotelian Pope John Paul II (1993) wrote an encyclical defending the traditional view that truth has primacy over freedom. Rorty (2006) has a volume of interviews called *Take Care of Freedom and Truth Will Take Care of Itself*.

### **An Aristotelian Response: the Place of Teleology**

Rorty’s position is surely stronger than is usually acknowledged, once it is seen as offering not just criticisms of the tradition, but a whole alternative way of seeing the world, that includes its own checks and balances. Even people who are well acquainted with the detail of the position often feel however that it is deeply awry, denying a powerful intuition that holds most of us in its grip, the view that there is a way that things are, and that our knowledge should try radically to correspond to this. I want to suggest a defence of the older ontology developed by Aristotle, which can confront Rorty’s argument that there are things out there, but there is no truth out there, so that there is nothing to which knowledge could correspond. I think an Aristotelian reply should focus on the area of teleology, and the strangeness of our interactions with living things, especially our interactions with other people.

The first move is to question the easy transition which Rorty and like-minded thinkers make from discussion of things like mountains to discussion of things like giraffes. Aristotle sees a significant difference here. A mountain is not really an entity at all, but rather a collection or heap of entities, given that its constituents are preserved as small particles (Aristot. *de Gen. et Corr.* 328a8). Similarly, artefacts, the familiar tables and chairs of many a plodding Aristotelian student introduction, are not entities for Aristotle, but collections of things. Considered as wholes, they are not really there as things with a nature of their own (Aristot. *Phys.* 192b9-22), at least not in the way a thing like a giraffe is there, a point which has been interestingly made in an analytic setting, by Peter van Inwagen (1990). When heaps or artefacts are in question, Aristotle agrees with Rorty, that they are bound together into objects by our concepts, and are constituted as what they are only in relation to these. Our concepts do not cut such things “at the joints”, but rather bind them into things that acquire joints through the act of binding. It is quite otherwise with things like giraffes. The joints we identify in a giraffe are not just joints formed by our concepts, but are, significantly, joints for the giraffe itself. For Aristotle, this is the beginning of a way that an entity in a certain sense “speaks”. Of course it does not actually speak, but it has the beginnings of something which can eventually issue in speech, namely a stance on the world. This does not mean that the animal adopts a sort of mental posture, but simply that its very existence is a striving for certain ends (above all, for more life). The animal therefore comes at us not as materials to be arranged by our concepts or languages, but as something that is already arranging itself, embedding a kind of understanding which humans can articulate and draw out into a word.

Part of the problem in dealing with this philosophically is that we are never forced to acknowledge the life of an animal in the way we are forced to acknowledge its height or colour. Kant (1952, p.376) makes a distinction here, between concepts that are “constitutive” of the basics of a world, and concepts that “regulate” ways we think of some of the basics once they are constituted. He places the attribution of teleology, or life, in the second category. Certainly the life of a thing is strangely elusive, when we try to get it in focus. While it is the central object of our gaze when we identify an animal as an animal, and not just as a collection of parts, we never observe the life as such, as though it were some further qualification alongside the colour and smell of the animal. When faced by the thought that an animal “understands” itself like this in a certain way, and faces us with the beginnings of a word about itself, our epistemological instincts tell us that this cannot be, and that our registration of the animal as alive must go back to some regulative cognitive function of ours. Once we move in this direction, we lose the sense that there is anything more in the world than materials, which various languages form into objects. Our awareness of a living thing tends to collapse to the same level as our awareness of an object in a painting, which arises from suitably “regulated” colours. Does this really describe the passage that goes on when we suddenly realize that something is alive, which we had thought inanimate, and experience a kind of awakening, as in the moment when we suddenly feel a tug on the end of a fishing-line, or realize that what we thought was a telephone answering-machine is in fact a live speaker. We do not so much arrange a set of materials into a picture as realize that there is another agent out there, who has quite different interests from ours, and who is moving in relation to us. This takes us well beyond our dealing with causal impacts by developing more or less useful vocabularies, which is the way Rorty wants to put it. Rather we recognize that there is something in front of us that has its own contours, having already understood itself in a particular way, so that it is not simply a silhouette that is formed from materials framed by our interests. We are never forced to acknowledge such a thing, and can remain at the level of arranging materials into objects for the sake of our coping, if we want. Some choose to stand off and regard the antics of an animal, or another human being, in the same way as we regard an avalanche on a mountain, something we approach merely tactically. Mary Midgley (1994, pp.96-100) refers dismissively to scientific approaches which see an animal more or less as a complicated volcano, a procession of materials through a stable frame which the materials themselves form for a time. A person who carried through such an attitude in the everyday would admittedly be a very strange person. Before we know it, most of us consent to acknowledge the reality (that is, the life) of the animal that looks back at us from a set of interests that are not ours, accepting that there is a way the animal is, so that it is not just an object formed by our interests. We can see mice as “vermin”, and can at least imagine them as “food”. Here we are forming materials of the world into objects that are put together by ourselves along with our interests and vocabularies. But we are also capable of approaching the mouse in a different way, where we come to acknowledge its reality, as a small animal with interests oddly like ours, and which can look at us from out of those interests. This is to start to come to the reality of the mouse, and not just to an object constituted by our interests. It is to see the mouse, as the Christian creation tradition has it, as formed by a kind of “word”, so that being a mouse is already a sort of interpretation that human words can pick up and articulate. Some such attitude is probably presupposed by the peculiar human possibility of making friends with the mouse.

As an example of the contrast between framing materials to form an object, and coming to articulate a word which the object itself in a sense “speaks”, we could think of the example of a small child who is in a bad mood with his or her parents, and is in a certain sense enjoying the bad mood, and the feelings that go with it. They frame the parents within a hostile discourse, saying things like “I hate you”, “you don’t love me”, “you don’t care about me”, and so on, using a concept to articulate a heap of materials, the sort of thing we do when we put together a mountain. The parents are allowed to appear only as they appear within and for this discourse. But there is a strategy that parents sometimes develop for dealing with this sort of thing – to try to make the child laugh. The child is then faced with an interesting kind of choice, between holding the parents within the frame of reference created by the rage, so that the parents remain correlates, or giving in and laughing, and somehow coming into another world, where the life of the parents is acknowledged and recognized as an independent reality. Again, the child is not forced one way or the other. It is always possible to remain within the rage and keep the frame in place, so that the humorous remarks are seen as mocking, confirming the point that “they hate me”. And yet there is an almost irresistible compulsion to laugh, which brings the child into a world where he or she accepts that the objects of knowledge are not just objects of knowledge. They emerge from the half-light where they exist as subjects that have certain objects present to them, and consent to come into a common world. I think this moment is important for understanding Aristotelian views of reality and the world.

The teleological direction of a living thing is a kind of implicit preferred description or self-understanding existing in the world, the sort of thing that Rorty thought we could not have. Such a description is oddly present, even before it is formulated, as though it is waiting to be put into words by humans. Another human or animal looks at us as something, as it confronts us in the world. This was the sense perhaps in which Aristotle thought that things had a deep nature, the beginnings of a language, not in the sense that animals speak, but that they have already implicitly understood themselves, so that they *are* in a certain way. In this respect at least, they can look at us in a way that almost forces us, yet also appeals to our freedom, to bring this to articulation.

MacIntyre (1985) argues that the philosophical choice facing the Western ethical tradition is one between Aristotle and Nietzsche. I think Rorty gives us a clear example of this sort of choice in a broader context, showing that traditional ideas of God, nature and freedom belong together, and that if we want to think one of them, we have to think the others as well. He of course does not want to have any of them, and is fascinated by the exploration of one of them (freedom) when it is uncoupled from the others. Those who still want to have all of them have their work cut out, if they are to develop a plausible account of how it is possible. It seems to me that an understanding of teleology is crucial for the attempt.

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## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### Lonergan, Emergent Evolution and the Cosmic Process

By  
Anthony B. Kelly

#### Introduction

God's motive for Creation is the potential production of another entity similar to God. While God can only create creatures, an intelligent created entity could possibly create additional aspects of its own being that could make it similar to God. To open this possibility God initiates Time, Energy and a number of mathematical Cosmic Constants in the Big Bang. These interact to produce both Matter and Life, each with appropriate laws of nature. Matter freely self-organises and produces at least one life-friendly planet. Life begins on Earth and evolves in complexity and intelligence. Some members of an evolved intelligent life form – Homo sapiens – eventually begin to make themselves similar to God, in aspects of their being such as creativity and goodness. The search for God's motive for creation begins with Aristotle, who almost solves the problem but considers he has developed an antinomy. God's motive becomes clear when Samuel Alexander's (1920) and Bernard Lonergan's understanding of the Cosmos as an Emergent process is applied to Aristotle's original conclusions. God's motive appears to be the potential development of another entity or entities similar to God.

Samuel Alexander (1920) identifies the Emergent stages of the process of cosmic development.

Bernard Lonergan proposes a cosmic process that develops from stage to stage, with each stage of the process exhibiting greater freedom than the preceding stage, leading to the freedom of humanity to restructure both itself and the world. The complex form of the cosmic process, beginning with the Big Bang, is understandable once the purpose of the process is understood. This purpose is to make possible the free self-creation of new aspects of the being of a created entity, to enable members of that entity to make themselves similar to God in creativity and goodness.

God cannot create an entity that is similar to the self-existent God, as God can only create creatures.

However God can provide the means, in the Big Bang, to initiate the self-organisation of a series of freely operating cosmic processes, which could lead to the evolution of intelligent animal species.

Members of such a species could eventually develop themselves in goodness and creativity, making some members of the species, such as Jesus, similar to God and an appropriate subject of God's love.

Recognition of this purpose leads to the resolution of Aristotle's antinomy.

God is necessarily "hands-off" the cosmic process once it has been initiated. The Big Bang provides the Energy, the Time and the mathematical Cosmic Constants that make planet Earth, life and the process of evolution possible. The cosmic process is self-organising at the Emergent Stages of Matter and Life, and self-creating at the Emergent Stages of Mind and at the Human Moral-cultural Emergent Stage. Humanity is the original "Do it yourself" kit.

#### The significance of god's motive for creation

Understanding God's motive for Creation is important because God's motive, once it is understood, can provide a criterion against which doctrines that were formulated in a more primitive context can be tested and if necessary reconsidered. This reconsideration could apply equally to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. One other possible way of approaching the question of God's motive for Creation would be to consider what kind of God is presupposed by some of the doctrines of these and other belief systems. Could God be an exponent of the mass killing of people of other races or faiths, of everlasting torture or of everlasting insatiable carnality? Thanks to Aristotle we do not need to continue with this form of thought-experiment.

#### Aristotle

Patrick Madigan (1988) outlines the discussion of God's motive for Creation from Aristotle to Aquinas and beyond. Aristotle initiates the discussion when he establishes two apparently contradictory conclusions.

(1) God is necessary, as first mover, to explain the existence of the world, and (2) God is not able to be the cause of an entity that is significantly different from God. As Madigan (1988) says: "Aristotle establishes simultaneously two very strong points: first, that God must exist as a necessary first cause to explain the world, and secondly that God, if he exists, could not cause a world significantly distinct from himself. Both conclusions are demonstrated as necessarily true, and the one contradicts the other".

The apparent contradiction between these two conclusions relies on the Cosmos being complete, as Aristotle understands it, and not in process, as Alexander (1920) and Lonergan understand it. Aristotle's only understanding of process is based on the circular, repetitive, biological process. Aristotle does not possess the category of linear process, in which the outcome can differ radically from the inputs. The lack of this category makes Aristotle think he has developed an antinomy. I argue that there is no real contradiction between Aristotle's conclusions.

While God cannot directly create an entity that is not "significantly distinct" from God, God can open the possibility of the self-creation of additional aspects of the being of a created entity, which could eventually make that entity, or some of its members, similar to God. God cannot intervene in such a process without frustrating its self-creating purpose. This is why God is "hands-off" the process that follows the Big Bang. The Big Bang provides everything necessary for the cosmos to develop by self-organisation until a series of intelligent animal species evolve. Any further development can only be through a process of self-creation by members of such an intelligent species.

### **The big bang and the cosmic process**

The Big Bang is the initiation by God not only of Time and of Energy, but also of a number of mathematical "cosmic constants". Cosmologist Martin Rees (2000), shows that a series of mathematical "cosmic constants" are embedded in the Big Bang. Rees states: "Mathematical laws underpin the fabric of our universe, not just atoms, but galaxies, stars and people. And everything takes place in the arena of an expanding universe, whose properties were imprinted into it at the time of the initial Big Bang." Rees (2000) identifies six of these mathematical cosmic constants as particularly relevant to the present state of the Cosmos, stating: "These six numbers constitute a 'recipe' for a universe." Subsequent development is sensitive to their values, as: "if any one of them was to be 'untuned', there would be no stars and no life."

Rees (2000) does not accept the obvious implication that the cosmic constants are evidence of design. Instead he postulates a multiplicity of universes with different cosmic constants. In adopting this position Rees (2000) multiplies entities beyond necessity, in defiance of Occam's razor. I consider and reject this position in "The Intelligent Design of the Cosmos" (Kelly 2006).

I argue in my Thesis "The Process of the Cosmos" (Kelly 1998) that both matter and life develop by self-organisation. I am indebted to Rees (2000) when he shows that the Cosmic Constants are the mechanism responsible for this self-organisation. The Cosmic Constants provide the laws of nature that apply to most new Emergent Stages as the basis for a new Emergent Stage develops. Thus Life emerges when an appropriate form of Matter, in a favourable environment, make it possible for the Cosmic Constants to initiate Life.

### **Alexander's emergent evolution**

In "Space, Time and Deity" (1920), Samuel Alexander shows that the Cosmos develops through a series of Emergent Stages. Each Emergent Stage introduces something completely new into the world, but the new Emergent Stage is still able to be affected by the laws of the Stage from which it has emerged. These characteristics are the essence of any Emergent. Thus when Life emerges from Matter it is completely new but still affected by the laws of Matter, while it has its own new laws. Most, but not all, Emergent Stages occur when an existing Stage provides the material and the environment that are necessary for the Cosmic Constants to initiate a new Stage.

Alexander (1920) identifies four Emergent Stages: Matter, Life, Mind, and Moral Personality. Matter emerges first, then Life. He considers Mind constitutes an Emergent because it manifests consciousness. I regard Mind as an Emergent because of its mode of origin. The development of the human mind is not a function of the Cosmic Constants. It is the first product of the process of human self-creation. I identify the fourth Emergent Stage, his "Moral Personality", as the Human Moral-Cultural Stage. This Stage only begins within the last 2,600 years, when some humans begin to think critically and begin to develop an awareness of the natural moral law.

### **Lonergan's "emergent probability"**

For Lonergan there is a cosmic process that develops from stage to stage, with each stage exhibiting greater freedom than the preceding stage, leading to the freedom of humanity to restructure both itself and the world. At the root of this cosmic process Lonergan affirms a directed dynamism, parallel to the detached and disinterested human desire to know.

This pure desire

heads for an objective that becomes known only through its own unfolding in understanding and judgement, and so the dynamism of universal process is directed, not to a generically, specifically or

individually determinate goal, but to whatever becomes determinate through the process itself in its effectively probable realization of its own possibilities (Lonergan 1958).

Lonergan draws a parallel between the incomplete human knowing that heads towards fuller knowing and an incomplete Cosmos that is heading towards fuller being. While there is such a thing as finality, it is not “some pull exerted by the future on the present” but is an affirmation that the Cosmos “is not at rest, not static, not fixed in the present, but in process, in tension, fluid.” the principle of finality provides “an upwardly but indeterminately directed dynamism towards ever fuller realization of being.” Lonergan does not explain what might constitute the ultimate end of this process of “ever fuller realization of being”. I suggest the only credible end of this process is the self-creation of entities similar to God.

### **Cosmic and human development**

The Big Bang provides the Time, the Energy and the Cosmic Constants which together provide the foundation of Matter and allow for its development. Matter develops into a number of Galaxies, Solar systems and planets. The extent of the Cosmos, the random interaction of laws of nature and the unlimited time available, ensure the eventual production of at least one life-friendly planet – Earth. Life emerges on Earth, where evolution produces a number of increasingly intelligent, but instinctive, animal species. Members of one such species - Homo sapiens - eventually develop their cognitive capacities beyond the capacities provided by instinct. They begin to recognise and utilise information other than that which they recognise instinctively. This self-development initiates the human mind, and makes Homo sapiens human. As Lonergan (1974) notes: “Man’s development is a matter of getting beyond himself, of transcending himself, of ceasing to be an animal in a habitat and of becoming a genuine person in a community.”

With the self-development of a mind Homo sapiens cease to be mere animals and become human. They are no longer bound by their instincts. They become free to develop other characteristics, such as creativity and goodness. These characteristics, when sufficiently developed, could make them similar to God and appropriate for God to love. To understand this self-development, from the animal level to the human level, we need to consider what it is that distinguishes the various levels of life.

### **Information**

The difference between the various levels of life is closely related to the type of information that is able to be detected at each level. Every living species recognises and reacts to the information that is essential to the species survival. Different forms of life react to different information, in the sense of relevant detectable differences. As Andrzej Chmielecki (1998) notes “information – defined here as any detectable difference of physical states - (is) the determining principle of all animate systems, one which determines both their architecture and their operation.”

Plants react to differences in soil temperatures and to other physical factors. These provide the plant with information relevant to the survival of its species. Animal species are not limited to detecting information that relates solely to the survival of the species. Their instincts can enable them to detect and react to information that could relate to their individual survival. This capacity to detect a wider range of information is the beginning of intelligence. For some species this perception of information extends to the recognition of natural items that can be used as tools. All Hominid species display this capacity.

### **The hominids**

There are many other Hominid species during the million years before Homo sapiens evolve with a significant linguistic capability some 160,000 years ago. Initially Homo sapiens hunt and gather just as earlier Hominids had over the previous million years. There seem to be no significant material differences between their activities and those of earlier Hominids during their first 100,000 years as a Hominid species. However, some time before the Upper Palaeolithic Revolution of 45,000 years ago, Homo sapiens begin to recognise and utilise a range of information beyond that which other Hominid species have been able to recognise. This development is initially demonstrated by the beginning of human cultures.

The development of a mind does not appear to be a function of the size of Homo sapiens’ brain. Neanderthals evolve some 230,000 years ago, well before Homo sapiens. They are physically stronger and have a larger brain, but they die out when Homo sapiens begin to form cultures. With the development of a mind, Homo sapiens may have become able to out-compete the Neanderthals, just as the Dingo was to out-compete the stronger and fiercer, but less intelligent, Thylacine or “Tasmanian Tiger”, when the Dingo arrived in Australia some 4,000 years ago.

Some human hunter-gatherers eventually recognise that the regular annual die-off of edible plants that leave dormant seeds or tubers provides the information that enables them to begin agriculture. This insight takes a further 35,000 years to develop, from the initial formation of human cultures in the Upper Palaeolithic Revolution to the beginning of the Neolithic Agricultural Revolution. The human mind continues to develop in the process of making connections of this type. Mind constitutes the third Emergent Stage in the process of Emergent Evolution.

The most recent Emergent stage, the Human Moral-Cultural Stage, only begins to develop within the last 2,600 years. Only humans can be moral. A person's innate morality, as distinct from the moral criteria of their culture or religion, is the measure of their humanity. Principled morality is still rare, as Lawrence Kohlberg has shown. The Human Moral-Cultural Emergent stage involves the perception and application of the natural moral law.

### **The origin of human consciousness**

Both Bruno Snell (1953), and Julian Jaynes (1976), have shown that the present form of human moral and critical consciousness, involving both logical reasoning and moral awareness, took Homo sapiens millennia to begin to develop.

Snell (1953) and Jaynes (1976) offer quite different explanations of the present form of human consciousness, in which humans have insights into their own mental life and the mental life of others. Jaynes (1976) proposes the prior existence of a bicameral mind, on the model of the bicameral brain, while Snell (1953) traces the development of the present form of human consciousness through Greek literature. As Snell (1964) comments in his preface to "the rapid development of Greek thought in the fifth century B.C. is a fascinating spectacle . . . And since these new ideas became a possession of Western Civilization, we can observe ourselves growing."

Jaynes (1976) suggests that in the bicameral mind one part of the brain became aware of moral commands which were then "heard" by the individual human, and to hear was to obey. Jaynes (1976)' ideas are applied to the pre-logical Hebrews by Rabbi James Cohn (2007). Cohn (2007) regards the Biblical Abraham as pre-logical, saying: "Abraham is not a model of faith. . . . He is a product of his times. He hears and obeys. He cannot *not* obey the voice once he hears it."

Both Snell and Jaynes (1976) see the beginning of morality as linked to the beginning of the present form of human consciousness. Snell's analysis of the gradual development of the present form of human consciousness over a considerable time appears more reasonable to me, but Jaynes (1976)' approach supports Plato's idea that values constitute an objective realm of essences, which humans become aware of a priori. The "voices" heard by bicameral minds appear to be intuitions of Plato's realm of essences, particularly as the voices focus on moral behaviour.

Homo sapiens' mind may have begun to develop as a by-product of sapiens' linguistic capability. Individual words would have initially had a limited application but many words have an inherent flexibility. As Phil Eklund notes in "The Jaynesian": "A word is a communication that can be stored in memory in a versatile verbal format, which allows learning in one area to be metaphorically applied in other areas." (Summer 2007, 3) This potential for language to lead to an increase in understanding appears to first become a reality some 30,000 years ago when: "As suddenly as a light switch being turned on, people were leaving grave goods, making idols, painting cave walls, the full gamut of bicameral authorisations." (ibid)

### **Humanity as a do-it-yourself-kit: hominid to human**

Humans are products of a continuing process of self-creation, through which they can cease to be just another animal in a habitat and can begin to make themselves fully human. The first step in this process is the self-development of the human mind. The Upper Palaeolithic Revolution is generally accepted as evidence of this initial development.

The physical evidence of further development is traceable through technology, but if the purpose of the cosmic process is the potential production of another entity similar to God then the most important human changes will be cultural, both intellectual and moral. These constitute the process of human self-creation towards divinity.

As an eminently moral product of the moral context of Judaism, Jesus can be understood as a proleptic success of this process of human self-creation. The phenomenon of Jesus provides support for the argument that the motive for Creation is the potential production of other entities similar to God, as does the intellectual and moral creativity of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in the Classical Greek context. While Jesus provides the clearest example of the success of the cosmic process, other members of intellectual and moral cultures that have been recognised as Saints, have created aspects of their own being that make them similar to God in goodness

### **In a nutshell**

Intelligent created entities can create additional aspects of their own being that can make them similar to God. To open this possibility God initiates Time, Energy and a number of mathematical Cosmic Constants in the Big Bang. These interact to produce both Matter and Life, with appropriate laws of nature. Matter freely self-organises and produces our life-friendly planet. Life begins on Earth and evolves in complexity and intelligence. Members of an intelligent life form – Homo sapiens – can make themselves similar to God in creativity and goodness. Jesus and Socrates appear to be proleptic products of this process of human self-creation.

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## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### Conversion/Politics by

Matthew John Paul Tan

#### Introduction

If there is one thing that the West values more than anything, it is the degree of freedom that many societies currently do not enjoy. Most, if not all, western societies have in various ways, tailored their legal and political arrangements to maximise the capacities of each individual to make his or her own choices in the absence of any external coercion. One example of such interference, many argue, would be proselytisation, or the making of converts to a particular religion or cause.

At the heart of many political projects that protects this kind of freedom is the creation of the public square, a political haven designed to enable the free exchange of ideas that take place with no paralleling evangelical project. Very often, however, the defence of a proselyte-free zone has been used as justification for the exclusion of those deemed to threaten to disrupt the pristine neutrality of that space with evangelical intent, the most obvious target being religious voices.

But is such a space a truly proselyte-free zone? Are we really as free as the defenders of the public square make us out to be? There appears to be an assumption, one shared even by sections of the Church, that the current state-centric political framework that makes the public square possible lacks any evangelical intent. However, I argue that politics is fundamentally evangelical and that the current political framework acts as an evangelical force, making proselytes by marking a secular gospel on the bodies of the very people the Christian Gospel seeks to reach. This assertion will be based on an epistemology that treats knowledge categories to act on the body as much as they act on the mind, and that conversion in the face of this evangelisation takes place through a recruitment of a body into practices long before it occurs through a cognitive assent to a corpus of propositions. The body then becomes a crucial site for evangelisation.

My paper will explain how this evangelical and conversional process takes place. I ultimately reject any notion of a theologically neutral public space and suggest a new area of evangelical concern for the Church, which at the same time implicates the Church in what Graham Ward calls the “politics of Believing (Ward 2000a, pp. 71-4)”, in that sustaining the believability of this ecclesial discourse requires attention to the production of communities of belief. This attention to communities of belief is significant, for it challenges the assumption concerning not only the monochrome nature of the state frame, but the neutrality of that frame in terms of sustaining an evangelical ecology. Ultimately, this paper argues that the Modern assumption of a theologically neutral public space must be rejected, since no facet of life would be free from evangelical processes. The practices that sustain that “neutral” space are still implicated in the process of evangelisation.

#### Belief, Subjectivity and Social Imaginaries

To explain how political frameworks can be evangelical, it is necessary to question the “natural” status of our current political arrangements. Hendrik Spruyt's *The Sovereign State and its Competitors*, posits a powerful argument that current institutional arrangements arise more from the granting of political privilege than proven merit (Spruyt 1994 pp. 148-179). This is significant because his argument gives political credence to institutions that *lack* such privilege. Moreover, it is important in helping us consider the landscape as more complex than what mainstream political theories suggest.

It gives added weight to arguments by constructivists and feminists that give political credence to interlocking communal practices and significations, what Ward calls “social imaginaries”, and regarding these imaginaries as having as much political legitimacy as Westphalian statecraft, though lacking the privilege of the imaginary of the Westphalian State. Privileged or otherwise, what gives all social practices and relations their political power is their ability to capture and mobilise a shared communal imagination (Anderson 2006). It is the intimacy between the physical creation of social institutions and their capture of the imagination that give such social arrangements the label of ‘social imaginaries’. Viewed this way, one can expose as myth the notion that the current, inherently state-centric, public political framework is the only one that humans can operate in. Westphalian political institutions are not inevitable givens but only dominant social imaginaries (Cavanaugh 2004), a dominance gained by political privilege and mass assent rather than demonstrated efficacy.

So if privilege underpins the dominance of the state form, can one assume the state-centric status quo to be ideologically neutral? The answer to this question would depend on one's assumptions concerning

the self-sufficiency of the subject, and the stability of what it knows and wants. Spruyt's potent analysis still betrays an assumption of an autonomous and stable subject, and this assumption runs against Foucault's highly influential shift from the knowing to the discursive subject (Foucault 1970, pp. xiv), a subject that is unstable, possessing no immediate consciousness of itself, and is always affected by his position within particular times and spaces (Ward 2000a, p.17).

So who a subject is and what that subject knows emerges not from mere cognitive assent to propositions, but from its immersion into a pool of symbols operating within a particular social imaginary. So to tie subjectivity with evangelisation, it is necessary first to see how subjectivity is imbricated in the formation of social imaginaries.

### **The Formation of Social Imaginaries**

To begin our consideration of this segment, one must start with Louis Althusser's famous dictum that there is an intimate "theory practice relationship": practices explicate the possibilities of theory (Bloch 1995 p.268, Althusser 1969, p.172), while theories are what instruct and infuse meaning into practices (Althusser 1969 p.169, Smith 2004 p.232).

This is a statement that is theologically significant since, as Ward reminds us "what surpasses the social must still work within the social (Ward 2005, p.15)". Christianity thus cannot remain a mere mental category that deigns to judge social practices whilst being itself cut off from a distinct social practice. Also, a Christianity centred on an incarnate God must therefore require social praxes in order to be efficacious. Christianity needs *praxis* to form a concrete locus from which to interpret, discern and critique reality (Harding 1991), comprising what feminists call a "standpoint". The practical nature of Christian imaginaries is accentuated further when one speaks of Christianity as a task of "read[ing] the signs of the times (Matt 16:3)". Such a reading does not merely comprise textual analysis, since the things to be 'read' are the self and its experiences of social phenomena. At the same time, the self and social phenomena resemble texts because their meanings are not readily accessible (Fish 1980). They can only be "read" through a process of discernment, which in turn arises from practical engagements. The process of discernment also involves a coupling of concrete engagement with these phenomena with a lens of an interpretive tradition (Ward 2000b, p.103).

To tie this back to subjectivity, it means that conceptions of the self are caught up in acts of interpretation (Smith 2006, p.48). However, Derrida reminds us that the context within which acts of interpretation take place is constantly changing. Therefore all interpretations, including interpretations of the self, cannot remain stable independently (Derrida 1982, p.320). The stabilisation of the subject then is possible only when it is formed in relation to other subjects (Ward 2000a, pp.17-18). Communities of interpreters with shared interpretive practices thus play two very important roles. First, they provide stability to all interpretations, including those of the self (Fish 1980, pp.4-16). They also provide concrete spaces that give that interpretation believability. This is important because one needs more than an interpretation of reality, but also a disposition to regard it as a reliable interpretation. One needs what Pierre Bourdieu calls the *habitus* or "community of dispositions (Bourdieu 1977, p.35)", that makes one gravitate towards seeing things one way rather than another. But this disposition must subsist within a "field", some kind of "social universe (Bourdieu 1993, p.162)" that inserts bodies into a "structure of social positions socially marked by the social properties of [the social universe's] occupants, through which they manifest themselves (Bourdieu 1993, p.71)". The possibility of Christian discernment, or any kind of discernment, is imbricated in performances of communal formation, cultural engagement as well as reflection. These are practices constitutive of the Christian standpoint.

What then are the sites on which the data perceived by these lenses is imprinted? William Cavanaugh's acclaimed work on torture asserts its significance lies in torture's ability to reproduce the imaginary of the state, which is then manifested on the physical body of the torture victim. At the same time, this manifestation on the body also challenges other imaginaries (Cavanaugh 1998, p.57). The body then, rather than the mind, becomes the new "the new site of power (Baudrillard 1993, pp.101-24)" because it is "base for communicative activity (Gil 1998, p.107)". Subjectivity is caught up in the formation of imaginaries that constantly lash their claims on that subject's body. More specifically, the self is understood by its relation to other bodies within that imaginary, since as Ward and Lynn Nelson argue, knowledge categories in one person derive from its contact with the body of another, through sets of corporeal practices occurring within the imaginary (Nelson 1990, p.290, Ward 2005, pp.95-98). This also means that the body is no mere passive recipient of symbols, but also a transmitter. The symbols that are inscribed on the body also make that body the vehicle for the transmission of those symbols onto other bodies (Gatens 1996, p.70). Therefore, the body as a semiotic transmitter and receiver becomes a vital node in the formation of the self, and contact of such transmitter-bodies with one's own receiver-body becomes the process by which the formation of the self is effected.

To follow this to its logical conclusion then, what the subject *believes* to be real knowledge is similarly caught up somewhere in webs of corporeal practices. And because the corporeal configurations that constitute the “field” are not static but in a state of constant flux, it should follow that belief itself is similarly unstable. And yet, one's ability to exist is dependent precisely on such stability of belief. This means that in the flux from one corporeal relation to another, the self is at every moment called to believe something as an adequate grounding for all forms of knowledge and notions of the self (Ward 2000a, p.74). So immediately, it becomes apparent that there is actually no ideologically neutral zone or mode of existence.

### **Evangelisation and Conversion**

But how then is this process of the formation of the imaginary evangelical? To explain this, it is necessary to understand that the body at any one time is not a stagnant occupant of a single imaginary. Rather the self is constituted in a constant process of attractions and repulsions between multiple imaginaries (Ward 2005, p.53). What is more, one must take note of Seyla Benhabib's observation that hierarchies exist within even the same interpretive community, so that participation in communal practices always involves some kind of domination, albeit grudgingly consensual domination, by some members of that community and the marginalisation of others (Benhabib 2002, p.5, Letherby 2003, pp.23-28).

This is what ensures some semblance of cohesion within standpoints. But if this is true at the communal level, the need for cohesion and the concomitant process of privilege and marginalisation of imaginaries that takes place must be replicated within the individual, so that a hierarchical relation of imaginaries is established within the individual (Ward 2005, p.83). The stability of the imaginary, therefore, is concomitant with the goal of maintaining that hierarchical relation of imaginaries both communally and individually.

Also, recall that with each transition from one imaginary to another, one is called to believe in an adequacy of grounding of existence. This call to belief constitutes a suspension of one's independent judgement and “Presuppose[s]...a stable reality (Ward 2000a, p.72)”. In this suspension, one must necessarily defer to the judgement of another, and believe in that other's promise that the judgement is adequate, since the adequacy of that grounding is not self-evident. In every movement then, one participates in what Ward calls the “structures of authority”. In every movement, then, one participates in an act of faith. But this act of faith also constitutes, in Ward's words, a “suspension of the certainties of present possession with respect to future fulfilment (Ward 2000a, p.71).”

This statement is pregnant with political capital, for in the crossing from one imaginary to another, one is putting faith not just in the adequacy of its grounding, but also submitting to another's promise of a better future. The theological significance of this process is that this is precisely a response to a “good news”, a Gospel. This word Gospel is not used flippantly here, for the Greek equivalent *euangelion*, was synonymous with announcements concerning Imperial rule, and such announcements included, importantly, promises for peace and the principal events of the life of the sovereign (Leon-Dufour 1973, p.215).

So transposing this concept to the Christian tradition then becomes no linguistic accident, for it means the Christian Gospel constitutes more than just a set of Christic propositions, but also a reign that Jesus seeks to effect, with its own promises of future reward (Rev 22:12). Indeed, before Christ, the prophet Isaiah blessed “the messenger of good news”. The content of that news: Sion Saying that God is King (Isa 53:3). John Howard Yoder argued that the Kingdom of God is not a merely “spiritual” category. Rather, one must conclude that in the ordinary sense of his words, Jesus was announcing “the imminent *entrée en vigueur* of a new regime (Yoder 1972, p.39)”. Evangelisation as the spread of the Gospel then is caught up in the call to suspend judgement, and corporeally submit oneself to a Christic structure of authority, and to allow that structure of authority to infiltrate all knowledge categories and become their foundation. It is a call to give credit to future fulfilment of the promises that this particular power structure brings. Given this understanding of evangelisation then, we see an important conflation between social existence, the political processes constitutive of that existence, and being subject to evangelical programs. One is called to become, in Castoriadis' words “a walking, talking fragment of a given society (Castoriadis 1997, p.332)”.

How this occurs is through a process of conversion, for if one understands the relationship between imaginaries and the individual as a hierarchical one, then the call to submission is at the same time a call for the destabilisation and eventual conversion of that hierarchy, and putting a new, once marginalised imaginary in the place once enjoyed by a privileged imaginary. How this repositioning of imaginaries takes place is through a recruitment not just of the mind, but also of the body away from one set of practices and into a new set. This reorientation at one level reconfigures social relations and

multiplies to bring about Althusser's "revolution in social relations (Althusser 1969, pp175-176)". But at another level, such practices gradually manifest and legitimise those once marginalised imaginaries. What is more, the process of conversion of imaginaries does not leave the body intact. Foucault reminds us that one's body is always being marked, trained and even tortured into becoming an emitter of signs (Foucault 1979, p.25). To become a fragment of the imaginary, the body must be made into the very image of the imaginary it participates in (Smith 2006, p.92). In the same way that responding to the Christian *euangelion* involves "putting on Christ (Rom 13:14)" mimicking Christ to the point of becoming *alter Christos* (Smith 2006, p.106), acceptance in the imaginary's *euangelion* is to allow a corporeal transformation into the very image of the imaginary, so that subject and imaginary will, in Christ's word's, "all be one (John 17:22)".

What Gospel, then, does the current state-centric imaginary announce with its configuration of bodies? What the modern imaginary announces is the autonomous individual whose integrity is sacrosanct. With the current interpenetration of state and society into a single spatial complex (Cavanaugh 2004, p.45, Hardt 1995, pp.27-44), production of the Modern individual takes place not just through the nodes of state institutions, but through all social space (Hardt 1995, pp.33). The Modern individual, preceding any communal belonging, can only achieve sociality through contracts, and from the very potent analyses of both William Cavanaugh and Dan Bell, the protection of the individual becomes dependent on submission to the bearer of the greatest violence (Cavanaugh 2004, p.234, Bell Jr 2001, pp.33-35). Sociality, then, is synonymous with a process of violent domination of the strong over the weak, the collective over the individual, and the force of truth is replaced by the truth of force. Paradoxically then, the protection of the individual self becomes dependent on the obliteration of that very self, with only the shell of the collective remaining (Zizek 2005, p.54).

### **How Shall the Church Respond?**

If the above is true, then arguments for religious voices to stay out of politics because of accusations of proselytism would be strange, since politics itself is implicated in that same evangelical project, by holding the body of the modern self captive in the modern "field". To put it simply, the Church needs more than propositions, for in confining itself to rhetorical or cognitive solutions when bodies are captured in thrall of the state form, it is allowing itself to be evangelically outflanked by the modern field. The Church needs to inculcate the *habitus* to make those propositions believable. And the development of a Christian disposition requires first an attention to the development of ecclesial "fields". But in the same way that all imaginaries are not inherently stable, the Christian *habitus* and the ecclesial fields are not inherently self-evident. This is why Jesus remarked in Matthew's Gospel that it is possible for a message to be heard and not heard, his signs seen and still unseen (Matt 13:17). Having the "ears to hear" are not self-evident givens, but rather the result of the carving out of his own Christic "field", first in the temporal formation of the disciples and later in the *ekklesia*. In light of this, then, the Church in our current day must similarly review the nature of its evangelical task and actually expand it.

For this mission encompasses more than paying attention to what minds are receiving, but also to where bodies are being positioned within the sea of imaginaries. This mission does not allow the Church to naively regard the corporeal relations that secular imaginaries engender as lacking any evangelical intent and capacity. For such imaginaries are fundamentally evangelical entities which, as far as the Church is concerned, can steer bodies towards behaviours that estrange and impute evil intent (Col 1:21).

This opens a new area in the evangelical mission of the Church. Given that where bodies are positioned in a "field" influences the believability of faith claims, the Church must give attention to its own "fields", and the technologies that reproduce them, such as its liturgies and sacraments. Making "disciples of all the nations (Matt 28:19)" would encompass not just achieving consensus on ideas, but also training the bodies of those disciples into becoming "ecclesial fields", and nourishing the *habitus* to make believable the knowledge categories of the Gospel.

And immediately, the Church politically implicates itself, since creating these "fields" of belief interrupts the monopoly of secular "fields" that were meant to pervade all forms of sociality. Submission to Christ, then, must entail a concomitant refusal to surrender the Church's own public space to the Modern State's public sphere, a zone which Michael Hardt insists is coextensive of state rule (Hardt 1995). In so refusing to surrender social space to the state, the Church immediately challenges the state's monopoly of social space that underpins its self-proclaimed status as the neutral, secular messiah.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has cast attention to what should be a new facet of the Church's evangelical mission. It

began by questioning the neutral status of current political arrangements, as well as its inherently Modern liberal commitment to the separation of Church and state that they ostensibly proclaim. It also collapsed that inquiry into a second that looks at the role of knowledge via the immersion of the person into a series of corporeal relationships, the constant mobility of every person between those sets of relationships and the inherently political processes that take place with every step taken. In doing so, this paper has also hopefully exposed the inescapably evangelical mechanics that are occurring with each step taken. Every socialised individual, merely by being a socialised individual, is constantly caught up in and is an extension of an evangelical process.

In the collapse of politics and evangelisation, and in the need for the Church to extend its evangelical horizons to encompass the production of “possibilities of belief”, the Church already implicates itself in a “politics of belief”, through its interruption of the *regnum saecula*'s monopolistic control of social spheres. Given the constitution of the Modern self in this monopoly and the violence therein, one must expect a resort to violence in order to ensure the continued spatial monopoly of the secular state. “Becoming a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1)” then becomes more than just surrender of one's mind to ideas or having one's soul achieve states of “spiritual” sanctity. In light of the collapse between corporeality, sociality, politics and evangelisation outlined above, Paul's instruction to the Romans should also involve the offering of one's body to the inherently political mechanics of formation that take place with every move and breath, and suffering the consequences of disrupting the smooth surface of the Modern evangelical project, the state.

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## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### Intentional Freedom, the Fundamental Construct of Self-Consciousness

by

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The purpose of this paper is to give a brief introduction to the importance of an attentive and free will in constructing self-consciousness taken from the insights of the philosopher, Paul Ricoeur. Having an attentive and free will in constructing self-consciousness may seem obvious at first glance but, as we shall see, one thing leads to another and, before long, small beginnings give rise to greater thought; and when the saying of the need for an attentive and free will to construct self-consciousness is translated into doing, the act of willing or constructing self-consciousness becomes a task to be worked at rather than something we take for granted (Ricoeur 1978, p. 30 & 170). This is because developing an awareness of self, or developing a self-consciousness, requires not only a level of desire – a wanting to – but to develop anything also requires effort; an effort that is, ultimately, productive. Or, as Paul Ricoeur has put it, someone ‘who does not carry through did not truly will’ (Ricoeur 1987, p. 201).

Now, to will something is to intend an action. Only when what is intended is actualized can I claim I had done what was intended. To use a rather well known biblical example, when God said, ‘Let there be’ and ‘there was’ (Genesis 1:3), ‘Let there be’ signifies an intention – what God desires; and ‘there was’ a completion of that intention – an actualization of what God desires; in other words, God makes an effort! The act of willing, therefore, encompasses both intention (the desire) to do and the actualization of that intention in the act (in the effort) of doing.

For Ricoeur, to intend an action already says two things about intentionality: first, when I intend an action I acknowledge I have the ability or power to do it. Second, the action intended is an action ascribable to a particular subject: I am going to do it. In short, to intend an action is to facilitate the beginnings of an initiative: I intend an action in the world by which the world is changed in some way. It is in this sense that we speak of the human being as a capable being (Ricoeur 2004, p. 392): a being who is able, a being who has the capacity, to actualize a change in the world.

For Ricoeur, this double quality of intentionality – an action to be done and an action to be done by me – is the hallmark of what it is to be human because this double quality of intentionality expresses my freedom to act, my freedom to choose. For Ricoeur, this intentionality by which I exercise my freedom is the key aspect for determining self-consciousness (Ricoeur 1990a, p. 136; 1992, p. 79).

However, intentionality is not the whole story because, as was said at the beginning, the one ‘who does not carry through did not truly will’. Until intentionality effects a change in the world, the intention to do something remains simply an intention. But before going further, let us reiterate what has already been mentioned, namely, the intention to do something is much more than a wish (Ricoeur 1978, p. 5) because intentionality affirms I have the capacity or power to do what is intended and that I am the one who decides either to do or not to do what is intended. Intentionality affirms my human capacity and freedom to do; it affirms my human capacity and freedom to initiate a change in the world.

However, to complete the action of willing, intentionality moves to realize itself in action. It is action after all that effects a change in the world. If you like, it is my action which makes visible my intention. It is my action which objectifies my intention; and what is actualized also says something to me and to others about who I am.

This reflexive nature of action, namely, that my action says something to me and to others about who I am, Ricoeur calls reference. Ricoeur says that reference indicates ‘the intentional direction toward the world and the reflective direction toward the self’ (Ricoeur 1978, p. 139). Using our earlier example, in the ‘Let there be’ and ‘there was’ of creation, not only does ‘Let there be’ say something about God’s intention and God’s capacity to do but also ‘and there was’ reveals something to God and to others of who God is: creation, or the act of creating, itself becomes a reference point for the divine.

For Ricoeur, then, ‘Intentionality on the one hand and reference to a self on the other...are the marks of a subject’; intentionality and reference to the self are the ‘two distinctive characteristics’ of human ‘consciousness’ (Ricoeur 1987, p. 8).

So, development of self-consciousness demands action, but not any kind of action. It demands an intentional action, in other words, an action that concludes an attentive deliberation; and by attentive deliberation is meant the freedom and choice inherent in the process of willing from deliberation to act, and with reference to the world. For Ricoeur, then, the ability to make choices is fundamental for a free will to be free (Ricoeur 1987, p. 135). In fact, in Ricoeur’s own words, ‘The refusal to choose

or...the postponement of choice, elevated into a way of life, presupposes a deflection of consciousness which contents itself with endless reflection' (Ricoeur 1987, p. 138).

However, this does not lessen the difficulty of making choices. We are continually having to move 'back and forth' between 'far-off ideals' we constantly discern and refine and having to weigh up the 'advantages and disadvantages' of everyday, practical choices in the light of these ideals no matter how indefinite they may be (Ricoeur 1992, p. 177). This compounds the difficulties associated with making free choices in 'the historical situation' of everyday life (Ricoeur 1987, p. 129); and any 'certainty' I attain at any given moment remains provisional since the truth of my self, the truth of who I am, continues to unfold (Ricoeur 1992, p. 180). So, our actions and convictions call for constant interpretation.

The provisional nature of certainty in the unfolding truth of the self highlights the fact that, for Ricoeur, 'Consciousness is not a natural phenomenon' (Ricoeur 1987, p. 69). It is a task to be accomplished: a task that requires desire and effort encapsulated especially in the notion of intentionality. Intentionality belongs to the human exercise of freedom. Intentionality makes me not simply a means to an end, a cause of some action. Intentionality makes me an agent with the freedom to choose (Ricoeur 1990a, p. 136). "I intend" is, therefore, the beginning of the exercise of my freedom to bring something into being in the world by my action. "I intend" is the necessary antecedent to the exercise of my initiative – that is, my intervention in the world (Ricoeur 1992, p. 109). The whole trajectory from intention to choice to action not only changes or creates something in the world, but the whole trajectory facilitates self-discovery: I become more aware of who I am in the very act of bringing something into being, that is, in the very exercise of my initiative. The intention to construct self-consciousness, therefore, not only requires desire and effort but, in the very desire and effort to do the intended and to bring that intention to term in the exercise of initiative, we discern that this whole process of willing is also creative and heuristic of the self.

In this sense, then, to will is to reveal. Willing, understood in this way, is revelation. For Ricoeur, revelation is 'yes, let it be'; revelation is 'fiat' (Ricoeur 1987, p. 344). And revelation is linked with what Ricoeur calls, 'affirmative intensity', that is, revelation is linked with 'taking a stand', taking a position in relation to the world, a position in which I commit or bind myself in some way. Inherent in 'taking a stand' is the notion of promise. In willing something into being in the world by way of initiative there is a promise of what might be. In this sense, then, we can say that every act of willing has the shape of a promise (Ricoeur 1978, p. 68).

But how is this affirmative intensity of 'taking a stand' in the shape of a promise linked to revelation since a promise is a movement toward a future fulfilment whereas the 'let it be' of revelation appears to be an acceptance, an acquiescence to what is? The answer lies in Ricoeur's notion of consent which concludes every act of willing. Consent is the 'fiat', the 'let it be' of revelation (Ricoeur 1987, p. 344). Revelation can only be greeted by consent: the "It is so!" Consent, is consent to the truth as it is revealed; that at the end of every promise there is consent to what is: it is so! Intentionality, then, expresses promise; and promise ends with the completion of the act. Promise ends with the consent that "It is so!"

In this sense, every act of the will closes and opens again my awareness of self. On the one hand, every completed action closes the promise of what might be. In this sense, something is revealed to me and to others about who I am here and now, something to which I am called to consent: "It is so!" On the other hand, my life is continually unfolding, my actions, at any given moment, constantly call me to account in reference to those 'far off ideals' that draw me onward. In this sense, every completed action carries an element of incompleteness when tied to this on-going revelation of the self. In other words, when faced with the horizon of ideals, what is revealed here and now remains open to change; remains open to promise. What we have, then, is a veritable peristalsis between intention and consent, promise and revelation, an opening and a closing in the gradual awakening of self-consciousness.

This brings us back to what was said earlier, namely, that certainty about who I am is provisional since the truth of who I am continues to unfold. In this sense, consent too is provisional – open to further change – until I am fully revealed to myself (Ricoeur 1987, p. 479). Only at this horizon of ultimate fulfilment will my consent, "It is so!" be fully at home with the truth of my being. Expressed poetically, what is paradoxical about this ultimate revelation of the self is that it is also a finding of the self. The fulness of self-revelation is also the ultimate end of self-discovery. In the words of T. S. Eliot: 'Home is where one starts from...In the end is my beginning' (Eliot, *East Coker* V).

However, in equating the act of willing with 'taking a stand', I have moved beyond a mere ascription of an action to myself. In 'taking a stand', I commit or bind myself in some way to a position in relation to the world. In doing so, I have moved beyond saying "I did this" to "I am responsible for this". An action can be ascribed to me: I killed someone. But I may not be responsible for my action: I

may be mentally impaired, or that what happened was a result of an accident; granted that, sometimes, the boundary between ascription and deliberated intentionality is not always clear.

But when ascription becomes imputation of responsibility, we arrive at the full force of what it means to 'take a stand'. This deliberated intentionality belonging to the responsible agent is called, by Ricoeur, '*attestation*' (Ricoeur 1992, p. 180 [italics in text]). By attestation, I impute to myself an action that makes me responsible for that action. Responsibility establishes a 'causal tie' between the agent and the action in such a way as to render the action 'blameable or praiseworthy' (Ricoeur 1992, p. 101).

Responsibility, then, lifts the mere ascription of an action to a subject up to the level of ethics: the one who acts becomes the responsible or the ethical self. Only at this level of the ethical self, at this level of self-attestation, is the self revealed to the self and to others as someone committed or bound in plausible conviction to a position in relation to the world (Ricoeur 1992, p. 180). Interestingly, for Ricoeur, responsibility for my action also carries with it an 'obligation to act' (Ricoeur 1992, p. 152). In other words, being responsible, a person not only takes responsibility for his or her action but is beholden to take action if and when required. Self-attestation, then, in the full force of 'taking a stand' or taking responsibility for one's own actions, becomes the epitome of what it means to be true to oneself not only in what I say, but also in what I do, here and now, open to the future. It is 'an avowal, an expression of internal testimony' (Ricoeur 1992, p. 72).

It may be objected that taking responsibility for our actions according to the preferences that drive the choices we make is surely not that extraordinary. Everyday, are we not following our preferences, making choices and decisions that describe and circumscribe our constant activity? But are we really that aware of the jostling voices that inform our preferences which, in turn, drive our choices and actions each day? Have these preferences undergone a process of deliberation requiring even a moment's reflection? And are my choices and decisions really mine, or are they a product of unreflected routine? Or do they belong to a nebula of unattested and unconscious influences ranging from unresolved and hidden subconscious expectations all the way to coercion under the guise of a more subtle manipulation whether of a personal or ideological kind? When challenged by these questions, can we honestly affirm that we live every day with such a heightened self-awareness? The findings of psychoanalysis would seem to say otherwise.

It may also be argued that these questions concerning 'taking a stand' are only questions that arise when we are confronted with crises and with life-threatening situations. However, if self-attestation is born out of responsibility in the deliberation of preferences that affect our choices, it stands to reason that when faced with such crises, life-threatening or not, the resources we call upon to meet them are only those we know ourselves to possess.

So, an unreflected life is a very impoverished life (Ricoeur 1990b, p. 247; 1992, p. 178). And an impoverished knowledge of self may also weaken self-worth and limit our opportunity to be aware of what is possible when faced with personal crises. This, in turn, can all too readily spiral down toward a paralysis of mind and body often associated with extreme suffering 'experienced as a violation of self-integrity' (Ricoeur 1992, p. 190). Does this not suggest that the road taken toward some form of recovery, of coping, also makes us more resilient as we are forced to face our true selves and to take responsibility for our lives? This, I believe, is the risk of consciously embracing an 'acting *and* suffering' life (Ricoeur 1992, p.190 [italics in text]); the 'stakes', as Ricoeur says, are ultimately 'ontological' (Ricoeur 1992, pp. 302-303).

In the light of this oft unreflected self or, at least, a more unreflected self than we would care to admit, is it any wonder that attestation is haunted by suspicion? However, this same suspicion that questions our imputation, our sincerity, our testimony, might itself not be a bad thing. It is a suspicion that could equally be turned toward a self-interrogation beginning with an indictment on my own lack of attention and responsibility for my actions. Such a suspicion that leads me to question the motives for my actions and the responsibility I take for them ought not to be, in the final analysis, a suspicion that is unwelcomed; as Ricoeur has said: 'Suspicion is also the path *toward* and crossing *within* attestation' (Ricoeur 1992, p. 302 [italics in text]).

Self-attestation by which self-understanding is deepened arises, then, from an 'aroused will'. For Ricoeur, 'Only an inclined, aroused will can also determine *itself*' (Ricoeur 1986, p. 52 [italics in text]). The responsible person is one whose 'Consciousness continues to invent in doing' (Ricoeur 1987, p. 202) where inventiveness involves both creativity and discovery (Ricoeur 2003, p. 362).

For Ricoeur, the telling of our stories or the narrative of our lives is analogous to the function of a plot in literary and dramatic works. Our ability to articulate our stories becomes our way of synthesizing the 'heterogeneous', that is, the diverse elements that go to make up our lives. Our ability to tell the story (as best we can) is our way of trying to gather together into 'a single meaningful unity' the

‘multiple events’ or the ‘causes, intentions and also accidents’ that shape our lives at any moment of the telling (Ricoeur 2004, p. 243).

Here we have arrived at another crucial element necessary for the awakening of self-consciousness, namely, the importance of the telling of our stories as a way by which we humans give meaning to our lives. On the one hand, a reflected life (as opposed to an unreflected, impoverished one) is certainly a necessary element for human beings to discover and give meaning and purpose to life but, on the other hand, reflection is not sufficient in itself. Human beings require to express that life as well, to articulate it in some way; in short, to bring that life to language which here could broadly be termed our engagement in and with the world. The exercise of human freedom, intentionality, initiative, responsibility – in other words, all that belongs to the act of willing we have thus far mentioned – demands our engagement with the world and not a retreat from it. This connects up with, and follows on from, what was mentioned earlier, namely, that intentionality includes reference: ‘the intentional direction toward the world and the reflective direction toward the self’. This double referential directionality toward the world and toward the self is the construct, no matter how basic, from which Ricoeur will ultimately build his understanding of the self as a self in relation to other, where this other refers to the other of the world, of other people and, for Ricoeur, the most intimate relation of all, the other of conscience, which for him includes the world and other people (Ricoeur 1992, pp. 318-319).

We find and posit meaning, then, by a process that is both reflective and initiating. To be both reflective and initiating demands possibility. Reflection cannot give rise to new meaning nor could we initiate anything without the possibility of change. For Ricoeur, the capacity by which we institute and constitute ‘what is humanly possible’ we call our imagination (Ricoeur 1965, p. 127). By instituting and constituting what is humanly possible, our imagination enables us to engender new meaning and to effect changes in the world because we can see the possibilities. Our imagination acts to change our perspective of the world. Thus, Ricoeur is able to say that we can change our reality by altering our imagination (Ricoeur 1965, p. 127).

Therefore, a reflective and responsible life is also an imaginative one, that is, a life open to possibilities without which we succumb to the paralysis of extreme suffering mentioned earlier where, in the cognitive process, this paralysis manifests itself in the inability to bring order, to give meaning, to what is perceived by way of the senses that is an aspect of despair. On the affective level, this paralysis is manifested in the inability to either discern what is good or to equate what is good with the wherewithal of freedom to achieve it. The good is perceived as unattainable, reducing or destroying self-worth, the other aspect of despair. This extreme form of suffering or paralysis of mind and heart strikes at the very core of our description of the human being as a capable being. Ultimately, then, despair is spawned by the reduction or destruction of our ability to imagine the possible. It is no longer possible to make sense of the world and my place in the world; it is no longer possible to discern what is good or to attain a good I perceive. The will, no longer capable of seeing beyond itself, implodes (Ricoeur 1967, pp. 146, 148 & 287).

Reflection, initiative and imagination are all bound up with the telling of a story – the telling of each of our life’s story. Reflection, initiative, imagination form a trajectory across which the whole awakening of self-consciousness spans. It is a trajectory by which the desire and effort to construct self-consciousness finally becomes productive. From our humble beginnings in our initial focus on the importance of intentionality to the will in its task of constructing our self-understanding and awareness we have arrived at the narration of a personal story: a lifting of focus, as it were, from the practical level of action to all that bespeaks of a responsible, capable, acting, suffering – in short, ethical – self in relation to the world, other people and conscience that belongs to what it means to be a self in relation to other encapsulated in what Ricoeur calls self-attestation (Ricoeur 1992, pp.3, 203 & 327).

But for all that we have said with regard to the necessity of exercising the freedom inherent in intentionality to determine self-consciousness, that is, all the intentional choices we make over the whole process from deliberation to action, one major player in this whole discourse has so far remained silent: the figure of evil. By evil, I do not mean that aspect of evil which Ricoeur names as the ‘evil always already there’, the evil we find ourselves thrown into and outside our control and our making, portrayed so cunningly in the figure of the serpent in the Genesis story (Ricoeur 1967, pp. 257-258). Rather, I am speaking of the human propensity for evil, the evil contingent on our actions, the evil ascribable to us even if we do not mean to bring it about.

This evil contingent on me as an agent exercising initiative infects freedom itself. Human freedom is tainted. There is a ‘gap’ that exists between my capacity to do and my ‘effectuation’ (Ricoeur 2004, p. 490), that is, what actually comes into being, so that even if I intended the good, what I intended may result in unexpected and, sometimes, undesirable consequences. In religious theological terms, “I miss the mark” or “I sin”. This insidious player called “Evil” opens us to even more questions to do with the captive or servile will, the terror of the sacred, the wounded nature of the human condition, the cry of

hope, all of which and among other things, fall into the purview of the symbolic language belonging to religion.

Still, for all that is left unsaid when confronted with the mystery of evil, consciousness remains a task to be accomplished, a task that requires the intentional and, therefore, free exercise of the will as the fundamental starting point for the determination of the self. The purpose of this paper, after all, has been to elucidate something of this starting point of self-determination called intentionality. Thus, if we were to distil the essence of this paper down to a single adage, the adage would be: wishful thinking does not a person make. Desire and effort, intentionality and actualization, reflection and initiative, the respective closing and opening of consent (revelation) and promise (possibility), placed in the imaginative fold of story-telling, renders the task of constructing self-consciousness productive. It is the process by which the self discovers and learns to attest to itself in relation or reference to the other of the world, other people and conscience in all its provisionality until the self is wholly itself, that is, when the as yet imagined possibility of the self is finally and completely at one (at home) with itself in its relation to the aforementioned threefold otherness belonging to the other in Ricoeur's definition of the self as a self in relation to other.

From a Christian religious perspective, this task of constructing self-consciousness is none other than the task of the coming reality of the reign of God in both senses of an horizon for a hoped for world and an horizon for a hoped for wholeness of the self. Just as the task of building the reign of God is on-going, so the task of constructing self-consciousness and world-consciousness is on-going; and just as I can only say in the provisional present that this is what I am like so, analogously, we say the reign of God is like: where 'the kingdom is among you' (Luke 17:21) points to the consent to a self already revealed and 'the kingdom of God is close at hand' (Mark 1:15) to an anticipation of a promise hoped for to be fulfilled.

Whether in establishing the reign of God or to arrive at self-consciousness, for Ricoeur, that task is hazardous: 'We have to dare: freedom is always a risk' (Ricoeur 1987, p. 173). Or as James Baldwin, an American novelist, once wrote, 'To act is to be committed, to be committed is to be in danger' (Beliele 2006, p. 200). In other words, to be committed is to be responsible, and the danger inherent in acting responsibly – at the very least – is that it achieves change (Beliele 2006, p. 202). Change is the price of self-awareness. It is the inevitable risk and danger associated with developing self-consciousness. For some, the risk may be too great, the danger too terrifying, with mediocrity the winner:

'...but since you are neither hot nor cold, but only lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth'  
(Revelation 3:16).

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## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### Nature, Freedom and God: a Way Out of Plato's Cave by Nicholas Coleman

#### Introduction

In 1999 the Warshawski Brothers' blockbuster movie *The Matrix* was released. The film depicts a society that initially looks to be the same as our world today. As the story-line unfolds, however, we learn that virtually everything is controlled by an Artificial Intelligence. The A.I. preserves people in a deep sleep while electronically feeding them a digital dream of being awake and living in the ordinary world. One character in the film describes the computer-generated illusion as 'the world they pull over our eyes to blind us to the truth.'

The Warshawski's film is reliably said to be based in part on Plato's allegory of "The Cave" (found in book VII of *The Republic*). Twenty-five hundred years ago Plato suggested that ordinary people living their daily lives in the material world were somehow victims of a profoundly believable illusion. His allegory of The Cave illustrates his understanding of the illusion and points towards finding the true nature of reality.

*The Matrix* was a majorly influential film. Today, a decade after its release, twelve year olds in the school yard are likely to know something about both the movie and Plato's classic parable. Their understanding might be unsophisticated, yet the mere fact of their interest testifies to a genuine curiosity about the true nature of reality.

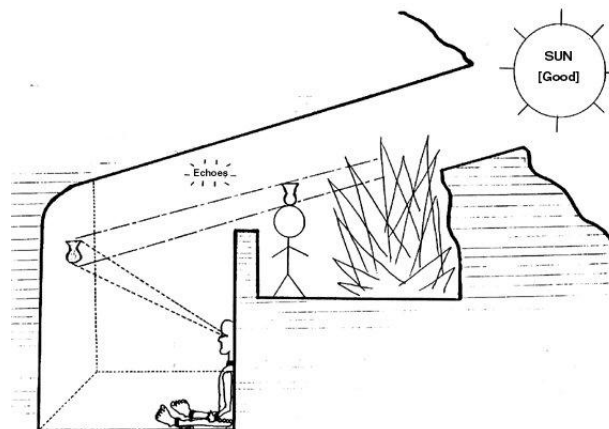
Plato's image of "The Cave" exercises a certain fascination for its symbolic description of the ordinary human condition as somehow out of sync with a higher and truer reality. His allegory paints a predicament in which many people feel themselves to be, namely, that the human world of daily life is far from all that's real, good and true. Further, it proposes a way of salvation from that diminished estate by reconnecting with the higher reality, which gives Plato's philosophy a religious dimension. According to Plato's parable, the finite physical realm apparent to our senses is not the real world, but only a poor copy of it. Original and true reality is the infinite spiritual world that can only be accessed by the mind. The innate activity of the mind, which we experience as first-personal consciousness, is similar to (or identical with) spiritual reality. Hence, the mind can connect to spiritual reality in a way that sense perceptions of physical things cannot.

This paper agrees with Plato's speculation about levels of reality and offers to cast some light on the way ordinary human experience regularly ranges between the physical and spiritual worlds. First, Plato's allegory is described; then, an explanation is given of how a Cave-dweller may exit the believable shadow world inside The Cave and discover the beauty and truth of sunlit reality outside The Cave. Plato's allegory is then demythologised, so to speak. Various central images in the story are equated to thought-processes that are familiar in everyday awareness. Thus, the play of shadows inside The Cave corresponds to our transient sensations of things in the empirical world; the vision of sunlit reality outside The Cave symbolises direct intuitions of eternal spiritual reality.

By scrutinising key elements of the allegory and unlocking their subtle significances, this paper offers an intellectually coherent way out of Plato's Cave. The existential merits of that exit, however, hinge on intuitive realisation of what the paper is describing. (Due to limits of space and time, the unity and identity of the Good and The One, and of the soul and consciousness, are assumed without supporting arguments.)

#### The allegory

Plato's story tells of people raised in the depths of a cave who spend their lives imprisoned in chairs that only allow them to look straight ahead at the rear wall of The Cave. Immediately behind the prisoners is a shoulder-high stone fence. On the other side of the fence is a road along which prison guards walk. They carry above their heads a variety of different objects. The road passes in front of a large bonfire that is situated part of the way upwards towards the mouth of The Cave. The light from the bonfire illuminates the objects carried by the guards and casts shadows of those moving



objects onto the rear wall of The Cave. The prisoners in their chairs see those shadows moving across the wall of The Cave and naturally believe they are substantial entities, for that is all they have ever seen. The Cave dwellers study those fleeting images in an effort to understand themselves and the obvious world before them. All the while they are oblivious to the presence of the bonfire that burns further up the rise behind them, on the other side of the stone fence. In terms of the flickering motion of this twilight world, the radiant stillness of the sunlit realm outside The Cave can hardly be imagined or described.

In Plato's telling of the tale, a prisoner is freed and taken past the bonfire out into the sunlit reality of the higher world. There he comes to understand the truth of the predicament in which his imprisoned companions remain. He returns to the twilight land of shadows inside The Cave and endeavours to liberate the other prisoners. Enjoying no success in his humanitarian efforts, the freed person returns to the brilliant sunlit realm above.

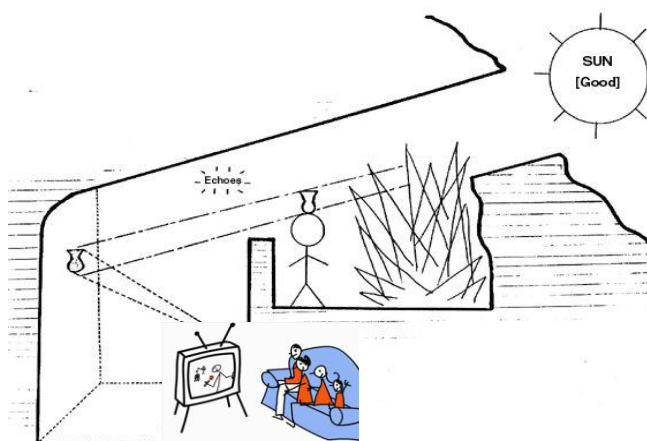
### Exiting Shadowland

In Plato's story, a prisoner is freed by one of the guards who leads him out of The Cave. We might reflect on the prisoner's situation in light of our own experience of shadows and notice clues to another way out of Plato's Cave.

In the allegory, prisoners are looking at shadows on The Cave wall. From our own experience, we know that when we see shadows we are simultaneously looking at illuminated sections of the wall surrounding the shadows. Indeed, it's only because strong light falls on the adjacent area of the wall that shadows are defined.

So, imagine a prisoner facing the wall of Plato's Cave; but let's say he isn't securely chained in place like the others. Initially, he concentrates on the play of shadow. To better discern them, he deliberately focuses on the dark areas and ignores the surrounding light. Then something happens to change his attention, and he notices the illuminated surfaces apparent in his peripheral vision. As he gradually turns around to see more clearly what was first glimpsed out of the corner of his eye, the prisoner would eventually turn right the way round to look at what was behind him. At first his eyes would be blinded by the ambient light of the hidden bonfire and everything would seem dark. Yet, if he persisted looking into the seeming darkness, his bewildered eyes would adjust to the relative brightness of the ambient light and he would begin to see.

Eventually, the prisoner would observe the solid objects carried by the guards behind the stone fence. At first, he wouldn't realise the objects he saw moving above the fence actually corresponded to the moving shadows on the wall. He'd have to climb over the wall and stand in front of the bonfire. There, his eyes would be dazzled a second time. After allowing his eyes to adjust to the direct light of the bonfire, then he'd see how the firelight fell upon the solid objects which threw shadows on the rear wall of The Cave. Even in the flickering twilight of The Cave, the freed person would recognise that the solid objects were more complete in colours and dimensions than the simple shadows. Eventually, the freed prisoner would find himself in a position where his eyes could adjust a third time, enabling him to look past the burning pyre and notice the sunlight at the end of the tunnel leading out of The Cave. As he climbed up the pathway towards that light he would exit The Cave into the constant clarity of the sunlit world outside where everything was visible in full colour and completely substantial.



### The symbolism

Taken literally, the scenario sounds complex and seems far-fetched. Indeed, it might stretch the bounds of credibility to depict people chained in chairs in a cavernous twilight where they mistake moving shadows for reality. Yet, today's social commentators regularly observe that people can mistake the world of TV or cinema for reality.

If movies had existed in Plato's day, undoubtedly he would have framed his story in cinematic terms. He would describe people sitting transfixed in comfortable armchairs while they look at films projected onto a huge flat screen in front of them. He would tell how those people watch the colourful images contrived by the film-makers and mistake them for reality itself. He would say that the movie-goers were oblivious to the projector doing its work behind them. He would also point out that they gave no

though at all to the entire film industry outside the cinema that makes movie-viewing possible in the first place. Finally, he would note that the movies shown on the screen were comparatively dim representations of the original world outside the cinema theatre.

As with all symbolic stories, Plato's allegory of The Cave is deliberately intended to mean more than it says. Indeed, Plato explains several of the main images in his parable (Benjamin Jowett's translation). He says: "the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world."

So, the Shadowland inside The Cave symbolises the dynamic empirical world visible to our physical senses. The 2-D shadows playing across the rear wall represent the physical things in space and time that we can see are always moving. The flickering bonfire that illuminates the 3-D realm inside The Cave symbolises the light of reason. The realm of enduring sunlight outside The Cave stands for intelligible reality – the invisible world of infinite and eternal spiritual truth. "What is at issue," Plato says, "is the conversion of the mind from the twilight of error to the truth – that climb up into the real world which we shall call true philosophy" (*Republic* Book VI, Part VII, 508d).

### Shadow to substance

If we accept Plato's allegory, then transcending the present empirical world and discovering eternal spiritual reality is a genuine option. A certain perspective is required to see the ordinary empirical world as a mere play of shadows. The picture (at right) suggests something like the viewpoint required. In that picture, what initially appears to be a "cave-painting" on a wall all of a sudden reveals itself from a more subtle perspective to be something radically different.

If the empirical world is like a shadow, then the mere fact that we are aware of looking at empirical objects means that we must also be aware of spiritual reality.

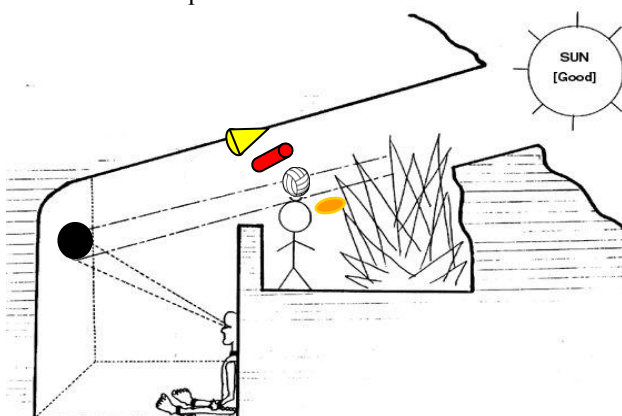
In the course of ordinary human life-experience, then, we must be constantly looking at spiritual reality without recognising what we see. Recall how the cave-people look at the whole illuminated surface of the wall but only see the shadowed parts. Similarly, we look at spiritual reality without seeing it whenever we disregard the presence of the spiritual dimension in our experience as a whole.

The problem is that once we overlook the spiritual, we eliminate it from what we see. As a result, whatever we see will not alert us to the presence of what we've overlooked. This same problem arises in regard to shadows which are 2-D versions of 3-D realities. It isn't possible to determine from a 2-D shadow alone what 3-D object casts it. A circular shadow, for example, can be cast by a sphere; but, when rightly aligned with the light source, an oval, a cone and a cylinder also cast circular shadows. Just by looking at the shadow, it's impossible to know the original shape that casts it. The problem can be solved by thinking about what we disregard in order to concentrate on bare empirical objects.

In today's consensual view of reality, we live in an empirical world where matters of natural fact are distinguished from judgements of human value. To have a realistic perspective, we are encouraged to overlook intangible and immeasurable concerns such as aesthetic values,

intrinsic meanings and final purposes. These immaterial factors are held to be no more than subjective and arbitrary additions to the real, value neutral, facts of nature. In terms of that consensual viewpoint, it is the moral dimension of human experience that needs to be disregarded for ostensibly realism.

Consider the case of a child's toy bear from that consensual point of view. Describe to the child that her lifelong companion (named "Bip," after the now-departed grandparent who gave the bear as a christening present) is really nothing but fur, vinyl, stitching and glass beads. Explain to the child that her wise and silent councillor in countless heartfelt conversations about life's joys and sorrows is, in



reality, just measurable dimensions and weights of inanimate fibrous materials. From the viewpoint of the child who knows the toy intimately, such an empirical reduction of her 'Bip' would be no more than a pale shadow of the bear's full moral and material reality.

If empirical objects are shadows of spiritual realities, then the equivalent of the missing dimension would not be anything spatial or physical but something immaterial. Spiritual reality has a moral depth that is absent from mere physical objects. This depth dimension is represented by the aesthetic values, intrinsic meanings and final purposes that attach to the things we recognise and relate to in the empirical world. By overlooking the immaterial dimension, a pure empirical perspective doesn't illuminate reality so much as eclipse it.

The reality of human experience is rich with invisible texture. Our life-experience is filled with values, meanings and purposes which delineate our reality and distinguish it from the realities of other people with different values, meanings and purposes. These delineating factors cannot be seen or measured empirically. They can only be known immediately and directly as pre-conditions for the possibility of empirical experience. These invisible textures make up the most important part of our life-experience. They help us construct our conscious world of thought, talk and walk. The immaterial, moral and spiritual dimension provides the basic framework of values that determines our interests and marks out the part of reality that we accept as our own.

### **Transcending empirical reality**

The texture of human experience is provided by the inner life of our mind. That inner life is not directly available as a physical object of perception. We know what we experience at any given moment, but that knowledge is not presented as a physical object. Our awareness of sensations is not visible to our physical eyes. Hence, physical vision is not much use if we are looking for a way to see spiritual reality.

To see spiritual realities we need to close our eyes and look in a different way. Fortunately, everyone has another mode of vision, although few people make great use of it. To find spiritual reality we need to look with the inner eye of our mind. Plato says (*The Republic*, Book VI, Part VII, 508d): "When the mind's eye rests on objects illuminated by truth and reality, it understands and comprehends them fully, and functions intelligently; but when it turns to the twilight world of change and decay, it can only form opinions, its vision is confused and its beliefs shifting, and it seems to lack intelligence."

To see how the inner eye of the mind provides a way out of the empirical world, let's consider some thought-processes that are familiar to everyday awareness. When we look at ordinary things in the physical world our total attention is rarely fully occupied. While we are looking at common objects such as tables and chairs and windows and walls, it's often the case that our mind drifts off to think about other ideas that are unrelated to those visible objects. There's nothing unusual about thoughts arising in the back of our mind while, in the front of our mind, we are otherwise occupied looking at physical things. Indeed, that's often how the values, meanings and purposes that shape our experience and direct our behaviour first manifest themselves in our life.

On occasions, it's not unusual for thoughts in the back of our mind to be at least as visible as things in the world around us. For example: after going to the cinema with a friend, the two of you might be walking some distance down the street to the car park. On your way, if the movie was very stimulating, you're likely to be discussing it enthusiastically. In such an ordinary moment, both of you will be recollecting scenes from the film with considerable clarity – watching them with your mind's inner eye – while at the same time keeping a lookout at the pedestrian traffic in the outer world around you. If the conversation gets especially exciting and your recollection becomes particularly vivid, it's even possible for the invisible light of inner vision to outshine and eclipse outer sight of the empirical realm. This may sound deranged to some people (you might even be thinking exactly that, in the back of your mind right now) and perhaps it is – yet, before a legitimate psychiatric evaluation may be made, far more information is needed about what is brought forth from within and how it relates to other people and the world. For all I'm highlighting is an exaggerated degree of a familiar and altogether usual activity in the life of the human mind. 'Sense perception does not provide the data for its own interpretation' (A. H. Whitehead). Every waking moment of every day, we look at visible things in the outer world; yet they have no value, meaning or purpose until we see them in the invisible light of our inner thoughts. We may well be concentrating on empirical objects that we see and hear in the world; but it is the non-empirical eye of our mind that knows and understands what we see and hear.

### **A way out**

The ordinary activity of human consciousness ranges from awareness of outer visible objects to awareness of inner invisible ideas. On a daily basis, we see things in the world and we know thoughts in our mind. What makes perceptions and reflections our own is that they are both owned by our self-

conscious mind's-eye. Our mind's eye knows what we see and knows what we think. The self-consciousness of our mind's-eye has access to both the interior and exterior worlds. As Plato said earlier:

When the mind's eye rests on objects illuminated by truth and reality, it understands and comprehends them fully, and functions intelligently; but when it turns to the twilight world of change and decay, it can only form opinions, its vision is confused and its beliefs shifting, and it seems to lack intelligence.

If the interior realm of The Cave is the visible empirical world and a prisoner exits The Cave into the invisible spiritual world outside, then the prisoner must represent not our ordinary empirical awareness but the non-empirical eye of our mind. In the twilight world inside The Cave the mind's eye is confused by the ever-shifting shadows of empirical things. In the steady illumination outside The Cave, the mind's eye finds itself at home in the eternal truth of spiritual reality.

The beginning of how this works in ordinary human experience is already familiar to anyone who has noticed it. Although quite possibly that beginning isn't recognised even by those who have taken the first step towards exiting Plato's Cave, for the journey out is through the seeming darkness of excessive light. The journey of the soul through the spiritual brightness starts on those occasions when we catch sight of ourselves looking at some object in the world while thinking about some idea in mind. Hidden in such glimpses are direct experiences of the higher reality of spiritual consciousness. They can be detected conceptually, through the use of ordinary reason, just by thinking clearly and deeply about what such ordinary experiences involve.

When looking at an object and thinking about an idea, obviously we are aware of what we are looking at and of what we are thinking about. Our empirical eye and our mind's eye are both open together, giving us vision in two directions. While seeing in those different directions, we also know we are seeing in two different directions. Hence, subtly, such momentary glimpses reveal a consciousness that transcends the duality of outer and inner awareness. Realising that higher, more comprehensive mode of unitary awareness is the first step on the way out of Plato's Cave.

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## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### God, the Architect of Human Freedom, and Religion its Servant by Patrick McInerney

#### Introduction

In our time, religion is news. Unfortunately, it is often bad news! Conflicts, violence and terrorism are often linked to religion. In defence of religion, I hasten to add that such perverse actions do not arise from religion itself, but from the use, abuse and mis-use of religion. When the absolute commitment proper to religion is used for ulterior motives, be they political, economic, ethnic, social or financial, the result is conflict and division. However, when a religion, any religion, is followed properly, it is a force for good in society ... and far from being the cause of conflict, it can heal conflict.

Accordingly, religion has a right and a responsibility to be heard in the marketplace of public opinion. Indeed, it has an obligation to make its views known. While its appreciation of values may derive from the spiritual-religious order, its arguments in the fora of public opinion must be based on reason rather than faith. It may propose, but not impose. As such, it is an integral part of the free democratic process to achieve public consensus on the common good.

However, religions are many, and while they hold many values in common, they differ from one another. So there can be contestation between different religions, and even within the one religious tradition. These inter-religious and intra-religious conflicts damage the credibility of the religions, and make their witness to and service of the common good less effective.

This paper follows the approach of the Canadian Jesuit, Bernard Lonergan. It argues that since the dynamics of consciousness are common to all people, familiarity with them can help resolve the conflicts between the religious and the secular, between the religions, and within the religions. Following these dynamics will ensure genuine human freedom and committed action for the welfare of society. Violating these dynamics leads to increasing polarization and conflict, the squandering of time, energy and resources, and precipitates decline in society.

In the stark choice that confronts us, God is not neutral. "I have set before you life and death ... Choose life so that you and your descendants may live." (Deut 30:19) God is on the side of freedom and life (cf. Gal 5:1, 13, Jn 10:10).

#### Lonergan and the Dynamism of Consciousness

Lonergan has a reputation for incomprehensibility, due not so much to Lonergan himself, whose work though often very demanding can be brilliantly lucid, but perhaps more to his followers, who sometimes speak in "Lonerganese", a language which is incomprehensible to those not familiar with it. I hope that my paper does not add to Lonergan's undeserved "bad" reputation.

Lonergan's basic method, once appropriated, is actually very simple, for it is the way we are, the way we become, for better and for worse. This way is so intimately close to us that we often overlook it, and are not even aware of it. It's a bit like the shadow under our nose on a sunny day, it's always there, but it's so close to us that we never advert to it.<sup>1</sup>

The method is in fact ourselves, it is how our minds and hearts operate in coming to know and appropriate anything, and then expressing that in symbols, art, words, deeds and in our living. Lonergan identified four distinct but related ways in which human consciousness works.

1. When something catches our attention, we attend to sights, sounds, smells, feel, taste, memory, and imagination.
2. Then we ask "*what is it?*" We seek to understand what it is that has drawn our interest. We seek for insights, an intelligent understanding of the object. And we keep on asking questions and finding answers until we have a comprehensive hypothesis that accounts for all the data of experience and overlooks nothing.
3. Then we ask "*is it so?*" Is my hypothesis correct? Is my theory accurate? Or is it just a bright idea without any substance in reality? Is it just a figment of my imagination, or is it real? To answer these questions, we search out the conditions which would confirm or deny the

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<sup>1</sup> The analogy actually fails, because it is not simply a matter of adverting to sense data, but of self-appropriation, which includes but goes beyond sense data, as Lonergan establishes.

hypothesis, and test whether or not they are fulfilled in the data, which leads to a judgement that what I have understood is/is not actually true, is/is not real.

4. Finally, we ask “*so what?*” What concern is that to me? What is the appropriate response to what I have affirmed as true, real, good, holy? We engage those questions and come up with an answer, and if we act accordingly, then we enjoy the pleasure of a good conscience, and if we do not act accordingly, we suffer the penalty of a bad conscience.

Loneragan claims that all human enterprise is based on these four ways in which consciousness operates – we attend to experience; we understand that experience to form an intelligent hypothesis; we judge that hypothesis to arrive at a reasonable affirmation; and we evaluate that judgment to arrive at a responsible decision or choice.

Of course, it is not quite that simple. Lonergan is rarely if ever accused of simplicity! This process can and does go astray. Lonergan details four ways in which this happens, which he calls bias. There is dramatic bias,<sup>2</sup> individual bias,<sup>3</sup> group bias,<sup>4</sup> and common sense bias.<sup>5</sup> All is not lost, however, for he also identifies how the process can be restored through conversions, and he names intellectual,<sup>6</sup> moral,<sup>7</sup> and religious conversions.<sup>8</sup> Finally, to add to the complexity, Lonergan realized that these four ways in which consciousness operates do so in opposite sequences.<sup>9</sup>

- One sequence is the process of coming to know and to appropriate knowledge that I have outlined above – mounting “upwards” from experience, through understanding, to judging, and choosing.
- The other sequence is the process of embodying and expressing value – flowing “downwards” from new or heightened appreciation of values that makes our responsiveness more attuned to reality, our judging more precise, our understanding more penetrating, and our attention to detail more concrete.

The designations “upwards” and “downwards” are not to be taken literally. They are metaphors. There is no physical movement involved, but the operations do occur in these inverse sequences. The upwards movement is cognitively driven. It aims at personal appropriation of knowledge. The downwards movement is value driven. It aims at the embodiment and expression of value. In more familiar everyday terms, the upwards movement is learning, the downwards movement is teaching.

### Two Questions at the Fourth “Level”

Although in this paper I focus on the fourth way in which consciousness works, the first three ways are also critically important. They are how we come to know truth, how we come to know reality. It is

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<sup>2</sup> For detailed treatment see LONERGAN, B. J. F., S.J. (1992) *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Toronto, Buffalo, London, University of Toronto Press.

<sup>3</sup> For detailed treatment see Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> For detailed treatment see Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> For detailed treatment see Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> For detailed treatment see LONERGAN, B. J. F., S.J. (1999) *Method in Theology*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

<sup>7</sup> For detailed treatment see Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> For detailed treatment see Ibid. He also mentions “affective conversion” (LONERGAN, B. J. F., S.J. (1985c) *Natural Right and Historical Mindedness*. IN CROWE, F. E., S.J. (Ed.) *A Third Collection. Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan S.J.* Mahwah NJ, Paulist Press.), and speaks approvingly of Doran’s proposal of “psychic conversion” (LONERGAN, B. J. F., S.J. (2004) *Reality, Myth, Symbol*. IN CROWE, R. C. & DORAN, R. M. (Eds.) *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*. Toronto, Buffalo, London, University of Toronto Press.)

<sup>9</sup> Lonergan wrote of this in a flurry of articles around 1975 e.g. LONERGAN, B. J. F., S.J. (1985b) *Healing and Creating in History*. IN CROWE, F. E., S.J. (Ed.) *A Third Collection. Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan S.J.* New York/Mahwah and London, Paulist Press and Geoffrey Chapman, LONERGAN, B. J. F., S.J. (1985a) *Christology Today: Methodological Reflections*. IN CROWE, F. E., S.J. (Ed.) *A Third Collection. Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan S.J.* New York/Mahwah and London, Paulist Press and Geoffrey Chapman, LONERGAN, B. J. F., S.J. (1985c) *Natural Right and Historical Mindedness*. IN CROWE, F. E., S.J. (Ed.) *A Third Collection. Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan S.J.* Mahwah NJ, Paulist Press.

how we arrive at objective knowledge, of ourselves, of our world, of what is beyond our world. It is a matter of attentive experiencing, intelligent understanding, and reasonable judging (and believing). As Lonergan writes: “Genuine objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity.”<sup>10</sup> Without genuine knowledge of what is true, real, good and holy, we are stuck in subjectivism. We are enclosed in our own narrow worlds of personal opinion, but not in touch with reality. We are subject to the ravages of relativism, wavering between fact and fantasy. However, by following the self-transcending dynamics of consciousness, we go beyond ourselves, becoming real knowers in the real world.

But having arrived at objective knowledge, there is the further question of our personal response to what we know to be true, real, good and holy. This is the fourth level, the focussed concern of this paper. There are two basic questions at this fourth level. They correspond to the end and beginning of the two movements that I mentioned earlier.

The first question concludes the upwards cognitional movement. It is *quid mihi est?* - what concern is that ... to me?” (cf. Jn 2:4), where “that” refers to an object of knowledge that has been critically established either:

- by my own immanently generated knowledge, that is by my attentive experiencing, intelligent understanding and reasonable judging;

or

- by my responsible believing in the immanently generated knowledge of an other who has critically established knowledge by that same process and communicated it effectively.<sup>11</sup>

This fourth level question does not investigate the nature of the object. That has already been done in the first three ways in which consciousness works. Rather, it tests the nature of the subject. It challenges the status of subject: do I have the intellectual probity and moral integrity to acknowledge what I know to be true and good? do I reach up to it, or do I fall short of it? In other words, the fourth level question “what concern is that to me?” probes the relation between the subject and the object.

The appropriate answer to this first question is acknowledgement of what has been affirmed or believed as true, real, and good (or dismissing what has been shown to be a lie, to be fiction, to be evil). Now it is no longer “this is true” (or “this is wrong”), a mere fact—but “*I know* this is true” (“*I know* this is wrong”). Over and above the factual affirmation there is a personal confirmation, the taking of a personal stand in regard to the object in question, a personal appropriation of that truth, goodness, reality, holiness (or refusal of the lie, the evil, the fiction, the sin).

The second question then asks *quid tibi est?* - what possible concern is that to you? – where “that” refers to the same object of knowledge referred to above. If the object is truly worth knowing, then it is also worth making known to others (or if it is false, not worth knowing, then it is important to communicate that to others so that they do not waste their time on investigating it), which answer commits the responsible person to teach what he/she has learned, this process being carried out through the downwards movement of the operations of consciousness.

This second question and its answer are particularly clear in ethical and moral issues. If some proposed action is acknowledged to be truly good and worthwhile, then it is truly worth doing. Lonergan makes this same point:

True judgments of value go beyond merely intentional self-transcendence without reaching the fulness of moral self-transcendence. That fulness is not merely knowing but also doing, and man can know what is right without doing it.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> LONERGAN, B. J. F., S.J. (1999) *Method in Theology*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

<sup>11</sup> For the five steps of belief see Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

He elaborates in a later paper:

But self-transcendence has a still further dimension. For so far we have considered a self-transcendence that is only cognitional. Beyond that there is a self-transcendence that is real. When he pronounces a project to be worthwhile, a man moves beyond consideration of all merely personal satisfactions and interest, tastes and preferences. He is acknowledging objective values and taking the first steps towards authentic human existence. That authenticity is realised when judgments of value are followed by decision and action, when knowing what truly is good leads to doing what truly is good.<sup>13</sup>

Simply to choose a project because it is good is itself a good act – but as Lonergan noted, it is “the first steps” only, it is not yet the full good. As the old adage has it: “the road to hell is paved with good intentions” – and we all know from personal experience that there is sometimes an embarrassing gap between choosing the good in theory and actually doing the good in practice!

To carry out that project because it is good is an even better thing. It is realising the actual good, and therefore more excellent than simply acknowledging the potential good.

Summarising this section, the first question *quid mihi est?* (what concern is that to me?) culminates a process of enquiry, the upwards movement; the second question *quid tibi est?* (what concern is that to you?) initiates a programme of action, the downwards movement.

### Supernatural<sup>14</sup>

I will now consider the questions that are operative in the context of what Lonergan calls “religious conversion”, God’s gracious intervention into our lives.

When God graciously comes to us and fulfils our longing, fills our deepest desires, gives God’s own self as the only adequate object that could satisfy the infinite yearnings of our restless hearts – the New Testament account of this transformative experience often quoted by Lonergan is: “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom 5:5) – we are again confronted by profound personal questions. However, in this instance they are not about a known object, something or someone that we have come to know or believe, the end product of the upwards cognitional movement. These questions are about the Unknown Mystery who has touched and transformed us. The questions are about our response to that mysterious transformation and the one who brought it about. As Lonergan says:

... now it is *primarily* a question of decision. Will I love him in return, or will I refuse? Will I live out the gift of his love, or will I hold back, turn away, withdraw? Only *secondarily* do there arise the questions of God’s existence and nature, and they are the questions either of the lover seeking to know him or of the unbeliever seeking to escape him.<sup>15</sup> [italics mine]

So there are again two basic questions, but they are different from those treated earlier.

The primary question is not *quid mihi est?* (what concern is that to me?), for here there is no critically established object of knowledge or belief to be appropriated, but the astonished experience that I am the object of concern of a Mysterious Unknown. It is an existential question, of personal surrender to that Other (or of refusal).

Having made that existential choice, the secondary question combines the previous two questions into one. It is *quid mihi tibi est?* (what concern is that to me and to you?). This involves the practical commitment to learn about and name the One who has first captured me and to witness accordingly (or to attempt to justify my refusal by rationalizing and deprecating all notions of transcendence beyond this world). That further commitment involves all the ways in which consciousness operates in both directions, to come to know God and to make God known, in symbol, in art, in word, in deed, and most

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<sup>13</sup> LONERGAN, B. J. F., S.J. (1996) The Future of Christianity. IN RYAN, W. F. J., S.J. & TYRRELL, B. J., S.J. (Eds.) *A Second Collection. Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan S.J.* Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

<sup>14</sup> Although in this section I specifically treat the human-divine relationship, the dynamics that operate here apply to all instances of falling in love. Crowe came to realise this, and noted that what Lonergan had regarded as an “exception” was in fact the normal state of affairs, that we fall in love with someone or something and then go about learning about the beloved person or object. See CROWE, F. E., S.J. (1989) An Expansion of Lonergan’s Notion of Value. IN VERTIN, M. (Ed.) *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*. Washington, DC, The Catholic University of America Press.

<sup>15</sup> LONERGAN, B. J. F., S.J. (1999) *Method in Theology*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

importantly in my living. It is making my whole self available for God's purposes, becoming, as St Francis of Assisi prayed, "an instrument" for God's purposes in the world (or it is building defences against God and walling myself in a self-enclosed world).

The account of the Annunciation provides us with an example of this dual commitment. After the angel's explanation Mary first response is personal and existential: "*Here am I, the servant of the Lord*" (Lk 1:38); and then she immediately adds the practical corollary: "*let it be with me according to your word.*" (Lk 1:38)

### **Spirituality and Religion**

I now shift from the interior world of individual consciousness to its outward manifestation in society. David Tacey has provided a sociological analysis of the distinction between religion and spirituality.<sup>16</sup> I suggest that the psychological ground of that distinction is the two fourth level questions and answers that I have presented.

- Spirituality is consciousness transformed in its personal awareness of Transcendent Mystery. It is consciousness being immersed in the love of God. It is the life, love, joy, peace, contentment and grace that fountains forth unceasingly in the God-inhabited human heart (cf "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water." (Jn 7:38))
- Religion is the mediation of that inner transformation into the world of human meaning – in word, deed, teaching, ethical and moral behaviour, and worship – that brings about God's holy purposes in the world.

In short, spirituality is God's transformation of the self; religion is the effective appropriation of and witness to that inward transformation in human history. Both are necessary. Neither can stand by itself. Spirituality gives life to religion, and religion institutionalizes spirituality; yet spirituality without religion is formless, and religion without spirituality is dead.<sup>17</sup>

### **One Spirituality, Many Religions**

I now go one step further. I suggest that spirituality is at the core of all the great world religions and all people of good will. It is the one wellspring of life and love and wisdom whose source is God and that is common to them all.

Despite this one common source, the religions are many, and they are manifestly different from each other. The differences arise in part from the different sages, seers, holy men and women, and prophets – Abraham, Moses, Buddha, K'ung-fu-tzu (Confucius), Laozi (Taoism), Jesus, Muhammad – who, in God's providence and to the best of their abilities, appropriated that spiritual core and mediated it to their contemporaries in accord with the demands of their particular time and place, and which have been handed down more or less authentically over generations in the different religious traditions. The differences arise in part from the different geographical and historical contexts in which that religious imperative was lived out. The differences arise in part from the degree of authenticity or lack of it in the original founders of the religions and in the handing on of the tradition through the course of history. The differences also arise from the presence, absence and degree of the different biases and conversions to which we are all prone.

Having shown that spirituality and religions derive from the two fourth level questions and responses in the transformed consciousness of believers, it is evident that the way to resolve the radical differences between the different religions is to enter into that world of interiority and to discover how they formed (and distorted) the various religious traditions. Doing this will enable us to appreciate the profound connections that exist between them, to restore the breaks that have occurred, to lay aside what is no longer relevant to our time and place, to eliminate the errors, to make up for the gaps, and to use all the

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<sup>16</sup> TACEY, D. J. (2003) *The Spirituality Revolution: The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*, Pymble, NSW, HarperCollins, TACEY, D. J. (2000) *Reenchantment: The New Australian Spirituality*, Pymble, NSW, HarperCollins. See also RANSON, D. (2002) *Across the Great Divide: Bridging Spirituality and Religion Today*, Strathfield, NSW, St Pauls.

<sup>17</sup> I hold that these two questions ground two conversions. The first I call "spiritual conversion", which is what Lonergan calls "religious conversion"; and the second I call "religious conversion", which is the individual founding or following a religious tradition. The adjective "spiritual" better captures the numinosity and anonymity of the personal surrender to Unknown Mystery, and the adjective "religious" adds precision and fits better with the common sense understanding of religion.

combined resources of our religious heritages to respond collectively to the challenges of our contemporary situation.

### **Religions and Freedom**

I conclude with a brief reflection on freedom. Freedom is popularly construed as the absence of constraint - that I am free to choose this or that object at will. Hence any imposition of restraint from outside, whether civil law or church law or divine law, impinges on my personal freedom to do what I want, but may be tolerated for the sake of the common good. So society, church, and God are seen as basically opposed to personal freedom. However, such a view of freedom is arbitrariness, and as Lonergan writes: "Arbitrariness is just another name for unauthenticity."

What he is getting at is that the dynamics of consciousness orient us towards the intelligible, the reasonable and the responsible. In other words, there is a discernible path in life, or as Doran says: "life [is] a movement with a direction that can be found or missed."<sup>18</sup> The authentic will freely choose to conform to their own inner dynamism and will follow the path that leads to life; the unauthentic are enslaved to biases and will rationalize why they wallow in decadence. Thus freedom is not random or arbitrary choice, but responsible choice, choice that follows the dictates of a good conscience and responds to what is true, real, good, valuable and holy.

Now the things of this world which I experience, understand and judge to be good – using the first three ways in which consciousness operates - are limited goods. They do not command my absolute allegiance. I am free to choose them, and I am free not to choose them. This "distance" between contingent good and absolute good is the source of human freedom.

In the previous section I indicated how God transforms human consciousness and sets it in the unlimited horizon of God's love, and focussed on the two questions at the fourth level. God does not interfere internally with the four ways in which consciousness operates, but acts on the person as a whole, inviting free response. God thus preserves and protects the way we operate. Hence, God is not the enemy of human freedom but its creator and defender. The fount of freedom in us is spirituality, our consciousness transformed by the indwelling God. Flowing from that source, authentic religion, far from binding us, frees us to become all that we are called to be in accord with God's holy desire for human and planetary flourishing.

### **Conclusion**

I have argued that the world religions are the external product of spiritually enlightened consciousness. Although they are many and varied, this fount of spirituality is at the core of all religions, and is the immediate gift of God. Further, the dynamics of consciousness are common to all people. Although processing different content that is particular to the different times and places in which people live, they dynamics operate in the same way, go astray in the same ways, and are restored and even converted in the same ways. Following their directives leads to truth, goodness, reality and holiness; violating their directives leads to error, evil, unreality and sin. Because of this commonality, Bernard Lonergan's analysis of the operations of consciousness provides a way for reconciling the differences between the different religions, within the one religion, and across the religious-secular divide. In this way, we will be responding to God's initiative, who created us for freedom and life.

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<sup>18</sup> DORAN, R. M. (1990) *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, Toronto, Buffalo, London, University of Toronto Press.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### Theology and Natural Sciences in St Gregory Palamas by Doru Costache

As a Church father, mystical theologian, spiritual guide and incisive polemicist against the non-ecclesial epistemology of many among the fourteenth century Byzantine intellectuals, St Gregory Palamas (ca. 1296-1359) exhibits in one of his later writings (Sinkewicz, 1988, p. 49-54; Chrestou, 1994, pp. 8, 28, 30; Papademetriou, 2004, p. 18) an impressive command of the 'profane arts'. The work in question, *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters: Natural and Theological, Ethical and Practical, and on Purification from the Barlaamite Defilement*, shows at least in its first section (chapters 1-29) the author's balanced understanding of – and critical appreciation for – the natural sciences, together with his genuine aptitude for logic and scientific reasoning. It also demonstrates Palamas' impressive discernment, a discernment which skilfully traces the specific capabilities and possible points of interaction between theology and science without, however, confounding the domains. The English version of the *Chapters* referred to throughout my article is the one published in *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, where the title reads *Topics of Natural and Theological Science and on the Moral and Ascetic Life: One Hundred and Fifty Texts*. For all references to the text, I have compared this English version against the original edited by Chrestou (1994, p. 74-261); when necessary, I made the appropriate changes. I have also consulted the original text and translation offered by Sinkewicz (1988, p. 82-113). This article argues that whilst Palamas is similar to many other medieval scholars in his true interest and expertise in scientific matters, he nevertheless distinguishes himself by abandoning the classical scheme that considered theology as the queen of all sciences, on the one hand, and science and philosophy as handmaidens of theology, on the other. At the origin of this shift lies more than likely St Gregory's authentic Christian mindset, which marks the inherent differences between worldly knowledge (as represented by science and philosophy) and the wisdom from above (as revealed to the saints and witnessed by the Scriptures). On the whole, the *Chapters* add new dimensions to the already complex portrait of their author. Exploring mainly the first section of the *Chapters*, this article outlines the scriptural background of Palamas' thinking together with his views on the various competencies of theology and the natural sciences. Finally, it will emphasise the relevance of St Gregory's approach for contemporary conversations on science and theology.

#### Summary of the first section (chapters 1-29)

The book begins abruptly, without a general introduction or any indication of its motive and purposes. The first two chapters appear to constitute a prologue for the first section only, setting the cosmological and epistemological parameters of the ensuing discussion. Chapter 1, for instance, points out the existence of similarities between theological and profane mindsets concerning the origin of the world in the work of an ultimate uncaused Cause; in turn, chapter 2 voices the Christian belief in the eschatological renewal of creation by the 'power of the Holy Spirit'. The message conveyed is transparent: on the one hand, there are areas of confluence between theological and natural epistemologies; on the other hand, there are domains that cannot be dealt with outside the confines of divine revelation.

The group of chapters from 3 to 14 explore the Aristotelian universe, whose cosmological paradigm has been acknowledged by the Byzantines and whose major division refers to the celestial and terrestrial realms. Within this group, two main subgroups are discernible, (a) from chapter 3 to chapter 7, and (b) from chapter 8 to chapter 14.

(a) The first subgroup explores the astronomical domain, endeavouring to dismiss the mythological and pseudoscientific idea of a 'world soul' (κοσμική ψυχή; chapter 3) or 'universal soul' (πανκόσμιος ψυχή; chapter 4) that ostensibly moves everything that exists. Palamas displays a good command of natural (namely, Aristotelian) science, which he employs in order to demythologise the astronomical theories of a Platonic, Stoic and Neoplatonic background. Characteristically, he ascribes all celestial movements and phenomena, which he describes in great detail, with exclusively natural explanations.

(b) The second subgroup ventures into geography, together with the physics of the terrestrial and water spheres, elaborated within a cosmographical model inspired by the same Aristotelian-Ptolemaic concentric system of the world. One of the most interesting features of this subgroup is Palamas'

struggle to show more proficiency than the ancient cosmologists in using scientific tools (cf. end of chapter 9).

The final group of chapters comprising this section, from 15 to 29, analyses the different ways natural philosophy and science, on the one hand, and theology on the other, depict reality, together with their respective mechanisms of perception. Within this group of chapters there may be discerned three subgroups, (c) from chapter 15 to chapter 20, (d) from chapter 21 to chapter 24, and (e) from chapter 25 to chapter 29.

(c) The first subgroup considers the way natural knowledge is achieved through complex interactions between external objects, human senses, our capacity to represent objects and the mind. St Gregory's approach is neutral and expositive, suggesting no reluctance towards sense perception or the competence of cognitive processes in matters pertaining to natural knowledge. His insight in the subjective conditions of cognition is significant, mostly his awareness that our grasp of reality is shaped – and this is typically an ascetical approach – by the personal state of attachment or detachment (chapter 17), respectively. He also remarks that our natural faculties cannot handle what pertains to the Holy Spirit (chapter 20).

(d) The second subgroup reiterates the biblical narrative of Genesis 1-2, pointing out the character of the theological approach towards reality as inspired by the 'teaching of the Holy Spirit' (chapter 21). The chain of being indeed unfolds according to the order of the scriptural text (cf. chapter 22), yet Palamas brings a series of cultural elements into this picture, such as the concentric Aristotelian-Ptolemaic universe (chapter 23). In the background there operates a coherent theological perspective, the author emphasising the dependence of the universe on the Trinitarian God, the possibility of discerning God's imprint in the harmonious adornment of the cosmos, and the irreducibility of the human person to the cosmic environs.

(e) The third subgroup addresses the main difference between natural epistemology and the God-inspired theology. If secular knowledge adds to the understanding of the natural function of beings, theological knowledge is essentially salvific (chapter 29). Furthermore, theological knowledge plays the role of an interpretive and discerning tool contributing to the disentanglement of scientific data from any deceptive interpretations that can affect our spiritual wellbeing. Ultimately, only theological knowledge reveals humankind's majesty as irreducible to any aspect of physical world (chapter 26). All things considered, it is obvious that St Gregory's thinking is fundamentally Christian and traditional, both balanced and nuanced. Natural sciences have their well-grounded competence yet this does not extend to matters pertaining to the domain of the spiritual life. Before considering Palamas' acquaintance with secular science, a brief overview of his scriptural background is in order.

### **A biblical framework**

Although elaborating within an Aristotelian-Ptolemaic paradigm St Gregory's thinking remains nevertheless thoroughly biblical, as endorsed by chapter 2 when he evokes as an authority 'the prophecy of those inspired by God and of Christ himself, the God of all'. Papademetriou (2004, p. 61-2) is therefore right when he notes that, for Palamas, the source of theology is the divine revelation as witnessed by Scripture and the Church fathers. Given the very scriptural spirit of the Philokalic tradition – to which he incontestably belongs – and the impressive exegetical and/or homiletic output of his years as archbishop of Thessaloniki, this should come as no surprise.

From the outset, Palamas makes clear that he is aware of the intrinsic limitations pertaining to scientific epistemology and the indisputable competence of scriptural revelation for all theological and spiritual matters. He thus points out the general agreement between nature, culture and Scripture, or between empirical knowledge and divine revelation, by admitting that the world has a beginning. However, he also emphasises the superiority of the biblical worldview over all those 'who sophistically teach the contrary'. In chapter 1, he states:

That the world has an origin nature teaches and history confirms, whilst the discoveries of the arts, the institution of the laws and the constitution of states also clearly affirm it. [...] Yet we see that none of these surpasses the account of the making of the world and of time, as narrated by Moses.

The indirect proofs inferred from all human activities by the logic of causality represent mere confirmations of the truth revealed from above and proclaimed by the Scriptures, that God is the originator of the whole of creation. Together with indicating Palamas' unequivocal biblical mindset, this approach also manifests his propensity towards translating the ecclesial message via digestible cultural categories.

Summarising the ecclesial worldview, in chapters 21-24 Palamas closely follows the biblical account of the cosmogenesis by depicting – instead of a static and geocentric cosmology, as suggested by Sinkewicz (1988, p. 14) – a universe shaped dynamically to sustain life and people. The presentation begins with the Creator and the general image of the universe termed as ‘heaven and earth’ (chapter 21), introducing sequentially the organisation of creation in six days through divine commandments (chapter 22), as an ecosystemic and anthropic process culminating in the arrival of humankind (chapter 24). Motivated by both pastoral and missionary concerns, this approach refers to a readership which – conditioned by both the Christian faith and a certain cultural paradigm – may find comfort, meaning and purpose in a world that could be at times terrifying in its silent majesty. This kind of approach avoids any syncretism and ideological speculation (Ware, 2004, p. 163). Adopting the traditional ‘apologetic’ method of early fathers, St Gregory systematically endeavours to assimilate Hellenistic cosmography by grounding it in the Scriptures (see, for example, the comparison between the natural sciences and the Bible in the description of circular movements in chapter 8). To him, the world and its summation, the human being, are primarily God’s creation and cannot be fully comprehended outside the theological worldview. As creation, furthermore, and in a panentheistic sense (Ware, 2004, p. 166), the cosmos is neither divine nor spiritually meaningless, since it is never deprived of God’s presence and embrace. The biblical dimension of Palamite mindset is even better represented in the second section of the book, which explores the intricacies of ecclesial anthropology, but which will remain outside the scope of this essay. Meyendorff (1998, p. 118-20) notes that this background is precisely the source of St Gregory’s positive attitude toward the world as God’s creation and the sciences as a means to explore the nature of the cosmos. My paper will now turn to an analysis of the scientific component of the first section of the *Chapters*.

### St Gregory’s use of science

In a very characteristic way, Palamas proceeds to demonstrate the Christian faith’s superiority in matters pertaining to the spiritual experience only after presenting in detail the scientific and philosophical thinking-patterns espoused by the humanists. However, his way of handling information is not always amicably treated by modern scholars.

It is true that, providing non-theological information Palamas sometimes mentions in a very general way the Greek ‘sages’ (σοφοί; chapters 3 and 9), ‘naturalists’ and ‘stargazers’ (φυσιολόγοι, ἄστροθεάμονες; chapter 28), leaving the impression that he is not ‘closely familiar’ with the relevant sources (Sherard & Ware, 1995, p. 291, n. 1). Echoing allegations, both old and new, that St Gregory did not enjoy an advanced education (Meyendorff, 1974, p. 75; Meyendorff, 1998, pp. 28-31; Papademetriou, 2004, pp. 62-3), such a perception is utterly superficial. The relative absence of explicit references is understandable in a book that was never designed to endorse the authority of pagan authors. Nevertheless, the scientific data employed in the first section and throughout the book are mainly yet not exclusively drawn from Aristotle’s treatises, both verbatim and in the form of paraphrases. A brief example of this includes the fact that the Stagirite’s concentric cosmology is explicitly referred to in chapter 10 and the famous ‘categories’ later in the book, in chapter 134. Furthermore, in chapter 25 St Gregory enumerates three ancient scientists (Euclid, Marinos and Ptolemy) together with four schools of logic and mathematics (Empedoclean, Socratic, Platonic and Aristotelian). Considering the above, we may surmise that even if he had not consulted primary sources, Palamas could have become acquainted with those authors and schools through the lectures, handbooks and anthologies to which he was exposed in the Imperial University. However, this neither affects the veracity of the information provided nor does it diminish the significance of his copious use of scientific data.

The difficulties of perception concerning St Gregory’s use of science extend, however, beyond the above. For instance, the editors of the English version of *The Philokalia* (Sherard & Ware, 1995, p. 291, n. 1) cautiously note that Palamas’ worldview is mostly personal and ‘must not be taken to represent Christian cosmology as such’. Here, again, both the suggestion of novelty and the assessment behind it remain inaccurate. Nothing about the Palamite narrative of creation is fundamentally unknown or foreign to patristic tradition, if compared with, for example, St John Damascene’s *Exact Exposition*, book 2. Furthermore, Palamas shared with the holy fathers a spiritual discernment that opposed any illegitimate wedding of faith and culture – a selective method whose paragon remain undoubtedly St Basil the Great’s *Homilies on the Hexaemeron*. The fathers, and St Gregory with them, had employed scientific models as channels to communicate the Christian faith, without ever substituting them for the spirit of the ecclesial worldview (Lossky, 2002, p. 104). Thus, and considering the biblical roots of his thinking, Palamas’ Christian cosmology – whilst reflecting the

parameters and issues characterising his contemporary culture – remains valid in spirit although the science that constitutes its framework has become obsolete.

Now, speaking of his use of secular science, two distinct approaches immediately elicit our attention. Firstly, Palamas acknowledges science as a tool capable of unlocking the secrets of the natural laws; as such, it contributes to the development of civilisation and to discern the wisdom of the provident God within the world (since the nature of the cosmos is to be God's creation). He asserts that studying the laws of nature and becoming aware of how things really work in the universe may lead – causally – to knowing the God who 'made, ordered and adorned' everything (chapter 23). Secondly, Palamas highlights the limitations of scientific epistemology to prevent any attempt of absolutising its potential – an aspect to which I will return later on.

With the *Chapters*, St Gregory displays a surprisingly proficient command of scientific issues.

Throughout the work he continues to praise the usefulness of the sciences and applies them skilfully to various matters, such as the use of geometry in chapter 81. One should be mindful, however, that this impressive display of scientific awareness is not ostentatious; he is indeed a Church father and his approach is motivated by very practical reasons. As such, he relies heavily on the Aristotelian or naturalistic epistemology to fight the theory of a 'world soul', which contradicted the ecclesial doctrine of creation. In chapter 3, for instance, he insists that 'every stone, every piece of metal, all earth, water, air or fire, moves naturally (φύσει κινεῖσθαι) and not by virtue of a soul (ἀλλ' οὐ τῇ ψυχῇ)'. In chapter 21 he gives a similar naturalistic explanation to the world's emergence out of the 'pregnant' (κύφορον) womb of the pristinely chaotic 'heaven and earth' (cf. Genesis 1:2): all things derive from that original matrix endowed with a generative potential.

In other contexts, St Gregory seems to simply enjoy dealing with scientific matters. He takes as granted and presents in detail a variety of scientific theories and data, such as the stratified and concentric cosmos (chapters 5 and 10-14), the movement of the winds (chapter 8), the proportion of land and waters on earth (chapters 9 and 10), and the mechanisms of sense perception and natural intellection (chapters 15-20). The most impressive is perhaps the demonstration in chapters 13 and 14, which endeavours to find the actual position of the centre of the water sphere by rapport with the terrestrial sphere; the exposition is accompanied by a graphic whose meaning is analysed in detail from a purely scientific viewpoint.

At any rate, there is no doubt that Palamas values scientific knowledge. Although the significance of his contribution remains ignored by contemporary researchers, his thinking matches the profile of all medieval scholars who were thoroughly versed in both science and theology (Lindberg, 2002, p. 58). On another note, this consistently naturalistic approach dismisses the current prejudice that – at least to some critics (Papademetriou, 2004, p. 318-9; Bradshaw, 2004, pp. 268-71) – Palamas embodies the triumph of Neoplatonism over Christian tradition.

### **A hierarchical epistemology**

Following the traditional apologetic demarche as represented, in the fourth century for example, by the Cappadocians (Stramara, 2002, pp. 151-5), the Palamite work displays a balanced and courageous integration of scientific data within a scripturally based, Christian worldview. Thus, when describing the natural realm St Gregory takes, in modern terms, the interdisciplinary approach even though the purpose of his laborious enterprise, as already mentioned, remains genuinely pastoral. He makes use of scientific data in order to stir in the reader a sense of awe before the meaningful complexity of the world, as designed, brought into being and sustained by its Creator.

However, to avoid any epistemological clatter, Palamas raises with clarity – perhaps for the first time in a consistent manner within the Byzantine context – the issue of distinct competencies pertaining to various fields of expertise. More precisely, he delineates the boundaries between theological insight and scientific knowledge (Meyendorff, 1998, p. 120), a distinction behind which two main factors may be outlined: St Gregory's commitment to the Christian teaching of the ontological gap between the uncreated creator and his creation (chapter 78), and his experience as a hesychast (cf. e.g. chapters 79-80). This demarcation represents a revolutionary contribution in a time when, for both East and West, the frontiers between science and theology were not drawn. In fact, it was this confusion that allowed his opponents to use the flamboyant yet inaccurate expression that theology is 'the queen of the sciences'.

St Gregory's epistemological scheme, however, encompasses more than the sharp delineation of domains, to which I shall return. Whilst acknowledging their respective features and the fact that they operate on different levels of reality, Palamas does not consider science and theology as contradictory and mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they both contribute to holistic education the same way that

human psychosomatic faculties cooperate in gathering and processing information (chapters 16 and 19). Notwithstanding this fairly balanced approach, one may find in the background the ‘imbalance’ produced by a hierarchical perception. Motivated exclusively by soteriological and pastoral concerns, this perception acts as a criterion discerning the extent to which the two domains, of science and theology, contribute to personal formation. More precisely, it endeavours to establish existential – not ideological – priorities. In light of this criterion, not all knowledge brings us closer to God and mystical enlightenment; not all knowledge makes us participate in the divine life; therefore, not all knowledge should be cultivated at the same rate by those interested in spiritual becoming. Whilst science has its own right to explore the laws of nature, ultimately it cannot be prioritised on the path of spiritual becoming.

These nuances should be carefully considered when addressing Palamas’ reluctance toward sense perception, natural intellection and scientific epistemology. In fact, his prioritisation of theological knowledge in spiritual matters, like in chapters 25-26, does not presuppose an abandonment of science altogether, as demonstrated by his skilful use of it in matters pertaining to nature. For instance, in chapters 20 and 26, St Gregory points out the limitations of the ‘philosophy based on sense-objects’, which is intuitive in essence and utterly confined to the empirical horizon by its use of the thinking-patterns as pertaining to an enstatic, non-mystical, intellect. This is not to imply, however, a general mistrust in regard to sense perception (Konstantinovskiy, 2006, p. 317; Sinkewicz, 1988, p. 13), an opinion contradicted at least by chapter 63. Palamas merely insists that the natural way of knowing has no competence on matters lying beyond its reach, such as the deifying experience of the hesychast saints. In chapter 20, he notes:

Such [empirical] knowledge we gather from the senses and the imagination (ἐξ αἰσθήσεως καὶ φαντασίας) by means of the intellect (διὰ τοῦ νοῦ). Yet no such knowledge can ever be called spiritual (πνευματική) for it is natural (φυσική), the things pertaining to the Spirit remaining beyond its scope.

Knowledge of God, spiritual experience or the deifying participation can be reached only through the ecstatic, mystical, attitude of those who – acknowledging their ‘own infirmity’ – seek healing within the Church, not without ascetic efforts (chapter 24). Concerned primarily with ‘finding salvation’, they receive the ‘light of knowledge’ (τῷ φωτὶ τῆς γνώσεως) and the ‘true wisdom’ (σοφίαν ἀληθῆ) that cursory factors cannot obfuscate (chapter 29). Attaining ‘the wisdom of the Spirit’ (ἡ κατὰ πνεῦμα σοφία) they come to the realisation that nothing matches this experience: sense perception and the natural sciences are simply unable to lead to ‘saving knowledge’ (ἡ σωτήριος γνώσις) and therefore cannot ‘procure for us the joy from above’ (chapter 25). Thus, proving incapable of scrutinising the other, uncreated, side of reality and ‘to know God truly’ (chapter 26), scientific epistemology has to admit humbly its limitations and acknowledge the competence of theology in matters transcending physical, common, experience.

There is nothing arrogant or simplistic about this exhortation to discernment. At least, nothing to parallel the arrogance exhibited by many modern scientists who, like the ancient naturalists (cf. chapters 26 and 28), idolise and trust absolutely their limited means, denying, to paraphrase St Paul (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9), what the eyes have not seen and human mind cannot conceive. Instead, St Gregory’s epistemology is anything but simplistic and reductionist. Papademetriou (2004, p. 62) points out that, given his commitment to the doctrine of the ontological gap, for Palamas ‘there are two ways to knowledge: scientific for created reality and divine wisdom for the knowledge of uncreated being’. Thus, given their incommensurable methods and their respective competences for utterly different levels of reality, science is never – to paraphrase St Augustine’s famous dictum (Nesteruk, 2003, pp. 36-40; Stramara, 2002, pp. 158-60) – a handmaiden of theology and theology never the queen of the sciences.

Without ever implying a confusion of domains, Palamas apparently aims at dismantling the dangerous construct represented by the hypocritical designation of theology as the queen of the sciences. Indeed, there are serious flaws with the rationale behind such a label. Since theology’s aim is to know God, and since God is uncreated, infinitely transcending both created nature and the tools designed to explore the cosmos, maintaining the idea of a *mathesis universalis* – one epistemology applicable to all levels of reality – is inaccurate, simplistic and ultimately utopian. Pointing to this understanding, Palamas anticipates the first postulate of transdisciplinarity (cf. Nicolescu, 2002, p. 272) seven centuries in advance. Thus, the pompous label of the queen of the sciences indicates in fact an attempt to reduce theology to the scientific approach (the queen cannot but represent the culmination of a method to be

found at the very base) giving the deceptive impression that there is only one level of reality, that of the created order. Far from representing the culmination of natural knowledge, theology is an ecclesial function designed both to interpret everything in light of divine revelation and to explore the mystical levels of reality (such as the uncreated life and the deifying participation) lying beyond the grasp of science, logic and metaphysics.

St Gregory's understanding and method constitute bright examples of a sharp discernment and balanced approach that remain so necessary for our contemporary circumstances. Theology and science are not competing within the same level of reality and consequently develop different, and incommensurable, epistemologies. If Palamas sounds radical with reference to the limitations of natural science, this attitude is motivated primarily by his aim at emphasising the existence of levels of reality unexplored by the scientists. Experienced synergetically through personal participation in the divine life, as divine-human interaction (Bradshaw, 2004, p. 265) and beyond common perception, these levels are as real as everything else, with the exception that no instrument other than our own being can serve to access them. And perhaps these aspects represent the essence of St Gregory's legacy: to indicate how the adventure of knowing involves us and passes through our being; to show that beyond the ontological gap and the weakness of natural epistemology the experience of God is very much possible; and to point out that the end of the journey is the transformative experience of theosis/deification, and not just the acquisition of gnosis/knowledge.

### Conclusion

The main standpoints Palamas defends throughout the debate with his opponents – such as the natural incapacity of human mind to explore the transcendent realm and to comprehend the parameters of mystical experience – are still very much present in the *Chapters*. Yet, in this later work he openly acknowledges the competence of the natural sciences to scrutinise the created cosmos, together with their contribution in refuting the theory of a 'world soul' and facilitating the contemplation of God's wisdom as manifested in creation. His discourse presents the complex interactions between theology and science in a surprisingly balanced manner and within a holistic perspective that anticipates the contemporary transdisciplinary approach. From the point of view of his consistent hierarchical scheme (configured by soteriological criteria and pastoral purposes) he stresses that scientific epistemology has nothing relevant to say about spiritual experience. This aspect lay at the core of the entire Palamite edifice, which holds as a central axiom the sharp distinction between worldly knowledge and theological wisdom. Precisely this division between theology and natural sciences allowed him to construe their rapports in a preferable manner to the redundant classic scheme, which assumes that science is the foundation of all knowledge and that theology, at its apex, is its queen. This may be considered as one of St Gregory's main contributions in an epoch where the scientific and theological competencies were far from being thoroughly differentiated.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

### Reflections on Secularisation

By

Greg Melleuish

There was a recent episode of the television programme Q and A in which there was a discussion of the relationship between religion and reason. A couple of participants made the comment that logic always trumps religion, on the basis that religion is essentially based on feeling. To say that one must either support religion OR follow logic indicates not only a misunderstanding of the relationship between religion and reason but also a strange mode of thinking that chops the world up into mutually exclusive categories. If there is something called modernity, then it would seem that one of its characteristics has been this strong tendency towards a radical simplification of understanding the ways in which human beings relate to the world.

The idea of secularisation derives from a nineteenth century understanding of human history that sees humanity passing through a number of stages on its road to the 'modern' European world (Burrow 1966). There are many ways of understanding those stages: 'savagery', 'barbarism' and 'civilisation'; hunter gatherer, pastoralist, agriculturalist, and commercial; slave, feudal, and modern; religious, and secular; religious, metaphysical and positive stages. On closer inspection, and with a better acquaintance with the facts of world history, these 'stages' often fail to deliver as meaningful historical concepts. This is true of a number of the terms of modern social science; the 'state' and 'democracy' are often used even though it is unclear exactly what they mean. If there is a positive side to that equally ambiguous term 'post modernism', it is the idea that the meta-narratives based on the concepts used by nineteenth century social theory obscure more than they explain.

It is no wonder that in recent times many of these large concepts have come under attack. This is because they are essentially markers on a conceptual map, not terms that describe an empirical reality. It can now be doubted if 'feudalism' ever existed (Davis 2008, Reynolds 1994). It is difficult to define what a 'civilisation' is. The same is true of the two key terms 'religious' and 'secular'. They are part of a nineteenth century meta-narrative or conceptual map in which human beings begin in a condition that is termed 'religious' and evolve or develop to one in which they exist in a condition of being 'secular'. There are a number of elements built into this model:

1. The default position for human beings is the 'secular.' Once they have been offered the secular option individuals will tend to opt for it.
2. The religious condition is one in which human beings believe in the existence of imaginary beings who have an impact on their lives. The secular condition is one in which human beings accept that such beings are imaginary and that they must understand the world and their place in it in naturalistic terms.
3. The passage from the 'religious' condition to the 'secular' condition is part of a larger historical process.
4. Eventually all human beings will attain the default secular condition because that is the way that human beings are meant to be.

The narrative of 'secularisation' is essentially a template that can be injected into history and then be supported by the selective use of evidence. But essentially it is unprovable. It is almost impossible to know how 'religious' individuals were in a pre-literate society; Rodney Stark (1999), amongst others, has argued that the idea that individuals in the past were all 'religious' is simply false. Then there is the problem that the source of our information on such matters is often religious professionals who had their own particular concerns and agendas. Even in the contemporary world it is difficult to gauge the extent to which any particular individual is 'secular' in their outlook as there may be habits and dispositions to which such an individual is unlikely to admit when questioned by survey taker. A failure to believe in particular propositions does not make a 'secular' individual; rather the religious has more to do with, as the author of *The Shack* William P Young recently expressed it, 'a sense of the transcendent' (Wakefield 2008, 16). There are many people who are as likely to admit to possessing a 'sense of the transcendent' as undergraduates in a Political Science tutorial to confess that they admire George W Bush and the U.S.A.

It would seem to me that one of the flaws with Charles Taylor's magisterial *A Secular Age* (2007) is that it perpetuates this view that human beings have moved from a world inhabited by spirits to one that is no longer so. This is the consequence of using the model of intellectual history to map what is

believed to be a qualitative change in human consciousness. The Taylor's narrative of secularisation works because it is a genealogy of the ideas of the educated and university elite in Europe and, in part, America. It is plausible because it is the story of the group most addicted to intellectual ideas and, often, least open to an understanding of the world that goes beyond the cognitive. For example, it has been claimed that academics are 'less likely to believe in God than almost anyone else' (Patton 2008). It would be possible to construct a counter genealogy of figures who do not tell the secular story. It is quite reasonable to claim that the two most influential public intellectuals of the past sixty years in the English speaking world have been C S Lewis and J R R Tolkien. Any Humanities academic worth his or her salt would regard such a statement as nonsense, especially when considered in the light of all those figures, from Freud to Foucault, who have dominated the Humanities in universities. However, *Lord of the Rings* has permeated the culture of the modern West to a much greater extent than Foucault. *Narnia* has been read, and now watched, by generations of children. Their impact has been so great because they speak to that part of human nature that is receptive to a 'sense of the transcendent'. What Taylor describes is a genealogy of a particular tradition in European intellectual life that is complicit with creating the conceptual map that has secularisation as its end point.

More particularly, as is the case with most abstract concepts, concepts such as 'secularisation' are derived almost entirely from the European experience. There is an assumption that all human societies pass through identical stages. But do they? For example it has been argued (Bin Wong 1997) that the features of 'modernity' in the West is a product of a specific European history and has only limited usefulness in understanding Chinese history which had 'modern' features at an earlier stage in its history. Equally Karen Armstrong's recent book *The Great Transformation* (2006) on the Axial Age demonstrates how human beings can go down different roads in their pursuit of a 'sense of the transcendent'.

Part of the problem here is the use of the word 'religion' and following from that 'religious'. It has been argued (Bayley 2004, 325–65) that the idea of world religions are a construction of the nineteenth century as imperial administrators found it necessary to deal with local 'religious' leaders. They attempted to understand and construct those 'religions' in terms that they could understand. [Note how I must use 'religion' and 'religious' because there are no neutral terms; nor are there any meta terms, except perhaps 'ideology' which could be used as a category into which 'religion' can be placed.] In turn this led to the creation of a number of imagined communities based on religion, analogous to the creation of nations. It is not clear the extent to which other religions follow the 'religion' template that is based on Christianity.

The terms 'religious' and 'secular' have problems if we wish to use them as analytical tools. But it could also be argued that we cannot do without them, as they may describe, at a basic level, two different orientations towards the world. We have very little with which to replace them. What is really worth questioning is the extent to which they can be seen as sequences in an historical process and the degree to which they are mutually exclusive elements of the human condition. However, it is clear (Masuzawa 2005) that the idea of world religions was a late nineteenth century European idea. Secularisation often rests on an either/or understanding of the relationship between the religious and the secular. One is either religious or one is secular. This radical simplification of the way in which human beings come to know and understand the world would not seem to accord with the complex reality of human existence. Human beings are oriented towards the world in a number of ways. There are many more modes than the one which emphasises rationality and propositional logic. That is to say we come to know and relate to the world through a multiplicity of modes and we possess a variety of ways of expressing that knowledge. This means that we generally live in a world that is not marked by clear black and white distinctions but in which there is considerable ambiguity and sometimes contradiction. The modern tendency is to demand consistency and clear cut distinctions when what that consistency may mean is no more than we allow one mode of understanding to dominate other modes. Modern people are sometimes puzzled when Islamic terrorists also turn out to be professional engineers and doctors when, in fact, there may be no real reason why the two cannot go together. To say that we have a pluralist appreciation of ourselves and our place in the world is not to say that that every human being will have the same mix of understandings. The mix will depend on where our talents lay, our emotional and intellectual disposition and our personal history. It is not unreasonable to say that in a normal, perhaps even an ideal, society there will be a multiplicity of understandings and that a harmony will exist amongst them.

If we look at most societies in human history what we discover is that they contain a range of understandings that often strike the modern Western outlook as puzzling. That is because the modern West has come to believe in a notion of progress whereby one begins in a state of superstition and error and moves through to one of rationality and science. This is part of an 'either/or' mentality, and the

belief of many of its members that there is a whole that somehow all hangs together. The way to make sense of that whole is to historicize it and turn it into the meta-narrative of secularisation.

It is not inconceivable that this is part of the Christian heritage that the West has received. Consider the following statement by Peter Brown (2003, 70–1):

A polytheist society had been made up of innumerable small cells. Though supported by immemorial custom it was as delicate and brittle as honeycomb. The Christian Church, by contrast, brought together activities that had been kept separate under the old system of *religio*, in such a way as to form a compact, even massive, constellation of commitments. Morality, philosophy and ritual were treated as being intimately connected: all were part of 'religion'; all were to be found in their true form in the Church. In the polytheist world, by contrast, these were separate spheres of activity...Neither philosophy nor morality owed much to the cult of the gods. They were human activities, learned from and enforced by human beings.

The seeds of secularisation lie in this desire to bring everything together under the one umbrella as a means of making sense of the whole. It lies in the *esprit de système* that the West has made its own. The real problem occurs when you put the *esprit de système* together with a rationalist approach to knowledge and attempt to submerge other approaches to the world as 'primitive' or 'ignorant' or 'emotional'. Ultimately what one gets is Jeremy Bentham and the cold calculations of utilitarianism. And it is a matter of personality, or rather the triumph of a particular type of personality in whom the desire for *esprit de système* is expressed in through an excessive attachment to rationalism and a drive to subordinate all other forms of human understanding to that of proceeding through 'clear and distinct ideas' and the analysis of propositions. In his recent *Why Spirituality is Difficult for Westerners*, David Hay (2007: 60–1) discusses the work of Eugene Gendlin who, in his treatment of academics with emotional problems found that many of his clients were so detached that they tended to treat their therapy sessions as academic debates. This may explain why they are more prone to atheism. Hay (2007, 60) claims that although detachment is necessary in the conduct of scientific enquiry, 'over-preoccupation with abstract ideas makes people prone to acquiring a disembodied, theoretical consciousness of the self, withdrawn from personal engagement in the immediate environment.' Hay (2007, 53–5) argues, quoting the work of Alexander Luria, that this sort of 'disembodied, theoretical consciousness' is related to the move from an oral to a literate culture and the resulting tendency to ignore our 'holistic awareness of immediacy.' In the modern world it is still possible to have both, but in the secular world of 'either/or' it is a matter of the abstract replacing the immediate. Hay's insights are strengthened by Mary Eberstadt's (2007) argument that the decline of the family preceded secularisation in the West. People 'became secular because they stopped having children and families.' If, as Eberstadt believes, 'people come to religious practice much of the time, or even just *some* of the time, because of their experience of the natural family', this could easily be accounted for in terms of the explanation that 'experience of the family' encourages our 'holistic awareness of immediacy' and tempers the excesses of 'a disembodied, theoretical consciousness of the self'. I believe that it can be argued that one of the major tendencies of modern Western thought is what Michael Oakeshott (1962, 1–28) has termed Rationalism, the tendency to strip off the practical, affective and skill elements of knowing and to leave in its place a series of rational propositions and recipes that engage only the cognitive element of our understanding. One could argue that this tendency is what marks out Western philosophy, going back to Socrates, but there can be little doubt that it has become more important in the modern world, although it has long been resisted in some quarters as the triumph of ideology or Jacobinism. In contemporary terms it can be seen as the triumph of 'theory' throughout our universities. To be an academic discipline, it is now necessary to have a body of abstract theory. Merely to embody a professional practice is not good enough. Hence we now have legal academics who want to teach and research the theory of law rather than teach the practice of law. The same is true of accountants who want to apply Foucault to the study of accountancy. The important point is that this rationalist tendency has now moved beyond the West. Olivier Roy (2004, 162) has argued that contemporary Islamism, as taught in the many small madrasas of the Islamic world has jettisoned its traditional cultural elements and come to concentrate on its scripturalist core. Fundamentalism is, in many ways, a response to the rationalist tendency of the modern world, as it seeks to reduce religion to a set of recipes that are to be understood in an abstract fashion. Secularisation has operated in tandem with rationalism and the attempt to strip religion of its affective nature. Strangely enough the churches were complicit in this development by focusing on the argument from design and natural religion during the eighteenth century. This had the effect, as Hay (2007, 58), following Michael Buckley, argues of taking the proof for religion away from religious

experience and replacing it with abstract scientific style arguments. There is an enormous distance separating the watchmaker of William Paley (nd, 17–24) and the statement of seventeenth century Cambridge Platonist John Smith (1660, 9) that ‘Divine Truth is better understood, as it unfolds itself in the purity of men’s hearts and lives.’

This is an intellectual and cultural shift that favours a particular type of orientation towards, and being in, the world. It is one that encourages a disembodied rationality and its model is that of the gentleman whose life and demeanour is shaped by that rationality. One can see that, in England at least, that this model developed in the wake of the Glorious Revolution and all its ‘modern’ consequences, ranging from the Bank of England and the National debt to the end of touching for scrofula by the Monarch (Dillon 2007). Its patron saint is le bon David, David Hume, a good natured man who seems to embody rationality and reasonableness. Beyond that perhaps it looks to the philosophical Cicero. Its most influential literary expression was the *Spectator*. It is opposed to both the warrior ethos and those who are weak enough to succumb to the foolishness of religion. Religion is to be reduced to the private sphere, that of emotions and women. The foolishness of religion is confirmed by the emotionalism of Methodism.

Rationalism then gives priority not only to disembodied rationality but also to the individual who is on the outside rather than the inside, who, like a carpet bagger takes his suitcase of reason with him as the tool of self-advancement. He is the ultimate *novus homo*. That is rationalism in its most benign form. In its more dangerous form it is the human being who is stripped of everything but their reason or their scripturalist religion. That is Robespierre or Lenin or Osama Bin Laden. Secularism and fundamentalism are both the outcomes of the rationalist cast of mind.

It can be contended that this rationalist spirit radically impoverishes our understanding of human nature and our capacity to understand the many pathways down which the human spirit is capable of proceeding. Consider the famous analysis of human nature by Hobbes (1991, 88) and Thucydides (1972, 80). Human beings are driven by profit, fear and honour. This model adds *thumos* to pleasure and pain, an element of human nature that many of our modern analysts would remove. But is such a model of human nature true? Or is it essentially a ‘stripped down’ model of human nature?

Along with utilitarianism, this is the modern secular model of humanity but one wonders how Hobbes and Thucydides would explain such human characteristics as humility or renunciation, let alone altruism. Both Thucydides and Hobbes wrote at a time when social bonds were in the process of collapsing. A ‘stripped down’ model of human nature might make sense in such circumstances when the rich traditions of the past appear to have eroded under the pressure of war, when expediency, as expressed in the Melian Dialogue (Thucydides 1972, 400–8), has come to dominate. It is surely much harder to countenance such a view at a time of normality.

In this way it is possible to argue that the secular vision of human nature, which is essentially an expression of an abstract rationality, is in many ways an aberration that has very little to do with ‘normal’ human nature. It is very far from being the ‘default’ position for human beings, but rather is an expression of this ‘stripped down’ version of human nature. As a model of the human spirit it is a dismal failure that does not deliver the freedom and dignity that it promises. Moreover, it is easy to see how much of the culture wars of the twenty first century follows from the impact of this understanding of human nature, between an educated wedded to a rationalist understanding and a commonfolk clinging to a much more organic understanding of the world and their place in it. Such a conflict follows naturally from the desire of the ‘cultured despisers’ of religion to relegate religion to the feeble minded and sentimental.

But in one sense they are right. As we noted in the case of Methodism, Rationalism leads not only to the cold dry religion of the argument from design but also to a desire to unleash the affective side of human nature. Considered from the point of view of intellectual and cultural history, Rationalism is but one tradition amongst many, but it is a privileged tradition because it is the one that is cherished by those who carry the torch of modern social, political and cultural theory, that is to say the majority of contemporary academics in the social sciences and the humanities. But then the same is true of secularisation. The fact that there are many ways of reaching modernity can be illustrated by the different trajectories taken by France and America in the wake of the democratic upsurge of the late eighteenth century. Both the French and the American revolutions allowed for the emergence of the popular will through their attack on authority. The French Revolution (Burleigh, 2005, 48–111) unleashed anti-clericalism, anti-religion and popular fury, and led to the division of France into two antagonistic camps, Republican and Catholic. The new democratic values of the Revolution were directed against established religion and appeared to indicate that the path to modernity necessarily involved the overthrow of religion and the establishment of a secular order. Of course, this new order often mimicked Christian practices, but the crucial point is that the way democracy developed in

Europe appeared to indicate that the democrats and the secularists were on the same side marching together towards modernity.

The American Revolution also led to anti-clericalism and a 'revolution from below' but it ultimately helped to make America a far more religious place than Europe. Both revolutions had been led by educated rationalists but whereas the effect of the French Revolution was to De-Christianise a large segment of the population, the American Revolution was but the prelude to the Christianisation of large part of the population of the backwoods of America. As Nathan O Hatch (1989) demonstrates in his *The Democratization of American Christianity*, democracy and Christianity came to reinforce each other in America. The free democratic and unregulated world created by the absence of an established church allowed a swarm of poor, ignorant preachers to multiply who spread the gospel throughout the back country. These were the Methodist circuit riders. Of course, the Methodists were the ancestors of today's Pentecostals, and this was a religion that was very emotional and appealed to the heart. As Hatch (1989, 55) comments, 'American camp meetings were awesome spectacles indeed, conjuring up feelings of supernatural awe in some, "the air of a cell in Bedlam" in others.' But it did make Christianity democratic and, at the same time, democracy Christian. This was a totally different outcome to what happened in Europe, a different road to modernity.

The free air of America also allowed for a proliferation of new religions (Albanese 2007). Hatch (1989, 113–22) points out that Joseph Smith was a product of this democratic religious environment. If the argument about secularisation is correct then the last thing that one should expect in the modern world is a new religion. Yet Mormonism (Albanese 2007, 136–50) with its mixture of Christianity and other elements, including Masonry, is exactly that. And, as Eberstadt (2007) points out, it flourishes today not least because of its positive attitude to the family.

One could put the different pathways of America and Europe down to the form that democracy took in the two places: decentralised in America and centralised in Europe. The important point is that the road that is taken in a particular society often owes more to what could be termed contingent factors. Choices are made and then we become the product of those choices. The assumption that there are necessary connections between certain things and ideas often turn out not to be true, as the divergent paths of France and America in the wake of the democratic revolution illustrates.

Of course this still leaves us with the puzzle of what we are to make of the concept of secularisation. It would be foolish to deny that there have not been intellectual and cultural changes over the past few hundred years that would seem to support the idea that there have been shifts in the way in which people in the West, at least, relate to the sacred and the transcendent. For example, in his study of Kingship, Francis Oakley (2006) charts the way in which the idea of kingship has been disenchanted and de-sacralized in Europe. But, in my reading of Oakley's argument, it would be wrong to use this process simply as part of a blanket 'secularisation'. Oakley (2006, 142) makes clear that the power of kingship owes its force to 'archaic patterns of sacral monarchy' and is in opposition to Christianity. Its decline is a complex process, although it is easy, and tempting, to use the 'secularisation' template to explain that decline.

And that is exactly the point about 'secularisation'; it provides us with a single concept that allows us to place complex phenomena into a box without having to think too closely about them. It provides us with a simple template that appears to allow us to explain changes that are going on in the world around us. It is an explanation that flatters the aspirations of the rationalist educated classes of the modern West and provides them with the illusion that they are in the vanguard of the progress of Humanity.

However, as has been argued in this paper, the problem with the secularisation template is that it wants to stuff the whole of human nature into a narrow and impoverished model that does little to allow that nature to flourish and to express itself in all its variety. In this sense the secularisation template does not deliver the freedom that it promises but becomes a harsh 'stripped down' version of humanity that can only impoverish the human spirit.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

### God(s), Freedom, and Nature in the Derveni Papyrus

by  
Harold Tarrant

#### Introduction

I deal in this paper with a text that still remains little discussed in Australia, but whose far-reaching importance is now becoming relevant to Hellenists with very different specialisations. It may possibly be the earliest surviving mainland Greek papyrus, discovered in a Macedonian grave in charred condition suggestive of burning.<sup>1</sup> Remains of the top half of a papyrus roll, with 26 columns part-extant. It was found in 1962, and published in an unauthorised version in 1982, but the early columns that were in need of painstaking reconstruction were published only in 1997 (Tsantsanoglou 1997). New texts have been published since 2002, including the official version of 2006.<sup>2</sup> At the present time it is being read with promising new multi-spectral imaging that can clear up some uncertainties, and I am fortunate enough to have seen some of what this technique can achieve with the papyrus.<sup>3</sup> However, the papyrus had deteriorated quite considerably since the find, and that will no doubt mean that the earliest photos will still be the best testimony in a few cases. The tomb is said to date from around the late 4<sup>th</sup>-century BC; the handwriting in this copy, with its careful and well-formed letters, may date from around the mid 4<sup>th</sup>-century; and the date of author is usually regarded as late 5<sup>th</sup>-century or very early 4<sup>th</sup>-century.

Regarding the environment in which the author worked, it should first be noticed that the dialect is Attic with an overlay of Ionic (or possibly vice-versa), but most of the subject matter is such that Ionic would probably have been the natural language for such a treatise. One would expect the author to have worked either in Athens or in the Aegean islands and coastal settlements. Even the latter possibility would probable entail his having had links with Athens. Like many other intellectuals he may have moved between cities. While he appears to be involved with religious practice, the influences on his thought have much to do with Presocratic philosophy, including Heraclitus (quoted in column IV), Anaxagoras, and with the language-theory and hermeneutics of the Sophists.

The text seems to divide naturally into two parts, for columns VIII-XXVI consist chiefly of a commentary on an early Orphic text in epic verse, attributed by the author to Orpheus himself. It looks rather like a hymn to Zeus, but is in fact distinguished by the author from Orpheus' 'hymns' so some other title should presumably be sought. It contains theogonic material explaining how things were before the 'birth' of Zeus. Or that, at least, is as it appears on the surface. For the Derveni author believes that the text, and perhaps poetic texts in general, speaks in riddles throughout (VII), and he consequently interprets it allegorically throughout. Plato is sometimes witness to instances of the allegorical interpretation of Greek myth (as at *Phaedrus* 229b-230a or *Gorgias* 493b-c), but we should not easily have guessed from Plato that any writer had by that stage employed allegorical interpretation as extensively and as consistently as the Derveni author.<sup>4</sup>

#### Derveni Theology

The actual generations of gods are not taken seriously by the Derveni interpreter, for he claims that Zeus existed even before he was called 'Zeus', and that his birth is no more than his receiving his

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<sup>1</sup> For extensive discussion of the find and of the subsequent rather sorry history of the papyrus the reader is referred to Betegh 2004; the present writer found essential information on the latter hard to locate in Kouremenos et al. 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Provisional English translations as well as the Greek text, to the extent that it was recoverable, are available in Betegh 2004 and Kouremenos et al. 2006. Multi-spectral images confirm that uncertain letters have not always been read more successfully in the Kouremenos edition than in that of Betegh, itself somewhat dependent on the text published in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* by Richard Janko in 2002; readers of French may also find Jourdan 2003 a handy acquisition.

<sup>3</sup> I owe thanks here to Apostolos Pierris, Director of the Institute of Philosophical Research, Patra.

<sup>4</sup> However, Plato does warn in the *Phaedrus* passage (229d-e) that once one embarks on allegorical interpretation one may never be able to stop, and the fragments of Metrodorus of Lampsacus (DK61A3-6), an associate of Anaxagoras (DK61A2) and hence a contemporary of Socrates, do reveal to us that systematic allegorisation of Homeric poems was already taking place among the devotees of Presocratic philosophy.

ultimate name. Those figures regarded as previous rulers and Zeus' ancestors by Hesiod (and Orpheus) are treated as simply prior manifestations of the divine intelligence. In his *systematically* allegorical reading of the poem, the author reduces Orpheus' Greek gods to physical forces, features of the natural world, so that it seems to be precisely the kind of text that might have incurred charges of atheism. The following is a selection of the identifications that the author makes in the course of his exegesis, often supported by the use of a kind of etymology best known from Plato's *Cratylus*:<sup>5</sup>

1. *adyton of Night* = depths of night which never sets (according to the etymology *a-dy-*).
2. *Olympos* = time, XII.3.
3. *aidoion* = sun, XIII.9.
4. *Kronos* (father of Zeus) = *krouôn nous* ('striking intelligence'), XIV.7.
5. *Ouranos* (father of Kronos): some doubts, possibly = *horizôn nous* ('limiting intelligence' as in the text as supplemented by Kouremenos et al. 2006), XIV.
6. *Zeus* = air, the eternal principle of existent things, after being named, XVII; on the analogy of Kronos the name ought to be given on the basis of Zeus' present function, which might imply the etymology of Plato's *Cratylus* (*di' hon zên*, 'through whom [things] live').
7. *Moirai* (Fate, associated with Zeus) = pre-cosmic *pneuma* (breath, breeze, spirit) of some kind, not other than Zeus, XVIII.1-3, and also = wisdom XVIII.6-10; hence there is a very close connection with the concept of Zeus as intelligent air.
8. *Aphroditê* (love-goddess) = mixing, *Peithô* (Persuasion) = yielding, *Harmonia* = connecting, XXI.10-12; all these forces seem to be treated as not other than Zeus himself.
9. *Earth + Mother + Rhea + Hera + Dêiô* = one female principle, with various names XXII.7-16; hence there appears to be a female principle to balance the various guises of the male rational divinity.
10. *Ôkeanos* = air (= Zeus?), XXIII.2-5.
11. *Achelôios* = water (or is it ≠ water, and therefore possible air again? Betegh 2004 and Kouremenos et al. 2006 disagree here), XXIII.12.

So author seems to be postulating the kind of divinity (or rather pair of divinities, with one adopting taking the traditional male role and being active in the on-going creation process, while the other adopts amore passive, earth-mother kind of role), which would be required to operate a Presocratic-style cosmology. Presocratic theories, insofar as they do not involve transcendent gods and mostly fail to separate the divine from the material, seem to be an unpromising area to search for supernaturally induced freedom from any of those things that humans usually want to be free. We are most familiar with the kind of theology that looks to the *supernatural* to free us from the pressures and evils of the present world, a world naturally identified with *nature*, but when god and nature are themselves inseparable one can hardly be appealing to god (= nature) to release us from his own terms and conditions—and certainly not if he is a rational god, whose ways are already entirely determined by rational principles, the kind of god that most late Presocratics postulated.

In spite of the problems that would be involved in seeking release from a properly managed rational universe, the author seems to be not only a 'new intellectual' as far as theology is concerned, but also an 'Orphic' practitioner.<sup>6</sup> He has contempt for those who offer the rites without any proper understanding that can be passed onto those undergoing them (XX), but he also speaks of oracle-consultations that he himself appears to be involved in (V.1-6); of the lack of belief among many who fail to believe the signs because of the temptations of pleasure, and so fail also to learn (V.6-12); of prayers and sacrifices that perhaps soothe the spirits (VI.1); of the incantation and sacrifice of the 'magoi' that can apparently avert hostile *daimones* (seemingly the spirits of the dead) that stand in the way of what is being sought (VI.2-5); of a liquid offering of water and milk (VI.5-7); of the sacrifice of many-knobbed cakes, whose form is explained by the multitude of spirits involved (VI.7-9); of the preliminary sacrifices to the Furies (*Eumenides*) made by the initiates on the same principles as those the 'magoi', for which reason those intending to sacrifice to the gods seem first to sacrifice something

<sup>5</sup> For a study of the *Cratylus* in relation to the papyrus see Anceschi 2006.

<sup>6</sup> I do not like the word 'Orphic', and use it only for the sake of convenience. I suspect that we should be looking rather for a word that indicates a new 'scientific' approach to religious texts and ritual, that will find much to commend in various personal religions designed to ensure the success of the initiate in the afterlife.

of avian stock, a bird, bird-part or egg (VI.8-11, cf. II.7; however, the reconstruction of the text at both points is quite ambitious). This may fit in with the fact that the spirits themselves are seen as bird-like, and what is sacrificed is again intended to match the nature of the recipients of the sacrifice. The key theme that seems to run through columns I-VI seems to concern the need for us to appease avenging spirits, whether *psychai*, *daimones*, *Erynues*, or *Eumenides*. It is these that seem to pose a barrier to human aspirations for some religious freedom, rather than the traditional gods who have here become a part of nature.

### Orphic Freedom through Purification

We now need to know a little of what was said about so-called Orphic practitioners at the time, but there seems to be a considerable overlap with those who claimed to be followers of Musaeus. Indeed, as long as one recognises that the legacy of Orpheus and of Musaeus were closely connected in at least some people's minds, one could easily imagine our author having been quite as devoted to the latter.

In the *Republic* Plato's Adeimantus presents a very hostile picture, which sometimes combines both religions and may be less than discriminating, in order to bring Socrates to account:

*Republic* 363c: Musaeus and his son (= the alleged founder of the Eleusinian mysteries) claim that the gods give just persons even more exciting advantages. Once they've transported them, in their account, to Hades and got them reclining on couches for the party they've laid on for just people, they next have them spending eternity wearing chaplets on their heads and drinking, on the assumption that the best possible reward for goodness is perpetual intoxication. ... As for unjust and immoral persons, they bury them in Hades in a kind of mud and force them to carry water in sieves, ....

*Republic* 364d-365a: Others cite Homer in support of the idea that humans can influence the gods, pointing out that he too said ... (*Iliad* 9.497, 499-503). They come up with a noisy mob of books written by Musaeus and Orpheus (descended from the Moon and the Muses, they say), which *are source-books for their rituals*. And they convince whole countries as well as individuals that there are in fact *ways to be free and cleansed of sin*. While we remain on earth this involves rituals and enjoyable diversions, which also work for us after we have died and which they call initiations. These initiations, they say, free us from all the nasty things of the other world, but terrible things await those who didn't take part in the rituals.

The first passage depicts the general thrust of such ritual as being the influencing of our destination in the other world, essentially freeing our minds from the fear of death, and ignoring our real deserts. The Derveni author would not fit perfectly with Adeimantus' claims at 363c, since this person does seem committed to principles of cosmic justice (IV) and does seem scathing about those who succumb to pleasures (V). The second passage seems a better match, bearing in mind that our practitioners make a great deal of books, including some ascribed to Orpheus. Presumably, then, they are exegetes of religious texts. The final warning is significant, for it seems clear from column V of the papyrus that persons who fail to believe in the terrors of Hades are a particular concern to the author—presumably because this seriously reduces the chances of rescuing them from what awaits those who arrive uninitiated. So somewhere among the religious practitioners mentioned here is where Adeimantus would likely put the Derveni author.

### The Freedom sought by the Derveni Author

What I wish to show here is how the physical world that we think of as 'above', ruled as it is by a rational divinity within it and operating according to predictable forces, does not seem to be the one that most concerns our author. Nature is thus not something that we need freed from at all, and indeed we cannot be free from it without being free also from the best of divinities who is himself a part of it. Rather, the author conceives of the real source of freedom as being concerned with the threats of an unpleasant afterlife. He holds that scientific religious practice can overcome these by freeing us not from god nor from death, but from the hostile spirits who may make this 'death' a misery for us. And scientific practice of course relies upon the understanding both of the world and of all the spiritual beings who may affect our future. The science concerned seems somehow to postulate some technique of reciprocity for appeasing potentially alien forces.

Like a good Epicurean, the author thinks that conduct in accord with knowledge has the power to free us from the fear of the supernatural and from the fear of death, but his beliefs and his route to this freedom are of course considerably different from any that would have appealed to the Epicurus, simply because his view of the physical world is utterly different too. Moreover, while Epicurus believed that he was throwing out all traditional religious systems in the course of preferring science, while the Derveni author's kind of science seeks to make scientific sense of as much traditional religious thought and practice as possible. He was committed to this, perhaps, not simply by some emotional attachment to traditional practices, but rather because his universe was intelligently governed

overall, and humans were the animals in whom this intelligence had been made most manifest. To dismiss centuries of religious practice, rather than modifying it to make it more rational, would have been to question the intelligent order of things. Epicurus, with no intelligent order to concern him, had no problem with dismissing everything that humans had hitherto done or said.

### Introducing New Divinities?

To illustrate the importance of this text by comparison with a different, and well known philosopher, it would be worth also noting that there is no doubt whatever that the author does not acknowledge any divinity that any ordinary Greek city could officially acknowledge, since his Zeus overlaps with the traditional Zeus in little more than name, while he does believe in, and sacrifice to, various annoying spiritual beings which probably bear little resemblance to the equivalent objects of any city's cult. To call them *daimonia* ('little divinities'), would seem entirely justified. In this respect the charges brought against Socrates,<sup>7</sup> that he failed to acknowledge the gods whom the city acknowledged and that he introduced other new *daimonia*, would seem equally well tailored for a public prosecution of the Derveni author. Perhaps the only other obvious point of comparison with Plato's Socrates is that both seemed to believe firmly in a wide variety of modes of divination.<sup>8</sup>

A greater resemblance may be found with the more air-obsessed and generally more sophistic Socrates of Aristophanes' comedy *Clouds*. This Socrates also practises ritual initiations (256-9) into the mysteries (144) of some strange and insubstantial beings (the Clouds), but at the centre of his cosmic view is the belief that life as a whole is directed by some airy force, totally unlike the gods of the city, not much interested in the individual well being or transgressions of individual human beings, but somehow retaining the vestiges of his cosmic role. He is no longer referred to as *Dia*, but as *Dinos* (379-81). The important thing is, not that this portrait was in any way accurate or that the label 'Orphic' might be applied to Socrates himself, but rather that Aristophanes could readily imagine the combination of weird religiosity, personal rituals, and utterly alien cosmic theory, and that he could actually find an individual to be the representative of such a combination.

What kind of freedom did the Cloud-gods in Aristophanes' play offer any of the devotees in the play? In the cynical author's own view the answer was probably that they no longer had to worry where the next meal came from. Both ingenuity and the Clouds themselves feed a whole tribe of sophistic types (331-9), and Strepsiades has only studied (and sent his son to study) in order to free himself from debt. From the character Socrates' point of view the answer is perhaps that the Clouds facilitate his freeing himself from the unfortunate magnetic pull of the earth below upon any thought not suitably dry and uplifted (228-34). From his henchman Chaerephon's point of view they probably offer him the opportunity to live perpetually away from the destructive force of the sun.<sup>9</sup> At the end of the extant play (admittedly not quite the same as the performed 423 BC version) nobody wins: Strepsiades is not only still deeply in debt but sore as well; Socrates is being choked by the excessively dry air (= smoke) from the burning of his school; and Chaerephon, who seems normally to seek refuge in the damp, dark recesses, is being burned to death.<sup>10</sup> They had sought freedom from parts of nature and nature had not forgiven them; in fact their gods, the Clouds themselves, have proved complicit in their punishment. Their embrace of *natural* divinities in order to free themselves from certain limited pressures that are themselves a *product of nature* has not unnaturally backfired.

### Conclusion

If western philosophy as a whole owes an enormous amount to Socrates, and if a small part of understanding that Socrates is understanding all the evidence and not just that of Plato, then the Derveni Papyrus, however alien to us, may yet help us to understand the origins of western philosophy a little better. Socrates did not write it, and may not even have known the author, and yet there are some revealing comparisons between them for which we are not totally dependent on Aristophanes'

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<sup>7</sup> On the actual charges see de Strycker and Slings 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Compare column V with Plato, *Apology* 33c.

<sup>9</sup> Chaerephon is associated constantly in comedy with a pale, or yellowish (Ar. *Wasps* 1413 and Eupolis fr. 239) complexion, supposedly indicative of his not emerging into the sun, so that Pheidippides' constant concern in *Clouds* is that he may emerge from the philosophic institution pale-faced; fire in the Derveni papyrus is clearly seen as a useful but dangerous separative force that Zeus must control, IX.5-10.

<sup>10</sup> This accords with the single line, 1505, that is given to him in the manuscripts, but denied to him by Dover 1968; Sommerstein 1982 actually gives him a little more than the one line, but that rather detracts from the comic point of having Chaerephon emerge only at the very end from the innermost recesses where he has all along been dwelling.

comic portrait. As for the freedom that was promoted more seriously by Socrates, as seen through Plato's eyes, it was once again closely connected with death. The Socrates of the *Phaedo* liberates his mind and inner self from his outward body to the fullest extent that is possible in this life, and achieves at the end of the work the most natural transition possible to the next phase of his existence. No avenging spirits seem to be lurking around the corner and lying in wait for his newly dead soul. His death has healed and liberated him, and he arranges the appropriate bird sacrifice to the god of healing (118a7-8): in return, perhaps, for the winged existence that he is now achieving.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> If texts of column VI are correct at the point where they have bird-sacrifices as the appropriate offering to the Eumenides insofar as they are souls, then 'wings' of the soul may be a factor here too. For the adoption of birds names by the most accomplished philosophers in the Platonic tradition see Tarrant 2009, who should also have recorded that Porphyry was occasionally known in the sources as *Phoenix*, which is not simply an alternative to *Phoenikikos* for 'Phoenician' but also the name of the rarest of mythical birds.

## CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

### Naturalism Reconsidered

by

Khaldoun Sweis

It is dangerous to show man too clearly how much he resembles the beast, without at the same time showing him his greatness. It is also dangerous to allow him too clear a vision of his greatness without his baseness. It is even more dangerous to leave him in ignorance of both --Blasé Pascal<sup>36</sup>.

#### Introduction

Darwinian evolutionary naturalism (DEN) is the strongest force for the legitimate expression of research in the sciences or the humanities today. I attempt to address some issues that DEN still need take under consideration. This paper is divided into three parts.

Part 1 is a struggle to find a coherent definition of DEN as it is currently understood. The common thread I find running through all definitions is the following: DEN is a belief or research paradigm that excludes any teleological, theological or supernatural explanations for the elucidation of phenomena in the universe. It assumes that the best explanations are causal non-purposive explanations, ultimately depending on the causal regularities of the physical sciences. Moreover, if anything cannot be explained by the machinery of the hard sciences, like consciousness, morality, or beauty, then it either is a mystery waiting to be solved or explained by the hard sciences, is epiphenomenal or does not exist (it is a social or linguistic, artificial convention).

In Part 2, I address the supposed unscientific presuppositions of DEN. This leads us to the question of scientific methodology. Famous philosopher of science Karl Popper wrote, "the criterion of the scientific status of a theory is its falsifiability, or refutability, or testability." If we cannot or are not allowed to consider the falsifiability, or refutability of DEN, then it is according to Popper, a non-scientific theory. Is this critique true? Is DEN a non-scientific theory?

Finally in Part 3, I frame and articulate to the DEN's community a strong argument against DEN ala Alvin Plantinga and Richard Taylor, (different than the one raised by C. S. Lewis). This argument states that if our cognitive faculties have arisen by purely natural, unguided forces, then, although they can be trusted to arrive at pragmatic conclusions, they cannot be trusted to arrive at truthful conclusions. The point is that truths that have survival values are not the same as truths that are reasonable or have a purpose.

In the spirit of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle literary character Sherlock Holmes, I will show that naturalistic explanations of the world are illogical and thus ought to be eliminated. Then, whatever remains, however improbable, may be the truth. It may well be that several other explanations remain, but I will show that naturalism does not have a convincing amount of support for rigorous academic argument.

#### Defining Naturalism

I begin with a theory referred to as materialism, scientific materialism, ontological physicalism, methodological naturalism or scientism. There are at times different authors who make a distinction between naturalism and scientism (scientism is also called materialism or physicalism). I will not be addressing these differences within the different views of naturalism itself. For the purpose of this paper, all the above will be referred under the umbrella of naturalism.

What is naturalism? There is no uniform agreement on what it is, but I can at least present a basic understanding of this theory. David Armstrong says that naturalism is "the doctrine that reality consists of nothing but a single all-embracing spatial-temporal system."<sup>1</sup> Some naturalist do not entirely deny that ghosts, angels and such entities or forces exist, but merely that one cannot use them within scientific explanation and they are thus for all practical purposes, irrelevant and might as well not exist. However, there still remain a few who outright deny any non-natural aspects of the universe such as Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett, Professor of Philosophy at Tufts University. They are part of a recent organization which does just this, calling themselves the "Brights." Dennett writes:

The time has come for us brights to come out of the closet. What is a bright? A bright is a person with a naturalist as opposed to a supernaturalist world view. We brights don't believe in ghosts or elves or the

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<sup>1</sup> D. M. Armstrong, "Naturalism, Materialism and First Philosophy," *Philosophia* 8 (1978) : 261; cited in S. Goetz, "Naturalism and Libertarian Agency," in *Naturalism A Critical Analysis*, ed. W. L. Craig and J. P. Moreland (New York: Routledge, 2000), 156.

Easter Bunny—or God. We disagree about many things, and hold a variety of views about morality, politics and the meaning of life, but we share a disbelief in black magic—and life after death.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, as commonly understood, naturalism is a position in philosophy that attempts to explain all phenomena and account for all values by means of strictly natural as opposed to supernatural means. Naturalism is a theory that claims that there is no higher tribunal for truth than natural science itself. The scientific method is the best and only reliable method for judging truth claims about the universe. Philosophy, sociology, politics, religion, economics must all comply to the hard sciences such as biology, physics and chemistry. Any claim that is contrary to the findings in and from the scientist in these fields is false or superfluous. Naturalism is a dogmatic theory, although many of its proponents deny this. Its proponents claim that the physical world is a closed system requiring nothing beyond itself. There were many who advocated this strong type of naturalism, such as Bertrand Russell, W.V.O. Quine and Paul Churchland. Others, such as Donald Davidson, Richard Rotry, Hilary Putnam and P.F. Strawton advocated a weaker version of naturalism that accepted thoughts as concepts, though not necessarily physicalist ones. Nonetheless, this weaker naturalism still sees all events of the world, concepts or otherwise, as ontologically dependant on physical ones.<sup>3</sup>

The common thread I find running through all these definitions is the following (eliminative, reductive, non-reductive forms of naturalism must embrace this as well). Naturalism is the system of belief or research paradigm that excludes any teleological, theological or supernatural explanations for the elucidation of phenomena in the universe. It assumes that the best explanations are causal non-purposive explanations, ultimately depending on the causal regularities of the physical sciences. Moreover, if anything cannot be explained by the machinery of the hard sciences, like consciousness, morality or beauty, then it either is a mystery waiting to be solved or explained by the hard sciences, is epiphenomenal or does not exist (it is a social or linguistic artificial convention). Thus, either naturalize the mind or gives up belief in it and accept it as illusionary.

I am referring especially to metaphysical naturalism here, not necessarily methodological naturalism. But whether methodological naturalism is viable is another paper in itself.

### **Is naturalism unscientific**

Let us begin by asking “What is science?” According to the *American Heritage Science Dictionary*:

[Science is] The investigation of natural phenomena through observation, theoretical explanation, and experimentation, or the knowledge produced by such investigation. Science makes use of the scientific method, which includes the careful observation of natural phenomena, the formulation of a hypothesis, the conducting of one or more experiments to test the hypothesis, and the drawing of a conclusion that confirms or modifies the hypothesis.<sup>4</sup>

According to the center for teaching evolution at Berkley, Science is non-dogmatic. Science Asks Three Basic Questions

1. What’s there?
2. How does it work?
3. How did it come to be this way?<sup>5</sup>

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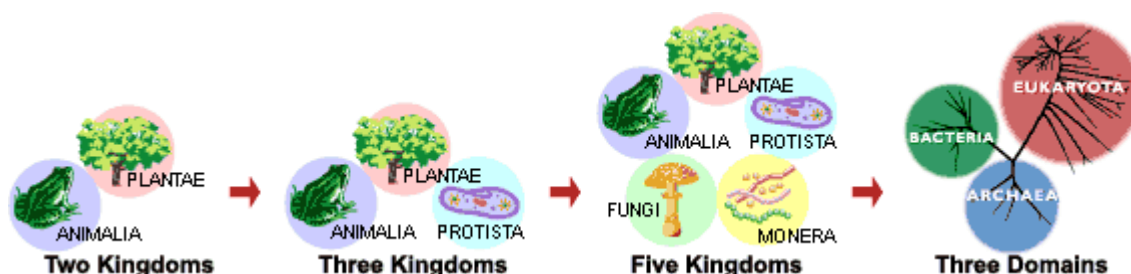
<sup>2</sup> D. Dennett, “The Bright Stuff,” *New York Times*, July 12, 2003. For more information of Brights, see their webpage, available at <http://the-brights.net>.

<sup>3</sup> See K. Nielsen, *Naturalism without Foundations* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996), 26; see also The Center for Naturalism (CFN) at [http://www.naturalism.org/center\\_for\\_naturalism.htm](http://www.naturalism.org/center_for_naturalism.htm); last accessed 28 August 2004. “The CFN is a non-profit educational organization devoted to increasing public awareness of naturalism and its implications for social and personal well-being. By means of local activities, publications, research, conferences, educational programs, and policy development, the CFN seeks to foster the understanding that human beings and their behavior are fully caused, entirely natural phenomena, and that human flourishing is best achieved in the light of such understanding.”

<sup>4</sup> Science. (n.d.). *The American Heritage® Science Dictionary*. Retrieved June 21, 2008, from Dictionary.com website available at <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/science>.

<sup>5</sup> Understanding evolution for Teachers At Berkley <http://evolution.berkeley.edu/evosite/evohome.html>; last accessed 21 June, 2008. Images also from this webpage.

They argue that “nothing in the scientific enterprise or literature requires belief. To ask someone to accept ideas purely on faith, even when these ideas are expressed by “experts,” is unscientific. While science must make some assumptions, such as the idea that we can trust our senses, explanations and conclusions are accepted only to the degree that they are well founded and continue to stand up to scrutiny.” The following illustration shows that the scientific enterprise has developed in its understanding of the different kingdoms of life on Earth. Science is supposed to be a developing and open arena for understanding and research. To restrict things like the Intelligent Design movement is against the very principles of science.



Why can't science allow for the research of evidence for God or the soul? In principle, there should be no problem with this at all, according to what science is supposed to do. However, I argue that science has been hijacked by naturalistic people who hide behind their anti-religious or anti-supernatural inclinations and call it “science.”

There is a strong antagonism for anti-naturalistic views. In the US, in a review of a book by Carl Sagan, Richard Lewontin, Alexander Agassiz Research Professor at the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, wrote that current science requires a prior commitment to both methodological and philosophical naturalism that cannot allow other worldviews to invade its academic turf “it is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.”<sup>6</sup> This dogmatic method is not isolated in the scientific enterprise. This is not science by any means. It is dogmatism.

For example, in England, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* states:

There has been a virtual consensus, one that has held for years, that the world is essentially physical, at least in the following sense: if all matter were to be removed from the world, nothing would remain . . .<sup>7</sup>

William Provine, Professor of Biological Sciences at Cornell University writes:

[M]odern evolutionary biology . . . tells us . . . that nature has no detectable purposive forces of any kind . . . There are no gods and no designing forces that are rationally detectable. . . . we must conclude that when we die, we die and that is the end of us. . . . There is no hope of life everlasting. . . . [F]ree will, as traditionally conceived, the freedom to make uncoerced and unpredictable choices among alternative possible course of action, simply does not exist. . . . [T]he evolutionary process cannot produce a being that is truly free to make choices. . . . The universe cares nothing for us. . . . Humans are nothing even in the evolutionary process on earth. . . . There is no ultimate meaning for humans.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> R. Lewontin, “Billions and Billions of Demons,” Review of Carl Sagan’s *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*. *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 44, No. 1, January 9, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> J. Kim “mind–body problem, the” *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. Ed. Ted Honderich. Oxford University Press, 1995. *Oxford Reference Online* (Oxford University Press) <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t116.e1469>; last accessed 21 August 2004.

<sup>8</sup> W. Provine, “Progress in Evolution and Meaning in Life,” in *Evolutionary Progress*, ed. M. H. Nitecki, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 49-74; cited in D. R. Griffin, *Religion and Scientific Naturalism*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), 32.

It is my hope that you can understand the antagonism against any teleological or theological advances in the scientific sphere is a result of a prior commitments and personal agendas disguised as science. At least religious folk have dogmas and are open about them. It is thus no wonder why the scientific movements that try to establish the existence of God or provide any verification for the supernatural are automatically ruled out before their evidence is even presented. With this said, I will present four arguments showing how this naturalism movement is not really science.

**First, naturalism cannot account for nonphysical things like consciousness.**

Consciousness is as real as anything else we experience. As William Hasker put it, naturalism is the view that “in any instance of mechanistic causation, the proximate cause of the effect does not involve a goal, objective, or *telos*; rather, it consists of some disposition of masses, forces and the like . . . it appeals to antecedent conditions involving only nonpurposive, nonintentional entities.”<sup>9</sup> But humans do have goals and objectives, and are very purposive and intentional entities. We have conscious experiences that are very authentic; in fact they are more real than inferred things like the solidity of the moon or historical questions of who was the first president of the USA. For example, you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you are experiencing the sentences you are reading right now. That is what cognitive scientists call qualia and first person experience. Philosopher Thomas Nagel called it, “The View From Nowhere” because it is nowhere to be found in our physical brains and is subjective, yet very undeniably genuine. Qualia do would not register on any physical system in the known world (although the results of you reading this paper, such as your neurons firing, would). It would follow that the mental events are caused by teleological agents called persons, not just C-fibres and other material substances. Thus we have an inconsistency for the naturalist because human beings, according to naturalism, are physical entities and nothing more. Since science is supposed to follow the evidence wherever it leads, and the evidence is that there is an immaterial conscious mind, and naturalism discounts anything not material, it does not follow the evidence wherever it leads. Rather than accept and research it, naturalism eliminates or naturalizes the mind too. It then follows that naturalism is not science.

**Second, on a naturalistic worldview, the explanation of the concept truth would be impossible.**

They would have to be basic abstracts and artificial conventions. What if someone believed that this year was 1872? Is that false?<sup>10</sup> According to naturalism, it cannot be true or false. There is no truth save that which we can measure with the hard sciences. This is problematic. This idea, that only what can be measured with the hard sciences is true, is false, because there is no truth save what you can measure with the hard sciences, and you can’t measure an idea or a date. So to say that naturalism is true, is anti-naturalistic! That is a paradox for naturalism. The very structure of the scientific enterprise today is a naturalistic one; consequently, it is no wonder why the soul is automatically dismissed as nonexistent or the conjecture of religious people.

**Third, objective ethics would be automatically eliminated.**

Ethical relativism becomes the moral system. Rape would only be wrong if the society saw it as wrong. The Nazis experiment would be neither objectively good or evil since it is all dependent on that German subculture. This is the result of denying objective ethical standards. That is against our intuitions and against the natural laws that have guided civilization (even though many of us did not follow these). The field of ethics is not all subjective; you can postulate objective universals when studying different cultures. There is no culture that praises rape of one’s one family for pleasure or mass execution of infants for pleasure, for example. To deny objective ethics is to dismiss the evidence and that is not scientific. Thus to embrace naturalism is to deny objective ethics and to deny objective ethics is unscientific.

**Forth, naturalistic scientists and philosophers do not allow naturalism to be challenged, thus, that automatically makes it unscientific.**

Famous philosophy of science Karl Popper wrote, “the criterion of the scientific status of a theory is its falsifiability, or refutability, or testability.”<sup>11</sup> If we cannot or *are not allowed* to find the falsifiability,

<sup>9</sup> W. Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 63.

<sup>10</sup> Norman Geisler and Paul Feinberg *Introduction to Philosophy*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980 ), 182.

<sup>11</sup> K. R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1962), 37.

or refutability, or testability of naturalism, then it is according to Popper, a non-scientific theory. This does not mean it is a false theory; just that it is a non-scientific theory. Although, I also believe naturalism to be a false theory.

Where does that leave the naturalists? I think Troy Cross of Yale University said it well in his review of Michael Rae's book, *World Without Design: The Ontological Consequences of Naturalism*: "If naturalism is to follow science wherever it leads, however, it cannot rule out specific kinds of entities [such as a soul] before science is complete. More generally, the problem is whether the science providing ontological guidance is *current* science or *ideal* science. If it is *current* science, then naturalism is probably false. If it is *ideal* science, then naturalism is metaphysically vacuous."<sup>12</sup> Cross says that "[e]pistemological naturalism fares no better. If it is at the mercy of future developments in science, it cannot follow science wherever it leads. But if it is immune to empirical results, then it is self-refuting, because it is just the sort of hypothesis that epistemic naturalism insists must be grounded on scientific investigation rather than armchair theorizing."<sup>13</sup> Now I argue along the same lines that naturalism is a system that is postulating a theory and imposing it on the evidence.

Thus, naturalism, by its own rules, is not science.

## Conclusion

According to the Alvin Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument against Naturalism,<sup>14</sup> (EAAN) the conjunction of the two theories of naturalism and Darwinian evolution and the belief that our cognitive faculties are reliable contributors of true beliefs, are incompatible. On a Darwinian account of evolution there is no reason why the adaptive benefits of awareness and cognition should give rise to true rather than just survival beliefs. In the Darwinian account the causal closure of the physical is an assumed truth.

According to current evolutionary theory, we human beings, like other forms of life, have developed from aboriginal unicellular life by way of such mechanisms as natural selection and genetic drift working on sources of genetic variation: the most popular is random genetic mutation. Natural selection discards most of these mutations (they prove deleterious to the organism in which they appear), but some turn out to have survival value and to enhance fitness; they spread through the population and persist. "According to this story, it is by way of these mechanisms, or mechanisms very much like them, that all the vast variety of contemporary organic life has developed; and it is by way of these same mechanisms that our cognitive faculties have arisen.

Natural selection rejects most of these mutations (they prove harmful to the organism itself), but the ones that have survival value and enhance fitness spread through the generations. According to this story, it is by way of these mechanisms, that all the vast variety of contemporary organic life has developed; and it is by way of these same mechanisms that our cognitive faculties have come. The argument here is that our cognitive faculties, if they have arisen from evolutionary naturalism, are not a reliable mechanism, or cannot be trusted to be accurate about what they report in the sense of the information being true even if it is beneficial to survival. Now according to traditional Christian (and Jewish and Muslim) thought, we human beings have been created in the image of God. This means, among other things, that he created us with the capacity for achieving [true] *knowledge*."<sup>15</sup> But I will argue below that we cannot have this true knowledge on a Darwinian naturalistic view point.

Plantinga's argument begins from certain doubts about the reliability of our cognitive faculties; a cognitive faculty—memory, perception, reason—is reliable if the majority of its deliverances are true. The reason we should doubt our cognitive faculties if we believe evolutionary naturalism is because natural selection does not care what you believe; it is interested only in how you behave. It selects for certain kinds of behaviour, (i.e. those that enhance fitness) which is a measure of the chances that one's genes are widely represented in the next and subsequent generations. It does not select for belief, except insofar as the latter is appropriately related to behaviour. Therefore, Plantinga says, it is not truth that our cognitive processes are after according to evolutionary naturalism, but survival.

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<sup>12</sup> See T. Crane and D. H. Mellor, "There Is No Question of Physicalism," *Mind* 99 (1990); cited in Tony Cross, review of Michael Rae, *World Without Design: The Ontological Consequences of Naturalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* 2003.07.14.

<sup>13</sup> Cross, review of Michael Rae, *World Without Design*.

<sup>14</sup> For more information on this argument see A. Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) chap. 12, A. Plantinga, "Naturalism Defeated," Unpublished manuscript, 1994, A. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 229-240, and *Naturalism Defeated? Essays on Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument against Naturalism*, J. Beilby, ed. (London: Cornell University Press, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *Naturalism Defeated*, paper.

James Beilby wrote that although the naturalist cannot produce an argument against Plantinga's argument, the naturalist has no reason that necessitates that he doubts his cognitive faculties in the first place.<sup>16</sup> This pragmatic objection, in my understanding, it is the objection that it does not matter if our experiences or thoughts of the world are true, the only thing that matters is if they are pragmatic (useful for adaptive behaviour for natural selection and survival).

I asked Plantinga about this pragmatic objection levelled against his theory. Plantinga responded that his evolutionary argument against naturalism is not an argument against the naturalist who thinks naturalism is pragmatic, but it is only against the naturalist who claims that naturalism is in fact true.<sup>17</sup> I take this an extra step. If the pragmatic naturalist tries to hold that his naturalism escapes Plantinga's argument, the naturalist would have to believe his own argument is not true, which is absurd. However if he believes it is pragmatic, then he must also logically believe that the belief "it is pragmatic" is also true. Thus, this leads him into the jaws of the argument again.

Thus, we cannot rely on our cognitive facilities for truth claims about the world if naturalism and evolution are true, but equally we cannot rely on any cognitive facilities which suggest that naturalism is false if evolutionary naturalism are true. To suggest that naturalism is false is to make the truth claim "naturalism is false." This preceding sentence is either true or false, and EAAN shows that we cannot trust our facilities at all if evolutionary naturalism is true about anything.

Approximately forty years before Plantinga's argument was published, Richard Taylor, (now deceased) Professor of Philosophy at Union College, gave an interesting thought experiment: Taylor asked us to imagine that the sign welcoming visitors to Wales, "THE BRITISH RAILWAYS WELCOMES YOU TO WALES," is an accidental coincidence of nature. If it is an accidental coincidence then we have no reason, argues Taylor, to trust its veracity. The stones have no purpose such that we think they do, that is, to welcome visitors to Wales. Taylor argues that if you were to believe that the stones did give you a reason, a true reason to believe you were entering Wales, then you must also believe that they were arranged by an intelligent entity with a teleos or purpose in mind, namely to welcome visitors to Wales. However,

it would be irrational for you to regard the arrangement of the stones as evidence that you were entering Wales, and at the same time to suppose that they might have come to have that arrangement accidentally, that is, as the result of the ordinary interactions of natural or physical forces. If, for instance, they came to be so arranged over the course of time, simply by rolling down the hill, one by one, and finally just happening to end up that way, or if they were strewn upon the ground that way by the forces of an earthquake or storm or whatnot, then their arrangement would in no sense constitute evidence that you were entering Wales, or for anything whatever unconnected with themselves.<sup>18</sup>

I would add that it is irrational to believe that any sign that is accidentally formed, that is, it has a non-purposeful origin be it in an ancient pyramid or in a downtown subway in London or New York, would also have a true (corresponding to reality) referent. Example, if I found some writing in an ancient pyramid and through the expertise of some archeologist and linguists, deciphered the writing to indicate the following: "Below the black sarcophagus, which is buried 50 meters under the gold one, you will find a tunnel leading to the pharaoh's most treasured possession." If I found, after digging, a black sarcophagus with a tunnel underneath leading toward a greater treasure, I would be *irrational* to suppose that the message found was accidentally formed. But, for it to be a rational belief, I must believe that the message was designed by an intelligent agent. That is Taylor's thesis.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> J. Beilby, "Alvin Plantinga's Pox on Metaphysical Naturalism," *Philosophia Christi* Vol. 5, No.1 (2003) : 131-142.

<sup>17</sup> Personal meeting with Plantinga in his office at the University of Notre Dame, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2004.

<sup>18</sup> See R. Taylor, *Metaphysics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 96-102.

<sup>19</sup> He then applies this to the human cognitive facilities:

We saw that it would be irrational for anyone to say both that the marks he found on a stone had a natural, nonpurposeful origin and also that they reveal some truth with respect to something other than themselves, something that is not merely inferred from them. One cannot rationally believe both of these things. So also, it is now suggested, it would be irrational for one to say both that his sensory and cognitive faculties had a natural, nonpurposeful origin and also that they reveal some truth with respect to something other than themselves, some-thing that is not merely inferred from them. *If* their origin can be entirely accounted for in terms of chance variations, natural selection, and so on, without supposing that they somehow embody and express the purposes of some creative being, then the most we can say of them is that they exist, that they are complex and wondrous in their construction, and are perhaps in other respects interesting and remarkable. We cannot say that they are, entirely by themselves, reliable guides to any truth whatever, save only what can be inferred from their own structure and arrangement.

Taylor says that some people may object, namely naturalists, holding that we can in fact trust our minds because we found our cognitive faculties reliable in the past, and thus have a sound reason for trusting them now. Taylor says this thinking is “absurd, if not question-begging.” Taylor argues that truths that have survival values are not the same as truths that are reasonable or have a purpose. His argument is not based on religious but metaphysical and philosophical considerations. One cannot imply that a personal God exist from these considerations, he argues.<sup>20</sup> I disagree. His argument establishes that if we are to trust our cognitive faculties to give us truthful rather than just pragmatic messages, then it follows that there is a personal intelligent who wrote the program of our mind, rather than random variations of chance plus time plus matter. Again, if we find truthful messages gives credibility to the truthful messages we receive from our cognitive faculties.

It is important to point out that the EAAN is *not* an argument that claims that if our cognitive faculties have arisen from determined forces, then they cannot give us adequate rational accounts of the world.<sup>21</sup> That argument is the claim that determinism is self-defeating because if it is true, then the person who arrived at that truth, is himself determined and cannot trust his own rational faculties to arrive at a true argument. However, and I agree with Richard Swinburne, that this argument “no force at all.”<sup>22</sup> If a person or a computer is determined, this does not mean that they cannot logically calculate a formula and that their conclusion must be false, unreliable or illogical. In the same way, a man may hear good arguments and then turn and accept them, and yet be determined to do so, yet is justified in believing what he arrived at. Swinburne writes of a conversation he had with Rodger Penrose, author of the *Emperor’s New Mind*<sup>23</sup> and *Shadows of the Mind*,<sup>24</sup> that the brain “contains an essentially non-algorithmic element. This would imply that the future would not be computable from the present, even though it might be determined by it.”<sup>25</sup>

This is not the argument presented by Plantinga and Taylor. They are *not* arguing that if our cognitive faculties are determined that they cannot be true, rather they argue that if our cognitive faculties are determined by blind forces then we cannot be rational to believe that they can give us a trustworthy account of reality. If we wish to trust them then we must also believe that there was an intelligent agent who created them. evolutionary naturalism viciously denies this. If evolutionary naturalism is true, then our cognitive faculties should only give us adaptive information about the world that may or may not be true, and the veracity of any other information is low or inscrutable, and thus unreliable.<sup>26</sup>

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If, on the other hand, we do assume that they are guides to some truths having nothing to do with themselves, then it is difficult to see how we can, consistently with that supposition, believe them to have arisen by accident, or by the ordinary workings of purposeless forces, even over ages of time.

R. Taylor, *Metaphysics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 100-101.

<sup>20</sup> R. Taylor, *Metaphysics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 102.

<sup>21</sup> This was C. S. Lewis’s argument against Elizabeth Anscombe in his book *Miracles*, which he subsequently took back and revised in a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. It is available under many different publishers.

<sup>22</sup> R. Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, Revised ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 233.  
<sup>23</sup> (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

<sup>24</sup> (London: Vintage, Random House, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> *Emperor’s New Mind*, 431, quoted in Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 353; Karl Popper writes, referring to J.B.S. Haldane, “. . . if materialism is true, it seems to me that we cannot know that it is true. If my opinions are the result of the chemical processes going on in my brain, they are determined by the laws of chemistry, not logic.”(J. B. S. Haldane, *The Inequality of Man* [London: Chatto & Windus, 1932], 157, cited in K. Popper and J. C. Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain*, [London: Routledge, 1977], 75). Halden subsequently repented of this assertion. Popper says this is an argument against determinism not [naturalism], however Popper revives the argument on pages 75-81 of his book with Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain* [London: Routledge, 1977].) Popper gives the example of the computer. It was designed by intelligent people, and thus that the argument does not work for it. If a lion arrived at a logically good choice it would be by accident not by intelligent deliberation. Also he points out that the laws of logic that hold the naturalist’s argument together is not a physically located law, yet real nonetheless. If naturalism is true it cannot be true based on logical laws because concrete, that is, real logical laws, which make things rational, cannot exist in a materialist world, but only in our minds as artificial conventions.

<sup>26</sup> Even Roger Penrose, a professor of mathematics at the University of Oxford is sympathetic to this idea. Daniel Dennett wrote of Penrose, “If our brains *were* equipped with algorithms, Penrose argues, natural selection would have to have designed those algorithms, but, [Penrose wrote] “The ‘robust’ specifications are the ideas that underlie the algorithms. But ideas are things that, as far as we know,

What about the evolutionary rationalization of consciousness? The evolutionary naturalists may hold that our patterns of beliefs/desires/actions are rational ones. It is a causal feature that can be explained by the evolutionary benefits of rationality. Again, the argument is not that our desires are rational, in the sense of them being practical, but that the probability that our cognitive mechanisms are reliable indicators of true claims (aside from practical and survival value) is either low or inscrutable, thus they cannot be trusted to be *true* accounts of the world. The EAAN is not against the naturalist who holds that beliefs/desires/actions are practical for living, but against the naturalist who insists that naturalism and evolution are in fact true.

I close with what Howard Robinson perceptively wrote in 1982:

[T]he materialist makes a show of being tough-minded he is in fact a dogmatist, obedient not to the authority of reason, but to a certain picture of the world. That picture is hypnotising but terrifying: the world as a machine of which we are all insignificant parts. Many people share Nagel's fear of this world view, but, like Nagel, are cowed into believing that it must be true (T. Nagel "'Physicalism,'" *Philosophical Review*, 74 [1965] : 340) But reason joins with every other constructive human instinct in telling us that it is false and that only a parochial and servile attitude towards physical science can mislead anyone into believing it. To opt for materialism is to choose to believe something obnoxious, against the guidance of reason. This is not tough-minded, but a wilful preference for a certain form of soulless, false and destructive modernism.<sup>27</sup>

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need conscious minds for their manifestation"" (R. Penrose, *The Emperor's New Mind* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 415, cited in D. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* [New York, NY: TouchStone, 1995], 447).

<sup>27</sup> H. Robinson, *Matter and Science: A Critique of Contemporary Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 125.

## CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

### A Question of Reincarnation from a Materialist Perspective

by  
Leah McMurry

#### Introduction

Materialism has been historically revered within scientific fields as the central metaphysical construct of the universe. Its ancient origin is found in Greece where the metaphysical theory of atomism was first articulated by Leucippus and Democritus. The basis of atomism rests on the theory of indivisible magnitudes, the idea that matter is made up of many tiny impenetrable elements i.e. atoms. A well-known follower of this metaphysical tradition is the famous ethicist Epicurus, whose extensive works in ethics prevented him from writing a full account of his amended atomistic metaphysics before his life ended. Instead, a loyal student named Lucretius wrote a six-book philosophical prose in Latin in order to detail the metaphysical workings of the atomism that Epicurus envisioned.

The metaphysics of Epicurean philosophy includes the universal elements of simply atoms and the void advanced by the first atomists, however the elemental movement of 'the swerve' is also included. Lucretius' poem entitled *De Rerum Natura* translated into 'On the Nature of Things' is the only account known that gives details of the workings of the mysterious Epicurean swerve. It is interpreted as the metaphysical operation of free will within the atomistic system, as it is the only alternative movement of atoms besides falling vertically throughout the void or colliding with other atoms. It is the notion of the swerve that enables my argument for a possibly freely willed movement of one's spirit atoms or *anima* after experiencing death providing the person is strong-willed or has maintained an appropriate ethical disposition by upholding the Epicurean ideals of living the 'good life.' This parallels the moral theory of Buddhism, whereby strength of will and moral knowledge determines one's fate in the afterlife.

By maintaining the central argument of Lucretius that freedom from the fear of death is the highest good, an argument can be found within the basic metaphysical propositions Lucretius advanced on the nature of atoms, to validate a perspective of reincarnation. An afterlife can be perceived for the persistence of one's *anima* throughout time, be the atoms randomly dispersed amongst the void and/or other living things, or essentially reincarnated as the core *anima* of another living creature. By giving a possible perspective of a materialist afterlife, then any counter-active fears of looming and finite death may thus be smothered. If Lucretius had given this possible perspective, then historically Epicureanism might have been classed as a religion.

#### Argument and Aims:

The notions of a divine order within physical metaphysical systems seem to be scantily approached in philosophical theory. Lucretian atomism is however, a physicalist account of nature, yet there are a number of propositions within the metaphysical system that can validate a perspective of reincarnation. The propositions Lucretius outlined in his six book philosophical prose on Epicurean metaphysics must first be discussed. This will follow with the arguments I make in reply to this system to argue instead for a possibility for reincarnation to occur as part of the metaphysical structure. This therefore disproves the main proposition of the theory that the soul is finitely mortal, by showing also how a perspective of the afterlife can be given to the destination of the *anima* or soul atoms. The theories in support of this view will then be discussed, followed by an analysis of the opposing arguments. There are many demonstrations of how atomistic continuity provides that a soul could indeed persist, or the destiny of one be perceived even if the atoms that made it up are scattered into multiple objects.

The core aim of this paper is to outline the premises that might validate a materialistic view of the soul as a persistent object throughout metaphysical space and time. Often, the only philosophical perspectives that allow for a separate soul from body and mind are typically dualistic. These theories regard the soul as an immaterial substance entirely separate from the physical world. If a materialistic perspective can validly be taken on the soul, then there might even be a possibility for the substance that incorporates souls to be defined and even maybe researched despite the extent on individual variability that exists in the nature and function of spirit. The philosophical questions that might be raised were there to be a material base of the soul are endless, not to mention the capacity such a discovery would have to provide physical evidence against immaterial theories of the soul.

The argument I make is against the Lucretian view of the soul as a finitely mortal entity. I argue that this conclusion is contradictory to the premises Lucretius outlines on the nature and movement of

atoms, specifically of atoms being indestructible. If atoms are indestructible, then it follows that the destination of a group of atoms that comprised a person's soul during their lifetime can indeed also be perceived in their afterlife as the destination of that person's soul. According to the metaphysical premises Lucretius outlines in the first of six books, the atoms of a person's soul will not cease to exist in any sense, even if they were to dissipate as described in Book III of DRN. It is also the premises that Lucretius outlines pertaining to the movement faculties of atoms, that allow me to argue that the continuity of these movement capacities make it possible to perceive that strength of free-will might allow the compound of one's soul atoms to choose a new body after its body dies. This is in reference to the infamous 'swerve' that Epicurus defined in contrast to the other atomists, that explains the capacity of free will that humans perceive to sustain. This shall be a point of further discussion, after a sufficient summary of the premises Lucretius outlined to argue the validity of Epicurean atomistic metaphysics.

### **The Metaphysics of Titus Lucretius Carus (99-55 B.C.)**

For brevity, the premises that Lucretius outlined in the six books of Latin prose in *De Rerum Natura* are below summarised into numbered order within each book.

#### **Book I: Universal Elements**

11. No one thing is created from nothing.
12. No one thing is ever totally annihilated or reduced to nothing.
13. The only universal element is the unit of indivisible magnitude, atoms.
14. The elemental space in and around atoms constitutes the universal void.
15. The universe consists of only atoms and void.
16. Atoms are indestructible.

#### **Book II: Atomic Shape and Movement**

##### *Movements of Atoms*

1. Atoms are continually moving in-flux, through either gravitational pull or collisions.
2. Single, unattached atoms move incredibly fast (greater than speed of light), yet compounds travel slower.
3. Atoms typically move downward, i.e. fall throughout the void.
4. Atoms occasionally 'swerve' from the vertical path, when "snapping the bonds of fate." (Trans. Rouse 1937, p. 257)
5. There was never more or less congestion of atoms within the universe.
6. To view matter as immobile is an optical illusion as all atoms remain in flux.

##### *Shapes of Atoms*

1. Atoms vary widely in shape.
2. There are a large but finite number of differently shaped atoms.
3. The number of atoms in all different shapes is infinite.
4. Only compounds of atoms form objects.
5. Only certain combinations of atomic shapes may form compounds.
6. Atoms are devoid of sensory properties, i.e. colour, smell and sentience.

The final three corollaries of Book II express again the infinity of the universe, labelling our world as one of an infinite number of worlds. Again, Lucretius expresses the self-regulating nature of our environment, and finally the mortality of our world because of his claim that for everything to have a beginning it must also have an end.

#### **Book III: Life and Mind**

1. Mind (*animus*) and spirit (*anima*) are distinct parts of the human body.
2. Mind and spirit compose a single corporeal substance dispersed evenly throughout the body.
3. Mind and spirit are composed of four substances; air, wind, heat and mysterious substance of extremely high mobility.
4. Life depends upon the union between mind and spirit.
5. Mind/Spirit atoms exist in minute amounts in proportion to the body.
6. Mind controls spirit so as to "keep life under lock and key." (Rouse 1937, p. 396-7)
7. Loss of heat and air depict the departure of the soul (*anima*) from the body at death.

Book III is finished with the morals of mortality and describes the blessings of an eternal sleep, as it provides escape from the torments present during life. The key to happiness is open acceptance to one's circumstances and taking pleasure in the environment as often as possible.

#### **Book IV: Sensation and Sex**

Book IV on sensation and sex, does not entirely concern us within this metaphysical inquiry. To summarise the arguments given is such that how vision occurs through the absorption of light atoms and also in mirrors how the same light atoms are reflected back to give a vision of the same area in front of the mirror. This is surprisingly accurate due to the extremely early timing of such thoughts. The rest of Book IV goes on to detail how the other senses of hearing, taste and smell interact with the atomistic system, and also distinguishes between thoughts and will. We may come back to the arguments here when the discussion comes to free will, however, most of the discussion will revolve around the swerve. Lastly he touches on the problems of sex and the stimulation received from the feelings of love and the blindness that may come with it.

#### **Book V: Society and Meteorology**

Book V is dedicated to the development of human society, and need not here be reflected on, as it is more a social and historical concern than metaphysical. The formation of the universe is an interesting point that Lucretius reflects upon, where he again states the mortality of matter in proposing that the world had a beginning and will hence one day have an end and be destroyed. In his theory of how the world was formed by a conflux of atoms, parallels contemporary Big Bang theory, due to his presuming that once there was nothing within the universe, except a hurricane of atoms still unintegrated and spiralling in unison. This was until some of the atoms collided and chain reactions of further interactions followed, creating compound formations and hence all the matter and objects we know in the world today. The other interesting point made in Book V is that of what elements are indestructible, and these are of course from the earlier propositions in book I depicting only two universal elements, atoms and void, yet Lucretius also highlights that the universe itself is everlasting and these are the only three elements not susceptible to death.

#### **Book VI: Cosmological Phenomena**

This section of *De Rerum Natura* is concerned only with explaining the atomic workings of specific meteorological phenomena on a wider scale. Such phenomena include earthquakes and other natural disasters. Many of these theories appear to be outdated with the discoveries of modern meteorology.

#### **Replies to Dispelling the 'superstition' of an Afterlife:**

Lucretius published *De Rerum Natura* (DRN) with the main goal of freeing human kind from the anxiety of dying by continuing the atomic materialist account of metaphysics that Epicurus expressed. In line with Epicurean philosophy, Lucretius believed that the highest utility of man was happiness achieved by freedom from anxiety or in Epicurus' terms the 'good life' resulting from freedom from physical and mental pain. Most mental pain and the deep anxieties of life, in the view of Epicurus, are caused by the fear of death, due to the widely circulated superstitions and *rites* of the gods who give punishment in the afterlife, a notable criticism of dualism. The solution to this problem of fearing death was essentially for Epicurus to construct the soul as a finitely mortal entity. It is the metaphysics of atomism that originally proposed the idea of indivisible magnitudes, which says that everything is reducible to one minimum of measurement. In colloquial terms it says that every physical object can be divided only as many times that the number of cells of matter (i.e. atoms present within the object) allow. This is due to Lucretius' propositions that atoms are indestructible within his theory of atomistic metaphysics.

The theory of indivisible magnitudes is one side of a still contemporary debate within metaphysics, rivalling the theory of infinite divisibility. The main reason why Epicurus and his followers support the theory of indivisible magnitudes is because it allows for the idea of a finite and mortal soul. This is due to the perception that once an object (i.e. soul) is broken up into its minimal and indivisible magnitudes (parts), the object does not persist throughout time as it is no longer whole in any sense of being, therefore mortal and susceptible to a final death. It is in DRN that Lucretius describes with vivid imagery, the workings of atoms within bodies, souls and the universe. He especially details the possible paths of the atoms that may constitute our soul and mind, in his terms the *anima* and *animus* in both living and dying. Stanford Encyclopaedia (Sedley 2004) cites Lucretius as the primary source of Epicurean metaphysics, and it also happens to be the only full account of the 'atomic' swerve, which is described as the source of human, free will within Epicurean doctrines (Annas 1992; Englert 1987; Sedley 2004). The Epicurean swerve is of large interest to this discussion about those atoms making up the soul and their pathways throughout life and death. I will also be looking at how the use of free will, often viewed as an exercise of the soul, might be possible after death.

The fear of death is derived from the impending judgment of one's goodness of character upon departing the physical world, as Epicurus expressed in his criticism of the superstitions of punishments

for undesirable character by divine order, i.e. by the ancient Greek and Roman Gods of his time. In simpler terms, Epicurus criticizes the circulation of beliefs in an afterlife prison called hell or something other to be a fear-mongering device.

The propositions that Lucretius gives in support of the mortality of the soul, are the second, fourth and sixth of Book III for a perceived soul consisting only through an integration of mind and spirit, and also the fourth and sixth propositions on atomic shape in Book II. I plan to argue that there is a possibility that the *anima* Lucretius terms as the group of atoms comprising the spirit or soul may at least persist individually throughout time. Therefore, giving a quality of immortality to that matter we perceive as our soul. This argument is based on the propositions pertaining to the nature and behaviour of atoms in Books I and II of DRN. The propositions I consider as a basis for my argument are those for the conservation of atoms throughout space and time, the indestructible properties Lucretius attributed to atoms in asserting their continuity, and also the continual movement capacities always open to atoms particularly that of the swerve. Based on these initial propositions made about universal atomic nature, there is reasonable evidence given by Lucretius that a person's atomic soul does not cease to exist totally when they die. If the number of atoms in the universe is conserved, then it follows that no atom will just cease to exist as per the propositions Lucretius made for the metaphysics of atoms, this is now the law of Conservation (Einstein cited in Scott: 1970, p. xi). If an atom that once was part of a person's *anima* before their life ended, according to the propositions of Books I, II and even the last of Book III, it will continue to exist eternally outside of the previous physical body it once resided in. From this it is indeed sufficient to deduce that the destination(s) of the *anima* atoms (even if dissipated) after the previous host to them has died is a true account of the afterlife fate of the soul. Even if the atoms of one's soul were to dissolve into the air as Lucretius described in Book III, these atoms would still be subject to the movement capacities that he attributed to them firstly in Book II. This means that the *anima* atoms would in the afterlife fall steadily downward through the void, or collide at such angles so as to disperse swiftly throughout the universe, faster than the speed of light as from Book II's proposition that atoms move quicker when separated from a compound. The final movement capacity, reserved specifically for only those atoms of *anima* substance is that of the swerve, hence, it would not be impossible to perceive that were these atoms to have a destination already willed into them, then they would have the capacity to swerve from the vertical pre-dissipation upon departing a body at death.

It is the concept of the swerve that I maintain is a continuous form of atomic movement and I intend this to occur for the *anima* atoms after death, thus instilling a possibility of free-will or choice within the soul in the afterlife. Annas (1992, p. 187) explains how the *anima* atoms are the only atoms the swerve may have an effect on, because the soul atoms being of the finest matter, may permit the effect of the swerve to ensue. None of these propositions I make for the case of a possible persistence of the soul is in direct conflict of the Atomic system Lucretius outlined. Therefore, giving proof to a perspective of immortality like that of Buddhism that can be taken from a materialistic metaphysical view. Also, because of the swerve, if after one dies their will is still strongly present in the released atoms of the spirit, it would be due to the swerve that an alternative path might be taken by the atoms to a willed destination. Why else would Lucretius have argued proposition 6 in Book III and described death as that event whereby the soul departs the body?

I make these arguments in support of validating the immortality of the soul in contrast to the mortal soul Lucretius forwarded due to my belief that it does little to relieve the anxiety of dying due to the depth of moral and emotional attachments. Some would say these attachments run deep into the core or soul of one's being, thus attributing final dissipation of one's soul to be the only experience death brings is relative the concept of hell circulated by the western religion of Mormon Christianity, an eternal darkness. Life for many seems to be actually worth living if there is reason to have it, and also a way to be rewarded for living in a peaceful manner due to the many punishments that can be brought about by many less-peaceful persons.

### **Supporting Arguments to a Lucretian Afterlife:**

Lucretius thought the most logical way to release anxieties of impending death was by eliminating any possibility to feel harm in the afterlife by making the soul mortal, a note to make about this is that it essentially equates humans to animals at least in the experience of death. There is little circulation, at least in most Western religious theory, of any type of afterlife existent for animals. Interestingly, the account of Eastern religions such as Buddhism directly includes animals through the notion of reincarnation. The irony lies in the concept of Heaven that is communicated through western religion, that of a perceivable paradise. It appears to give the idea that the person is preserved in their human 'spiritual' form, so it is unclear if taking the form of an animal is even possible if one did gain entry to the spiritual paradise of heaven. If a soul in Lucretian metaphysics were immortal as per the arguments

I have presented, and thus subject to move to a willed destination this event would take place only in a case of 'enlightenment' in the Buddhist sense. The levels of free-will or choice *anima* atoms might have post-mortem are difficult to define, however the Will is that faculty of the soul that Plato referenced as that most spiritual part of a person in charge of forming one's destiny and achievement of life goals. Thus, in parallel to Buddhism, a soul who obtains control of their will is enlightened and therefore in charge of their reincarnate destination in the afterlife. In contrast, a person who is indeed weak of will, or as in Christianity, an immoral being, would have little control over their soul in the afterlife, leaving it to dissipate.

The other proposition of Lucretius to call into question is that material he depicts as the matter departing the body at death, resulting from the mind and spirit being torn apart; heat and air. As per the propositions in Book III, the elements that make up the soul are comprised of heat, air breath and a fourth nameless element<sup>1</sup>. The inferences to be made from this is that parts of the soul are directed elsewhere every time one breathes out, just as when breathing in, new atoms that may have been atoms of another's soul are inhaled. This entails is that the soul is constantly interchangeable, as per the propositions of Lucretius in Book III about the simple part the vital spirit is of the body, and states that "...when a few particles of heat have dispersed and some air has been let out through the mouth, life forsakes the veins forthwith and abandons the bones (Latham 1951, p.99)." From this claim it may be perceived that parts of your soul can be left behind while new parts are up-taken, not that this occurs on a total scale but in the sense that when a person touches another, even the particles of breath that are interchanged may be perceived as a swapping of soul atoms. Thus the destination of atoms of the vital spirit can be viewed as spread amongst one's lifetime and include the air that comprises those atoms it becomes in the afterlife and thus collectively moves into constant flux until the collective of those core atoms all comprise a soul (or collection of its atoms) once again.

The consideration to be made is of persistence throughout change. There are arguments given from an atomistic perspective, beginning with Heraclitus, which argue for the lack of survival of an object that undergoes change. However, Lucretius did cite Heraclitus' view of metaphysical matter being elementally made of fire due to its changeable nature as a false theory. There are inherent problems in the theory, but there is considerable argument that validates subject/object persistence throughout change. A modern example is the Resolute desks, persisting the timber of the H.M.S. Resolute ship after its lifetime. This is a demonstration of how a persistence of the past object/subject, while still undergoing major structural changes (i.e. loss of body) may be perceived by taking in the collective reference of the left over living/physical parts. Another example of the persisting soul left behind could be Lucretius' poem itself due to his projection of the ideas of his soul core.

### **Opposing Arguments:**

The first most distinct counter-argument that might be made against my postulations is that of the final proposition of atomic movement given in Book II, which says atoms are devoid of sentience. We may refer to the definition of sentience as that of conscious feeling or sensation. The sixth proposition on atomic shape in Book II may thus be interpreted as though atoms are completely lacking in any sense or sensing properties. The arguments I have presented for the capacity of *anima* atoms concern only those movement capacities of these atoms, and do not require any stage of consciousness to be attributed to them. The soul is not perceived as a conscious or sentient object rather, it is the entity that is subject to the decisions and feelings given by the consciousness.

The second most popular counter-argument against the immortality of the soul in general is that of consciousness depending upon the use of the mind, lending support from the second, fourth and sixth proposition of Book III. Lucretius gives a moving case example of the necessary integration of the mind and soul, as that of the eye's ability to see after it has been removed from the body (III, 558-579 ff.). This example is a clear demonstration that the mind and spirit cannot function independently, therefore once the *anima* departs the body at death it is no longer consciously bound in any way to the previous subject. Here is the motivation Lucretius had behind indicating that atoms of the soul disperse randomly and widely spaced, like the vapours of smoke, because there is no force withholding these

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<sup>1</sup> If this were true, then it postulates that the atoms comprising the soul are a mixture of the chemical elements and compounds known as Oxygen, Carbon Dioxide and Nitrogen and most likely other gases. However, this is another topic of research.

tiny and delicate atoms. We must remember here the propositions of book II, that atoms are indestructible, thus Lucretius attributing destruction to the atoms of the soul is counter-intuitive to his theory. It appears he did not make it clear that the atoms of the soul would continue to exist as single and unattached entities throughout the void once departing a body. The description of 'dispersing like smoke' remains a vague expression and the outcome for these atoms also remains unexplained. Do they become different atoms once leaving the mind? Russell (1967, pp. 73-76) is in agreement with the attribution of the soul as necessarily linked to the mind, rendering it obsolete once it becomes divided from the entity at death. In his book *Why I am Not a Christian*, Russell depicts that the soul he perceives is inherently linked to memories and habit, upon death these are lost, and therefore no soul persists.

The human body is proof of constant change through growth by sustenance, and Russell (1967, p. 73) here accounts for the fact that atoms of modern physics do not classify as continuous in existence. This is a strict refutation of atomism, and there is indeed a volume published expressing the philosophical conflict of atomism with the law of conservation ( $E = MC^2$ ) that has resulted (Scott 1970). How ironic it is that the founding ideas for the theory of conservation, present in the arguments for atomistic continuity are now refuted by the intrinsic inter-changeability of atoms themselves. The theory of conservation still then supports the central idea of indivisible magnitudes that was the driving force of atomism, minus the microscope. Russell is of the basic standpoint that the soul is embedded in the mind, in support of Lucretian theory, he proposes that it is merely our memories. Also in line with Epicurean metaphysics, Russell argues that the will to believe in a future life is fuelled solely by the emotional fear of death.

The other emotion influencing the fallacy of belief in the immortal is according to Russell (1967, p. 75), the admiration of man's excellence. Humans like to believe that they are part of a higher order, and hence why we are endowed with such grand capabilities. Interestingly, the theory of Lucretius still allows for this emotion through praise of Epicurus in the beginning of his books of verse, all the while discounting the institutionalisation of worship to a supposed divine entity. Such was Voltaire's criticism of religion, and the lack of attribution to persistence of the human soul is what kept the theory of Lucretius' atomism from being classified in any way a religious belief because the soul is not immortal. What must be remembered is that the brain capacity of humans is not fully exercised as Einstein's theories explain, thus learning the truth about its full functions and utilizing them will be the only way to discover the true nature of human existence and the soul.

### Concluding Thoughts:

The ideas here presented, are reasons to take the perception of a possibly influential divine aspect from the viewpoint of Epicurean atomism. Due to the theory's basis on morality, whereby the good life is achieved by being free of pain and anxiety, there is reason to expect that this code could follow throughout one's death for those mysterious atoms that made up one's core will or soul as has been determined. In the metaphysical outline given, there is sufficient opportunity in which to approach Lucretius' atomism in such a manner as to validate a notion of reincarnation or perceive the afterlife persistence of a soul. The reliance on moral strength of will is an important one, due to the beliefs that have been traditionally held for millennia on how to reincarnate successfully. The indication of a perceivable persistence of the soul in the afterlife engages Epicurean physics with the moral notions of the afterlife that were avoided to discount superstition, however making the experience of the soul in the afterlife not morally judged but simply morally driven seeks to quell fears of death further. The need to experience as much pleasure as possible in the one life given makes the experience of death seem more morbid and oppressing. By giving a perspective on possible methods to continue life is a motivating force in living the good life as Epicurus intended, free from pain. The lack of eternal punishment also stands for the core proposition of the metaphysics of DRN. The historical note to make of this discussion is also that if Lucretius had acquired the means to evaluate atomistic behaviour, so as to incorporate the dualistic aspect of a separate entity from the body, then the following of Epicureanism may have classified a religious belief by giving a possible afterlife to the soul.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

### Set Free by the Word of God by Ronald Laura and Rachel Buchanan

‘there is no longer male and female; for all you are one in Jesus Christ’ Gal 3:28

Attempts to understand the philosophical presumptions which have motivated society's conceptualisation of women as a natural resource to be exploited as any other resource of nature, have led to a wide variety of sociological and philosophical explorations. Among such explorations, the Judeo-Christian tradition has been cited as a potentially rich source of socio-cultural prejudice against women. In what follows it will be argued that although it is to be admitted that there exists considerable exegetical ambiguity as to the Bible's view of women in the hierarchy of the created world, there is sufficient conceptual evidence to indicate that at least some interpretive devaluations of women do have a biblical basis. Women, it will be argued, are conceptualised as being resources, not unlike nature, created by God in order to be controlled and subdued by man. Firstly, we shall argue that a biblical pretext exists for conceiving of nature as being created under man's dominion. Our second task will be to explore the extent to which certain biblical passages can be plausibly interpreted to show that women are similarly conceptualised.

#### **The Biblical view of nature**

In 1967 Lynn White Jr. claimed that ‘our daily habits of action...are dominated by an implicit faith in perpetual progress which was unknown either to Greco-Roman antiquity or to the Orient. It is rooted in, and is indefensible apart from, Judeo-Christian teleology’ (White 1967/1973). According to White, at the time when Judaism was developed, it was the most anthropocentric of the world's spiritualities. The basic presumptions which serve to provide the conceptual framework by way of which Christians define their relation to the environment differ markedly from other religious conceptual schemes. For example, in contrast to many mythologies that contain a cyclical notion of time - thus no beginning or end - Christianity imported from Judaism a concept of time as being non-repetitive and linear. Along with this notion of time Christianity also borrowed from Judaism a creation story that located not only God but man above and beyond the natural realm. On successive days God creates the world: day and night; the sky; the oceans, the earth, and the plants; the sun, the moon, and the stars; the fish and the birds; the animals of the earth, and finally, the ultimate corporeal exemplification of his greatness, man. Only man was made in God's image and it was man to whom God gave the instruction: (Genesis 1:28) ‘Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals’. This message is reiterated after the Flood when God says to Noah (Genesis 9:1-2) ‘Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth. All the animals, birds, and fish will live in fear of you. They are all placed under your power’. These passages are of seminal significance for White, inasmuch as they have for many people provided a foundational vision in respect of which man's relationship to all of nature is defined. By way of his technological power man thereby established his dominance over the animal world; by naming them he manifests one form of his authority and power over them. Genesis has conveyed to many people that the earth was created by God for man's benefit. Although man was made from clay he is not just simply a part of nature, for he is made in God's image. On White's view the anthropomorphic ramifications of these beliefs are clear: ‘Despite Darwin, we are not, in our hearts, part of the natural process. We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim’ (1967/1973, p. 111). In contrast to virtually every major ancient religion Christianity separates man and nature, while justifying man's subjugation of nature by reference to a framework of interpretation within which it is God's will and command that man exploit nature for his ends. By virtue of having located man outside of nature, Christianity also provides man with a divine rationale, for the exploitation and subjugation of nature without conscience. Reinforcing the Genesis disposition towards the domination of nature, was - according to White the mentality of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Latin West, where natural theology was sanctioned by the belief that nature was man's to do with as he pleased. During this time, scientific learning was initially being developed by monks who believed that understanding how the natural world worked would reveal the blueprint of God's creative plan. This being so, it is easier to appreciate why from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century virtually every scientist was under the auspices of the Church and motivated primarily by a religious quest to comprehend how God operated by discerning the laws of nature. Insofar as the conceptual orientation of contemporary

scientific learning and technology emerged from this peculiar anthropocentric culture, that same culture enshrines within it certain of the presumptions of Judeo-Christian theology. Inasmuch as science has its origins in the ideas generated by those who were seeking to know God's mind through the workings of creation, 'modern western science [is] cast in a matrix of Christian theology' (White 1967/1973, p. 110). The result of this conflation is that there exists within western science and the technologies to which it gives rise a conceptual penchant towards the systematic exploitation and dominion over man over nature.

The views White expounded in his 1967 paper have sparked much debate on the ethical and theological aspects of environmentalism and his ideas have been described as being fundamental in the twenty five years of debate following their original publication. There is no doubt that White's provocative ideas did much to generate a re-examination of the ecological stance of the Judeo-Christian traditions and of the traditional interpretation of the relevant Genesis passages. A number of interpreters from the earliest Christians to modern day theologians have maintained that the Hebrew Scriptures have 'endorsed a suspicion of nature' (Tucker 1997, p. 3). Others have set out to demonstrate that the Scriptures contain more of an appreciation for nature than has previously been credited. Debate has often focused on Genesis 1:28, the verse in which God gives man dominion over the animals. Yet this verse does not reveal unambiguously whether God was intending to give man stewardship over nature or authorisation to exploit and subjugate. If God were giving man stewardship over nature this would commit man to a nurturing caretaker role within nature, a role in which man would be accountable to God for his actions towards the earth. In contrast, if God were giving man authority to exploit nature man would be able to do to the earth what he pleased without concern or conscience.

According to some scholars (Laura & Ashton 1991, 1998, 2006; Tucker 1997), the creation story establishes a hierarchy: God; man, his steward; and then the rest of nature. While human beings are God's creatures they, unlike the rest of nature, are created in God's image and therefore 'are the pinnacle of the pyramid, able to view the rest of the world at some distance' (Tucker 1997, p. 7). Some of the ways in which nature was viewed from the top of the pyramid are problematic. For example, the land that is considered worthwhile within the Scriptures is the arable land – the desert is viewed as wasteland and man is encouraged to transform this land into cultivated land. Consistent with this principle, the animals that fill the stories of the Hebrew testaments are largely the domesticated animals, such as the mules, horses and oxen- all viewed as having being created for the service of man. Coupled with this utilitarian teleology is the fear of wild animals that is well-documented throughout the Bible (for example, as expressed in Amos 3:8 'Where a lion roars who cannot help being afraid'). This distrust of wild animals in the Bible is demonstrated by allusions to a perfect future in which wild animals need not be feared. One example is the apocalyptic vision contained in Isaiah 11:6 which includes the belief that 'Wolves and sheep will live together in peace/ and leopards will lie down with young goats'.

A further issue arises which has to do with limits to the human use of nature. For example the Hebrew laws<sup>1</sup> that require that the land be left fallow every seven years protect the land from being over worked in a fragile eco-system.<sup>2</sup> It is made clear that although man has enormous power over nature, God has not given man complete authority over all of the earth. God remains the ultimate authority over the land, as when he asks man (Job 38:4) 'were you there when I made the world?' It can be seen that God is continually reminding man that the earth is God's and to him belongs all understanding and authority.

It can be seen that there are many differing perspectives threading through the Bible which in various ways affirm human dominion over nature. With technology humanity has the ability to impact deeply and positively upon the environment, by cultivating the deserts for example. But with this dominion comes responsibility and detrimental consequences if the limits of man's authority are breached. A

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<sup>1</sup> (Cooper 1990). See for details Exodus 23: 10-12; Leviticus chapter 25 & Deuteronomy 15:1-18, 23: 19-20

<sup>2</sup> Another example is the ecological disaster that occurs as a result of human activity and the loss of relationship with God described in Hosea 4:1-3:

There is no faithfulness or loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land;  
Swearing, lying, and murder, and stealing and adultery break out, bloodshed follows bloodshed.  
Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it languish,  
Together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish are perishing.

hierarchy is established – God talks to man in a way he does not talk to nature, but humanity is often reminded of its connection with the rest of nature.

### **Women's Place in the Hierarchy**

Differing threads of interpretation found in the Scriptures demonstrate the interesting array of internal inconsistencies which exist in the Bible. Rhiane Eisler (1987) explains that these internal inconsistencies are the result of the reworking of the ancient Hebrew texts by different authors and editors, one being a group of Hebrew Priests in the period around 400B.C.E. Scholars refer to these priests as the priestly or 'P' school and they are thought to be responsible for adding the second story of creation found within Genesis in chapters 2 and 3. This second version of creation is the story of Adam and Eve and it effectively changes the hierarchy of creation from God; mankind; nature; to God; man; woman; nature. The original creation story found in Genesis describes how on the sixth day God created mankind in his image, made them male and female, and blessed them (see Genesis 1: 27-28). In contrast to this the Priestly school's addition of Genesis 2:7-25 and 3:1-24 details the story of Adam and Eve and establishes God's sanction of man's dominion of women. Adam was created by God from the dust of the earth and Eve was created from his rib. Thus, not only was man created before woman but woman was created from man. In addition to this chronology and physiological aetiology woman is blamed for humankind's fall from grace. It was Eve who was tempted by the serpent and ate of the fruit from the forbidden tree of knowledge and then 'caused' her husband to do the same. As a result of her disobedience and corrupting influence, she was told by God (Genesis 3:16) 'I will increase your trouble in pregnancy and your pain in giving birth. In spite of this, you will still have desire for your husband, yet you will be subject to him'.

Adam is told by God (Gen. 3:17-19) that because

You listened to your wife...the ground will be under a curse. You will have to work hard all your life to make it produce enough food for you. It will produce weeds and thorns, and you will have to eat wild plants. You will have to work hard and sweat to produce anything, until you go back to the soil from which you were formed.

While the rebuke that Eve received firmly places her under her husband's authority, Adam's reprimand alienates him from the earth and reinforces the scriptural idea of man's separateness from nature. The earth and man are no longer deemed to work together, in unison or collaboration, to bring to fruition the harvest of the soil. After the Fall, the earth becomes resistant to the will of men and is reckoned as a force in opposition to his dominion. This being so, the concept evolves of man having to battle against the forces of nature in order to achieve supremacy.

### **Woman as Economic Property**

In the context of the story of the Garden of Eden the final outcome suggests that man is alienated from nature, while woman is alienated from man and punished by God to become subject to man. Through their shared alienation from God, nature and women become conceptualised as resources at the disposal of man. For example, Numbers 31:32-35 details the booty captured by Moses' soldiers after the Holy War against Midian; '675 000 sheep and goats, 72 000 cattle, 61 000 donkeys, and 32 000 virgins'. The women are spoils of war, not unlike nature's other booty such as sheep, goats, cattle and donkeys. God's instructions to his people concerning warfare left the Hebrews with a mandate to kill every man, woman, and child they captured, except for the girls and women who were virgins (see, Numbers 31:17-19; Deuteronomy 20:13-15). Such a culture served to bring into existence and legitimate the social structures by way of which women could sold as slaves, concubines and wives, making clear that within the ancient Judaic tradition women were valued as nothing more than economic resources that could be traded at whim (Eisler, 1987).

Two dramatic examples of this 'woman-as-property' attitude which is morally sanctioned in the Scriptures are found in Genesis and Judges. Genesis 19 describes two men visiting Lot in Sodom. The men of Sodom surround Lot's house and demand that Lot bring out his visitors, as they 'wanted to have sex with them' (Genesis 19:5). Lot instead offers the rabble his daughters saying, (19:6-8)

Friends, I beg you, don't do such a thing! Look, I have two daughters who are still virgins. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do whatever you want with them. But don't do anything to these men; they are guests in my house and I must protect them.

In this story Lot is shown to have a stronger duty to protect his male guests, who are strangers to him, than he does a duty to protect his own daughters and a similar story found in Judges.

A Levite, his servant, and his concubine were staying with an old man in Gibeah. Again the men of the town surrounded the house and demanded that the old man bring out his guest. Instead the old man's guest persuaded them to take his concubine. The Scriptures tell us that (Judges 19:25) 'they raped and abused her all night long and didn't stop until morning'. When the man was leaving that morning, he found her dead body and went home. In Eisler's words the regard for women in this society was so low that within the 'sacred text ostensibly setting forth divine law...we may read that one half of humanity could be legally be handed over by their own fathers and husbands to be raped, beaten, tortured, or killed without any fear of punishment- or even moral disapproval' (1987, p. 100).

The extent to which women were regarded as mere economic commodities, property to be traded between fathers and husbands is further spelled out in chapter twenty two of Deuteronomy<sup>3</sup>. Under the heading of 'Laws concerning Sexual Purity' the lawful way in which women can be exchanged is detailed in verses thirteen to thirty. These rules state that if a man marries a woman and then tries to rid himself of her by claiming that she was not a virgin, the parents must prove that she was by taking the blood-stained wedding-bed sheets to the town leaders. If they are successful, the husband is then to be beaten, whereupon he is obliged to give the girl's father one hundred pieces of silver for bringing disgrace on an Israelite girl. Furthermore, he can never divorce her as long as he lives. But if there is no proof that the girl was a virgin when she married, she is to be stoned to death for having (Deuteronomy 22:21) 'done a shameful thing among our people'. Alternatively, if a man is caught raping a girl his punishment is defined as having to pay her father the bride price, while the girl has to become his wife, with the provision that he will not divorce her as long as he lives (Deuteronomy 22:28-29).

It has been argued that the primary purpose of these laws is to protect economic transactions between two men (Eisler 1997). By falsely accusing a girl of losing her virginity prior to marriage, the husband was in essence slandering her father as an honest merchant and hence, the fine was paid to him. By stoning her to death if the accusations were found to be true, the husband was simply disposing of what was now an economically worthless asset. Payment of the bride price to a father if you raped his daughter stops men taking your assets without paying for them. Similarly, if a couple were caught having adultery, then the Scriptures maintain that they both be killed (Deuteronomy 22:22). In this way you were disposing of a damaged asset and providing for the punishment of a thief- the man who had 'stolen' another's property. Because the Hebrews were not so 'crass' to speak about women in purely economic terms, the rules were dressed up as divine ordinances from God, thereby legitimating horrific social practices by way of God's sanction (Eisler).

### **The Redemption offered by Jesus**

The extent to which women were excluded from God's grace in Hebrew society is demonstrated in the purification laws which declared them ritually unclean during menstruation and after childbirth. These laws found in Leviticus reinforced women's separateness from God and man through the taboos which prevented them from touching anyone or going to the temple during menstruation (See for details Leviticus 12:1-8, 15:19-33, and 18:19). According to some (Eisler 1987; Ruether 1992) Jesus came to set the Jewish people free from the rules such as this that bound their lives to inhuman treatment, liberating all people, including the women, from the bondage of oppressive laws. The most dramatic example of this came when Jesus healed the woman who was haemorrhaging from her womb. The woman had been bleeding for twelve years and she believed that touching Jesus' cloak would heal her. When she did so (Matthew 9: 18-23) 'Jesus turned around and saw her, and said "Courage, my daughter! Your faith has made you well". At that very moment the woman became well' (See also Mark 5:21-43 & Luke 8:40-56). This woman was ritually unclean at this time yet Jesus still healed her, a wonderful example to show that law, not even the Jewish law of the time, should take precedence over an act of love.

Jesus' rejection of the conventional separation of men and women is well documented throughout the New Testament. He violated custom by talking to women, as is illustrated in his communication with a

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<sup>3</sup> Ironically, verses of this chapter are also used by some commentators as examples which allegedly demonstrate God's pronouncement of an environmental ethic, see Cooper 1990; Tucker, 1997. The oft-quoted verse six, for example, states that 'If you happen to find a bird's nest in a tree or on the ground with the mother bird sitting either on the eggs or with her young, you are not to take the mother bird'. One interpretation of the verse is that God was instructing his people to behave in a way that would not threaten the survival of his creatures. A mere seven verses later are instructions in the trading of women.

Samaritan woman, an interaction which shocked even his disciples (John 4:7-27). He counted women amongst his closest friends and companions. In fact he praises his friend Mary in contrast to her sister Martha for transcending her domestic role and participating in scriptural learning (Luke 10:38-42). In this action he rejects the notion of women's separation from God which traditionally kept women from learning the Scriptures.

Jesus' life provides a model for others about a new way to treat women, with respect and as equals. His rejection of the Jewish rules that separate men and women, and women from God is demonstrated by his actions, as when he saves an adulterous woman from being stoned to death (John 8:1-11). Women were also an important part of his ministry and were to receive the gifts of the spirit along side the men. Acts 2:17 informs us that God says 'I will pour out my Spirit on Everyone/ Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message'. Jesus' ministry demonstrated that women were no longer to be viewed as an economic resource. They were to be partners with men, sharing together in God's spirit and similarly proclaiming his message. Jesus' message represented a revolutionary departure from the traditional Hebrew conceptualisation of women as the property of men, but the deeply entrenched prejudices against women were not so easily overthrown.

### **The Pauline Tradition and the Position of Women**

After Jesus' death his disciples were left to carry on his ministry. Paul became a leader in the newly formed Church and his letters to various Christian outposts have long been used as models for good Christian behaviour. Paul's realisation of Jesus' message of equality is demonstrated in Galatians 3:28: 'So there is no differences between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free men, between men and women: you are all one in union with Christ Jesus'. According to Rosemary Ruether, the 'tentative beginnings of an egalitarian view of male-female relations in early Christianity were quickly overwhelmed' (1992, p. 140). While the verse from Galatians demonstrates a continuation of Christ's model of equality between the sexes, further readings of Paul's letters demonstrate that Paul, or those writing in his name, was not so able to realise these ideals.

Several of his letters women insist that wives submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5). Reinforcing the devaluation of women, Paul refers to Eve's actions in the Garden of Eden as justification for these instructions (1 Timothy 2:11-14):

Women should learn in silence and all humility. I do not allow them to teach or to have authority over men; they must keep quiet. For Adam was created first, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and broke God's law<sup>4</sup>.

This is in direct contrast to Jesus' affirmation of Mary's involvement in Scriptural learning. Jesus' actions provide a blueprint for equality within male-female relationships, but as the above verses demonstrate, this model represented too radical a departure from the Jewish model of male-female relations. According to Ruether (1992), the egalitarian model glimpsed in the New Testament was overpowered by the pervasiveness of Hebrew traditions. The continued influence which Paul's words have had upon the modern world are noted by Stout and McPhail (1998) who remind us that women who are beaten by their husbands are often told by their pastors and priests that they must submit to their husbands.

We have here examined one modality of exegetical justification for the view that women and nature exist as resources for the benefit of men. It was shown that the notion of woman-as-resource can be found in the Old Testament of the Judeo-Christian scriptures. Here too can be found the idea that the earth exists for purely for man's domination. The Judeo-Christian creation stories, in particular, have fostered beliefs instrumental in the institutionalisation of patriarchy, which have in turn engendered social structures which have led to the exploitation of both women and the environment. Within some areas of the texts the connection between women and nature is clearly demonstrated - both were viewed as being man's property to dominate, exploit and trade. It was found that although this was one of several ways that women and nature were viewed within the Bible, and that certain ambiguity exists concerning the way to treat both, justification for the exploitation and subjugation of women and nature

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<sup>4</sup> This message is repeated in Corinthians 14:33-35:

As in all the churches of God's people, the women should keep quiet in the meetings. They are not allowed to speak; as the Jewish Law says, they must not be in charge. If they want to find out about something, they should ask their husbands at home. It is a disgraceful thing for a woman to speak in a church meeting.

can be found within the Judeo-Christian scriptures.

This interpretation of a god who is understood to have fashioned the world hierarchally, Laura has termed 'patriarchal theism' (Laura & Chalender, this volume). Patriarchal theism refers to the conceptualisation of a God who reflects a patriarchal understanding and ordering of the world. The stories described above betray a biblical basis for patriarchal theism. Patriarchal theism is one example of the connections that have historically been forged between women and nature in order to justify their domination, exploitation and subjugation. Once the implicit presumptions of patriarchal theism are made explicit, it is easier to recognise that the linguistic connections between nature and women are inextricably linked the descriptive and conceptual stereotypes which have come to identify these. These connections reveal a covert commitment to an epistemology of power that depicts women and nature in ways that are distinctly male biased. We argue that patriarchal theism is one manifestation of the epistemology of power and that Jesus' life, in word and deed provide an alternative model, an 'epistemology of empathy' and represents a vision that remains unrealised, even today.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

### Theo-Critical Feminism, Mother Nature and Epistemological Patriarchy

by

Rachel Buchanan and Ronald Laura

Our aim in this chapter is to argue that despite impressive advances in women's liberation, the value presumptions inherent in what we shall here call 'patriarchal theism' remain firmly entrenched, even in developed institutions of putative moral conscience such as the Christian Church. In what follows we shall argue that the persistent persuasion of patriarchal theism stands as an impediment to a deeper and more comprehensive emancipation for women within the Church than has yet been achieved. Our analysis can be extrapolated as a theo-critical heuristic for other religions traditions, but to keep this paper within manageable bounds, we refer primarily to the restricted role of women within the Christian Church. We have created the term 'theo-critical feminism' to refer to specialist studies such as this which focus primarily on the philosophical and theological reflection of feminist issues in theology. The methodological model we use here to elucidate our concept of patriarchal theism is what we call 'epistemological patriarchy'. We use the term 'epistemological patriarchy' to refer to the ascendancy and socio-cultural entrenchment of one particular form of knowledge whose institutional dominance provides the pretext for its superiority over other plausible ways of coming to know the world. The monopoly it enjoys amongst other contenders for the accolade of knowledge ensures that the role they might otherwise play in expanding a salutary community consciousness of variant perspectives of cognitive insight is marginalised and suppressed. What conditions the epistemological presumption as 'patriarchal' is that the concept of knowledge deployed is motivated and 'valuationally' informed by the obsession with power and control, subjugation and dominance, as regulated by institutional powerbrokers (still mostly male) motivated by vested interest. Given this preoccupation with power, we shall endeavour to establish that 'knowledge' is neither 'value-free,' nor for that matter, 'socio-culturally neutral', and thus that the concept of knowledge cannot be understood independently of the value presumptions which serve to motivate and characterise it. This being so, we contend that until the epistemological patriarchy which continues to condition the covert value hierarchy of institutional structures is explicitly challenged, the deprecation, denigration and discriminative abuse of women will continue, in any of a number of subtle and not so subtle ways. Because the dehumanising socio-cultural mechanisms to which we allude are epistemologically enshrined within the hidden agenda of seemingly innocent and innocuous processes, they easily go unnoticed. This is precisely why their existence is all the more pernicious and their social consequences, all the more problematic. Let us now turn to the task at hand.

#### **Patriarchy: Understanding its socio-cultural evolution**

Patriarchy as a system is historical: it has a beginning in history. If that is so, it can be ended by historical process (Lerner 1986, p. 228).

Patriarchy is an ancient word, meaning in Greek "the rule of the father" (LeGates 2001). A differently nuanced meaning of patriarchy comes to us from the Judeo-Christian heritage. Abraham of the Old Testament, for example, is referred to as the 'Patriarch', the father of the Jewish and Christian nations. Echoes of this meaning are also to be found in the Greek Orthodox Church, which has at its head the Archbishop of Constantinople, who is popularly referred to as the Church's 'Patriarch'. Another rendition of the term 'patriarchy' can refer to the legal powers and authority that a man has over his family. According to Bennett, (2006) this meaning was popularised in the seventeenth century by Robert Filmer's book *Patriarcha*, a political theory where the domestic meaning of patriarchy was extended to the king, who ruled over his country as a father ruled over his household. This permutation of the meaning of the word patriarchy is argued to be more accurately expressed by the terms 'patriarchalism' or 'paternalism' (Bennett).

While there exists a degree of scholarly ambiguity as to the socio-cultural origins of patriarchy (LeGates 2001), an examination of certain of the myths of the ancient world reveals that there were places and times when patriarchy was not ideologically embedded. Stories such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, and the creation stories of the Hebrews, to name only a few, illustrate that the emergence of patriarchy coincided with the birth and ascension of a new mythology which eventually decimated the matriarchal value system within which the very concept of the goddess found its expression. By devaluing the gifts of the divine feminine it became increasingly easier to elevate the concept of a male god whose remit was largely proscribed by the 'virtues' of conquest, protection, provision, judgement and retributive punishment. The diminution of

the divine feminine is especially well illustrated in the case of the eventual attribution to Zeus of the ability to 'give birth' directly from his head, thereby marginalizing the otherwise unique capacity of the goddess for reproduction (ie, the birthing of gods, half gods, humans, etc) on the one hand, and her generative role in general creation (ie, the creation of the cosmos or of nature itself) on the other. The mythology of the male-god thus establishes a conceptual framework within which the male god is reconceptualised as a being whose 'powers' now usurp those of the goddess. Consequently, the male god takes over her role, not only, as creator, but as a deity who nurtures, nourishes, loves unconditionally and even forgives. In this way the male god becomes conceptually transformed into a supreme being (ultimately the one and only) who acquires and assimilates the powers and attributes of every deity (both masculine and feminine) unto himself. He becomes in essence 'the divine hermaphrodite', who ineluctably becomes omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent.

From the vantage of patriarchy, it is important to understand the extent to which these supremely beneficent divine attributes are expressed unequivocally and determinately through his maleness. This new super-god of patriarchy subsumes the feminine virtues unto himself, while paradoxically remaining uniquely male. There is nothing he cannot do, nothing he does not know, and no form of good that is not, in some sense or other, of his doing or a reflection of his universal beneficence. As early as the late 1980s, scholars such as Lerner (1986), and Eisler (1987) acknowledged that an unabashedly male mythology had begun to provide the primary socio-cultural medium for the establishment and promulgation of patriarchy over not only matriarchy, but even over egalitarian societies some 7 – 11 thousand years ago. Notwithstanding tedious debate about the exact details of the chronological socio-cultural dynamic which most accurately portrays the relationship between patriarchy and matriarchy, it is incontestable that the reconceptualisation of the male-god within matriarchal cultural mythology played an enormously important role in the emergence and growing dominance of patriarchal epistemology.

### **Feminist Foundations of Epistemological Patriarchy**

Older than feminism and indeed inspiring it, patriarchy has been a prime characteristic of Western civilisation. Political and cultural invisibility, intellectual restrictions, sexual vulnerability, and economic exploitation, all justified in the name of nature and God, shaped women's lives, both stimulating and hindering the development of feminism and feminist thought (LeGates 2001, p. 23).

It is also important to make clear that 'epistemological patriarchy' as we deploy the term can be understood by the characterization given to it from the perspective of feminist critiques of male power. An exemplar of this covertly-nuanced meaning of the term is provided by Adrienne Rich who describes patriarchy as:

a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men – by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male (Rich 1977, p. 57).

As far as can be discerned, the term 'patriarchy' was first employed in this way - to describe male domination over women - by Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* first published in 1970 (LeGates, 2001). In this seminal work one of Millett's primary concerns was to awaken women to the fact that:

our society, like all other historical civilisations, is a patriarchy. The fact is evident if one recalls that the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office, and finance – in short, every avenue of power within the society, including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands (Millett 1970, p. 25).

Admittedly, this depiction is nearly forty years old and is in certain respects perhaps, understandably jaded. Given that women have in the intervening years made significant inroads by way of gaining employment within traditional masculine or male-dominated occupations, for instance, it would seem somewhat overzealous to describe every facet of power within our culture as being entirely within male hands. Nonetheless, we urge here that it is imperative to recognise that the epistemological hierarchy by way of which patriarchal discrimination is covertly institutionally sustained represents a potent defining factor in the continuing suppression of women within the Church and in society generally. This is why institutions such as universities, government bodies or even the Church could eventually be staffed entirely by women and yet be no less patriarchally oriented due to the fact that the institutional ethos of patriarchy remains as the dominant epistemological framework within which their functional mediations are conditioned.

Moreover, the argument we advance here is intended to establish that once again, even if such institutions were staffed predominantly by women, the 'worth of a woman' will in moral terms remain marginalised until the value-hierarchy of epistemological patriarchy that underpins the relevant institutional structures is itself reconceptualized. According to the view we proffer here, it is not men, per se, and thus, not even the number of men per se, working in an institution that makes the values it enshrines patriarchal. This is why the benefits which flow from such institutions will inevitably favour men, however many or few there are, both inside and outside them. While patriarchy is a system of societal organisation such that the primary opportunities and benefits flow to men, it is the epistemological presumption of the value of men over women which ensures that the institutional structures created within the system are patriarchal. If the very epistemic processes by way of which we come to know the world are driven and defined by an insatiable appetite for power, dominance, and control, there will always be someone or something subjugated by the system (see Laura & Cotton, 1999). Under the aegis of epistemological patriarchy women are systemically dehumanised by being reduced to and categorised in terms of their gender, whose diminished value within the system of patriarchal theism encourages the covert perception that, not unlike any resource of nature, women can be manipulated, exploited, and subjugated in accord with the vested interests of the supremely male god who has subsumed the female virtues unto himself. By epistemically defining the concept of a woman in terms of her gender, any particular woman may be covertly and sometimes overtly devalued and accordingly, treated as a resource for subjugation and expropriation. Within this patriarchal framework the rich talents of women and thus their labour, be it reproductive, intellectual or manual, may be marginalised with impunity. In short, regardless of the gender of the persons exercising power within patriarchal institutions, the question is whether the people, both the women and men working in such institutions, are morally regarded as persons rather than as things. This is a crucial point, for while epistemic patriarchy implicitly favours men with institutional benefits, it can do so in a way that dehumanises and depersonalises them, as well as women.

While patriarchy primarily rewards men, the concept of patriarchal epistemology is far more complex than can be conveyed by the popular idea that there exists a power struggle between men and women. The benefits of patriarchy, for example, also flow to some men more than others, and it is clear that some women benefit from institutional epistemological patriarchy more than some men. Within the intersecting value hierarchies which make up the western patriarchal socio- cultural system (Warren 1998) race and class can supersede gender. This is why poor black men can be more disadvantaged than middle class white women. Similarly, homosexual men within the domain of epistemological patriarchy have all too often suffered from the dehumanisation of patriarchal misogyny, just as much as women suffer patriarchal marginalisation (Bennett 2006). Although one meaning of patriarchy is expressed by the rule of the father, it is erroneous to assume that all men benefit from patriarchy, and similarly, that all women do not. According to Bennett 'women have not been innocent of collusion with patriarchal subjugation; indeed, some have supported it, some have benefited from it, and most have raised their daughters and sons to conform to it' (2006, p. 56). Bennett gives the example of medieval business women being advised to employ women over men, as this would cost them less from their purse. A more contemporary instance of women colluding with and benefiting from patriarchy can be found when female film producers within the porn industry unashamedly make money from the blatant sexual objectification of women's bodies. The same is true of brothels, traditionally run by a Madame who reaps the financial benefits of patriarchy by trading for money the flesh of those of her gender, whom she would otherwise call her 'sisters'.

The term 'epistemological patriarchy' is employed to convey a deeper meaning than that conventionally conveyed by the term patriarchy. By epistemological patriarchy we refer to the epistemological underpinnings of western society's theory of knowledge. As described by Laura and Cotton (1999) western epistemology is driven by a thirst for power. Far from being 'value-free' or 'neutral' independently of how we use knowledge it is clear that patriarchal epistemology enshrines a complex set of evaluative presuppositions which either explicitly deny or implicitly compromise the intrinsic worth not only of mother nature but of women, thereby transforming both into objects of desire to be manipulated by the will of men or those in power. Such a form of knowledge which is itself motivated by the lust for power in turn engenders technologies of power, themselves defined by a preoccupation with domination, subjugation and expropriation. The way in which technologies of power achieve control depends upon their capacity to recast the face and the things of the earth (Mother Nature) into a fabricated and synthesized form which makes the behaviour of these technologized reconstructions predictable in ways which implicitly suit man's alleged needs and desires.

The process by way of which technology achieves this measure of control depends upon what we shall here call 'transformative subjugation'. (For a full account of this theory see Laura & Cotton 1999, pp.

48-69). The technological process of control through transformative subjugation involves manipulating the animate and inanimate things of mother nature by converting them into commodities or fabricated 'things' to be bought or sold in the economic marketplace, as indeed women in many places around the globe still are. In essence, technology gives us power over Mother Nature by systematically synthesizing and reconstructing it into things of our own making. Indeed, what better way for patriarchal theism, for example, to control women's destiny than by fabricating institutional structures which covertly dehumanize her into just another of the 'things' he has subdued, this time by virtue of the impoverished roles ascribed traditionally made available to women for centuries, if not millennia, within the Church. Although an enlightened consciousness of empathetic epistemology (See Laura & Chapman 2009) has no doubt led to a far more equitable distribution of opportunities and ascription of respect for women, the fact that the apposite role for women to play in the Eucharist is still being debated in some religiously revered circles is a commentary on the persistence of the ghost of epistemological patriarchy in the 'theological machine'.

It is to be conceded that while women had achieved some measure of success towards the goal of challenging the inequities of patriarchal theism the methodological heuristic of epistemological patriarchy which underpins it remains insufficiently challenged. We conclude that although men no longer solely assume the primary positions of leadership and power within western societies, the epistemological values underpinning the western pursuit of knowledge and the institutional structures to which it gives rise remain fundamentally unchanged. This being so, 'epistemological patriarchy' still sustains the foundational framework for the edifice of patriarchal theism and the male ethos of power and dominance which still marginalizes women and circumscribes the opportunities for them to respond to and fulfill their vocational calling as it is given in God's voice, rather than the voice of the Church. That is, while the external trappings of a patriarchal society are diminished, the power driven form of epistemology underpinning society remains firmly entrenched.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN

### **Patriarchal Theism**

by

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and

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The Judeo-Christian attitude towards women and nature is not presented unequivocally within the context of Biblical literature. There are many reasons for this: some are exegetical, some are theological and socio-cultural, while others are epistemological. Whatever reasons might seem to explain the diversity of disposition to be found on this subject, our purpose in this paper is to show that the ongoing rape of nature and women in the western world can be explained partly as a consequence of the misuse, perhaps even the exploitation of this ambiguity. Lamentably, such institutionally sanctioned misinterpretations have led to a form of 'gender elitism' legitimized covertly by a discriminatory biblical presumption which we call 'patriarchal theism.' The use we make of this term is straightforward.

By 'patriarchal theism' we mean that a pretext exists within the Bible for describing the world and the divine events which take place in it which explicitly, and sometimes implicitly, encourages a way of thinking about nature and women that presupposes the superiority and authority of men over both. Just as the Jews are God's chosen people, so this patriarchal mandate affirms that man is God's chosen gender. The authors acknowledge that this way of putting the point stands to some extent as a provocative caricature, but it is our purpose in doing so to bring to bold relief that before the destructive patriarchal attitudes towards nature and women can be extirpated from the socio-cultural context, they must first be eliminated from the biblical context by explicitly rejecting the misinterpretations given to them. We submit that this cannot happen by pretending that there is no biblical pretext for patriarchy, even if such pretexts are nothing more than misinterpretations in the overall context of more comprehensive exegesis.

To tease out the aetiology of patriarchal theism and its impact on the ensuing treatment of women and nature we began our examination with a transdisciplinary analysis of the creation story. Our rationale for focusing initially on the book of Genesis is not because it is the only place in the Bible where patriarchal theism is manifest, but rather because the representation of it in Genesis is pivotal in understanding why biblical passages elsewhere can be and have been interpreted with a patriarchal slight of intellectual hand. Given this methodological limitation, the argument of this paper is intended as a heuristic to stimulate further informed discussion regarding the conceptual connections that have been made between women and nature; and to explain why the descriptions given to them in the context of patriarchal theism lead to persistent patterns contributing to institutional sanctions and forms of social behavior destructive of both.

### **Introduction:**

Laura postulates that 'the rape of nature and the rape of women figure in the unfolding of the socio-cultural history of the West as manifestations of the same dogmatic force of patriarchal consciousness that characterizes the dominant epistemology of power underpinning western education' (Laura & Heaney, 1990, p. 97). The extent to which this discriminatory form of consciousness and the epistemology which from it informs the conceptual culture of the Judeo-Christian religion enshrines the ideological posture we are referring to as 'patriarchal theism.' A fundamental presupposition of patriarchal theism legislates that man has dominion over the whole of the created world.<sup>1</sup> Nature, on this conceptual reckoning, is essentially a cornucopia of resources for man's needs and pleasures.<sup>2</sup> The first chapter of Genesis can and has been read as specifically bestowing upon man an obligation to subdue 'everything that has the breath of life in it.'<sup>3</sup> The earth from the onset of its creation is considered a gift from master to servant, from King to Prince. This being so, Adam, God's Son, is

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:28, "God bless them and said to them, "be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:29 "Then God said I give you every seed bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food."

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 1:30

afforded a mandate by his father to make use of and rule over every aspect of his environment.<sup>4</sup> Every 'fish of the sea' and 'all the birds of the air' are, ext. are seemingly enlisted within the created world for the service of man.

In this case what might be called the Adamic Covenant could be considered as complete, given that, all the earth's resources (livestock, viruses, colloids and particle waves) have been regimented for the mastery of man. Thus, pertaining to one resource in particular, we would argue that the patriarchal edge of the sword cuts sharply in regarding women as one of these 'natural' resources, as designed by God himself, to fulfill the interests of man (Radford 2008). This is why Laura (Laura & Heaney 1990) elsewhere argues that as long as the primary form of knowledge we embrace in our educational institutions is motivated by our insatiable appetite for power and dominance over the planet, Nature itself will ineluctably be regarded on the metaphor of a woman who has been created to serve man's interests or if she does not, she needs to be controlled, subjugated and subdued to ensure that she will. From this vantage it is no accident that nature has traditionally been conceptualized in feminine terms; 'Mother Nature', that is to say, and women have both been covertly devalued by virtue of being construed as little more than God-created resources to be expropriated, exploited, and manipulated to suit the purposes of a man and the institutional structures by way of which the will of man is socio-culturally entrenched. The central burden of what now follows in this piece is to reflect critically on the way in which patriarchal theism has emerged from and been sustained by anti-feminist interpretations of biblical literature. To debate so jaded a topic as the ordination of women is a sad but revealing commentary on the theological presumptiveness of patriarchy which informs and conditions modern Christianity, with few exceptions. Rather than let rhetoric substitute for argument, however, let us now turn directly to the task at hand.

### **Adam God's First Son:**

There is perhaps no better place to commence the elaboration of this heuristic of 'Patriarchal Theism' than at the beginning, and from the Judeo-Christian perspective, the Creation Story announces the origins of the created world and divine creation of the first human beings. It is important to note that the text makes explicit that the first human being God creates is a man, and that this first man is referred to as 'Adam' by God.<sup>5</sup> Although, in Genesis 1:27, it is also said that God created man, "in his own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female he created them," an ambiguity arises as to whether he created them equally. In Chapter 2:7, for example, which can be regarded as an elaboration of Genesis 1.27, God is said to have created man first, from the "dust of the ground." Theologically speaking, Adam is specifically graced by the hand of God that created him. Adam holds a special status in that he is the first human God creates, so in one sense he is archetypically human, and biblically the first human is man. Having been created directly by the hand of God Adam is not sexually reproduced; Adam's actiology is thus in another sense essentially supernatural. Adam is not just the first man. Indeed, on the second reckoning, he could possibly be regarded as God's first child and depending upon what significance this point is given, then possibly as God's first son.

This is why a childlike question whether Adam has a belly button may reflect a degree of theological precociousness and naïveté at one and the same time. Given the integral role within Christianity played by the concept of Jesus as the 'Son of God', it is understandable that the idea of construing Adam as God's First or Eldest Son would be, regarded as anathema, if not heresy by some traditional theologians. None the less, the teaching of the Early Church Fathers that 'Adam, was a pattern of the one to come' is strongly intimated in the writings of the apostle Paul, and affirmed quite literally, in the genealogy of Luke,<sup>6</sup> where Adam is referred to as the first son of God and Jesus is referred to as the seventy sixth heir of God.<sup>7</sup>

This being so, it is clear that within the context of the 'Christian Story' Adam is brought into existence by God's own hand. Unlike Jesus, Adam is not born of a woman, not even of a female goddess; he is a direct and pure creation of God. Moreover, God's decision to create a human who is male in his own likeness and image, but who is also male, represents a divine precedent which indirectly favors the socio-cultural value attached to being male. Augustine writes: "The first man Adam was made a living

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<sup>4</sup> Genesis 1:30. "And to all the beast of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground - everything that has the breath of life in it I give every green plant for food. And it was so."

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 3:17

<sup>6</sup> Romans 5:14

<sup>7</sup> Luke 3:23-37

soul." Faustus' First Man is neither of the earth, earthy, nor made a living soul, but of the substance of God, and the same in essence as God."<sup>8</sup>

### **Eve: The Afterthought**

Biblically, the creation of Eve is a very different proposition from several perspectives, one of which it is conceptually apposite to highlight here. On one plausible reading of Genesis when God made Adam, he was in doing to make 'Creation' itself complete. God created Adam, that is to say, to fulfill the divine idea of what the created world, should look like, or to put it more emphatically, to finish the work of creation in such a way that all the things that God thought should be created were in fact included as part of a created world un lacking and made complete.

The point here is that if a reader of the Bible takes seriously the Genesis account, or interprets the words of Genesis [God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him"] as literal in its ordered meaning, then it could well seem that neither Eve nor even the concept of a woman was part of God's original design for the created world.<sup>9</sup> The rationale for Eve's existence can, on one plausibly reading, be regarded as an afterthought, given that the created world God had in mind was already made complete with the making of Adam. Eve's presence on the scene becomes a part of the created world by virtue of what God recognizes as the human needs of Adam, not in terms that are obvious of any initial blueprint of the things that should be included in his creation. God's creation is not necessarily incomplete without Eve, Adam is incomplete without Eve. In this sense the moral imperative to create Eve is derivative, evolving from God's covenant with Adam. And so it is written: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him... after the man gave names to all the livestock... for Adam no suitable helper was found"<sup>10</sup>

What God acknowledges, or so it might seem from the relevant passage is not the intrinsic 'existence value' of Eve, as the 'daughter of God,' but rather the value her existence would have as a helper and partner for Adam, the man, whose loneliness might presumably be assuaged by her presence in his life. God thus acts out of Adam's interests, the fulfillment of which in turn serves to engender the extension of creation itself by prompting God to make Eve for Adam not for himself; and certainly not, that is to say to satisfy his original creation project, or the original ideal against which it was measured. If one takes the passage at its face value, it is tempting to conclude that God's creation of Eve was an afterthought arising. God manifested prerogative in the chronology of creating Adam first gives Adam a special status that has served as a patriarchal bias for discriminating the socio-cultural roles and relative worth of men and women in ways which have clearly cast a more auspicious eye upon men than women. God is of course still involved in the creation of Eve, but the pertinent passage suggests that her creation is conditional upon God's concern to make the already created man, Adam, a happy man.

It's important to note that Adam's woman does not receive the title of wife or personal name of Eve until after they have both been banished from the garden, cursed to death, and thus informed by God that "she would become the mother of all the living."<sup>11</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Theology of the Body* confirms this theological teaching, when he writes: "Genesis 2:23-25 enables us to deduce that woman, who in the mystery of creation "is given" to man by the Creator, is "received," thanks to original innocence. That is, she is accepted by man as a gift. The Bible text is quite clear and limpid at this point. At the same time, the acceptance of the woman by the man and the very way of accepting her, become, as it were, a first donation."<sup>12</sup> To gives some indication as to how the Roman-Jewish mind may have incorporated this doctrine into their teachings, The Jewish historian Josephus writes: "But when he (God) saw that Adam had no female companion, no society, for there was no such created, and that he (God) wondered at the other animals which were male and female, he (God) laid him asleep, and took away one of his (Adam) ribs, and out of it formed the woman"<sup>13</sup> However, Josephus clearly points out that God formed Eve from Adam's body, but only after God had first been given a chance to compare the anthropological structure of the animal world, with that of the human world.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Nicaea and Post-Nicene Fathers First series volume 4, St. Augustine, Anti-Manichaeism, Anti-Donatist writings -writings in connection with the Manichaeism –book XI- Faustus quotes:

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 1:27

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 2:18-20

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 3:20

<sup>12</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, section 17, 1980 Man and Woman: A Mutual Gift for Each Other. <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP2TBIND.HTM>.

<sup>13</sup> Complete Works of Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, book 1- Chapter1 section 2

<sup>14</sup> Josephus, *Ibid.*,

Although it would not be correct to deny that there is a sense in which Eve is made in the image of God; it does not seem entirely wrong to say that there is also a sense in which she is created in 'the likeness and image of Adam'. After all, we are told that God uses Adam's body (from L. *corpus* as in *Corpus Christi*) by taking from it a rib, out of which Eve is birthed almost parthenogenically from Adam. To be made, as was Adam, directly by God as a '*fait accompli*' is not the same as Eve being made from Adam, though God still did the making. Theophilus of Antioch in a letter to his friend Autolycus gives a practical reason as to why, it was necessary, Eve was formulated from the substance of Adam's *corpus*. Woven within Theophilus' argument, the modern idea of mutual affection, family cohesiveness and mental development are evidently not considered a social priority which might benefit both individuals involved in a nuptial relationship. No, Eve's subjugation is strung together by socio-political and/or economic reasons. "God made the man and another the woman, therefore He made them both.....not only, that the mystery of God's sole government might be exhibited;" Similar in structure to Josephus' argument, Theophilus justifies his patriarchal position by comparing the bestiality of unlawful relationships to divine unions by explaining the difference between the pagan practice of invoking the name of Eve in the Bacchanalian organic rituals, to the civil union of Adam and Eve.<sup>15</sup> Theophilus' stands to reason: 'for he who marries lawfully venerates the mother and father and his whole family connection, most importantly though, he who looks fondly upon his wife, even until death, Theophilus implies, secures all the goods of his household.'<sup>16</sup>

### **Hermaphroditic Man**

For Tertullian and for many other members of the ECF the defilement of desired sexuality did not figure into God's original creation. For example, Origen, among other early Greco-Roman communities went as far as to perform a self castration ritual upon their own *corpse* for the purpose of making perfect the body of original Man.<sup>17</sup> Even though the emasculating ritual was publicly rebuked by Eusebius on the principle that eunuchs were incapable of becoming patriarchs, the ideology of hermaphroditic perfection was still widely accepted among many of the ECF, such as Justin Martyr, Tatian and Hippolytus. Writing on the religious practices of the ancient Jewish and later Gnostic Christian Naasseni sect; Hippolytus recorded what was defined as a heretical tradition, but not a dead tradition by any means. "...the originating cause of all things else, a man and a son of man. And this man is a hermaphrodite, and is denominated among them Adam; and hymns many and various are made to him. The hymns however—to be brief—are couched among them in some such form as this: "From thee (comes) father, and through thee (comes) mother"<sup>18</sup> Notice the subtle prepositional distinction Hippolytus uses to convey the specific space the father originates from and the mother originates through the source; thus bestowing upon the oxymoronic male hermaphrodite the power to transcend the natural birth process.

Genesis does not exactly specify that Adam and Eve *knew* each other, in the sexual sense of the word (*yāda* 'y) prior to Eve's transgression; nor does the literal interpretation of the Creation Story claim that together Adam and Eve possessed a natural desire or physical requirement to consummate their contractual relationship in a already perfect environment for reasons so simplistic as species reproduction or emotional and sensual pleasure through copulation. As far as Tertullian and Justin Martyr were concerned, Adam's emotional contract was with God, and Eve was considered both men's property for she did not receive the title of *wife* until after man's exile from Eden.<sup>19</sup> The act of procreation within man's original state before the fall of innocence, *was*, and still *is not*, theologically considered the same sexual practice as post-Fall contractual copulation or nuptial consummation as it is

<sup>15</sup> Anti-Nicaea Fathers volume 2, Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria - Theophilus of Antioch - Theophilus to Autolycus – book 2, chapter 28, Why Eve was Formed from Adam's Rib.

<sup>16</sup> Theophilus book 2, ch28

<sup>17</sup> Church history life of Constantine (Origen's daring deed)" *Nicaea and post-Nicene fathers*, II series, Vol 2, Eusebius Pamphilus, book VI, Chapter VIII, Eusebius publicly rebukes Origen's decision to break civil law and perform the self-castration ritual. "At this time while Origen was conducting catechetical instruction at Alexandria, a deed was done by him which evidenced an immature and youthful mind."

<sup>18</sup> Anti-Nicene Fathers volume 5, Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian, Appendix Hippolytus – The Refutation of all Heresies, book 5 Chapter 1, Recalculation Characteristics of Heresy, Origin of the Name Naasseni; The System of the Naasseni.

<sup>19</sup> Tertullian (IV) part Forth 3, ch5

currently defined. Justin Martyr writes: “Anthropos (androgynous male) and the first woman existed previously, this one (Eve) sinned by committing adultery.”<sup>20</sup> Attacking this issue from religious judicial wary position, Raymond Lawrence (1989) *The Poisoning of Eros* argues the theological poetry in relation to sexual purity is rather confusing and historically unclear depending on which tradition one is approaching the subject. However, in relation to Jewish Orthodox practices the act of sex is likened to marriage; Quoting Rabbi Jonah and using an illustration from the *Midrash*, Lawrence explains, under Jewish Orthodox law even intercourse with a prostitute is considered a de facto wife. If a harlot stands in the street and two men had intercourse with her, the first man is not liable for prostituting the woman or adultery. As for the second man he is to be punished and condemned to death for breaking the first man's contractual obligation to the woman. “There is no such thing as casual, obligation free sex encounter,” Lawrence (1989, p. 23) writes, “the view that women were property of males on the order of domesticated animals” ..... ‘ensured that a man could not have a sexual relationship with a woman and simply walk away.’ Before the fall of man only one contractual obligation existed: ‘do not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; after-the Fall, sacrificial covenants and sacred prostitution was recorded as fashionable in agrarian cultures.’<sup>21</sup> It is certainly not clear whether Adam and Eve had a sexual relationship while in the garden and from the early theological teachings it seems likely that many sexually pure presbyters believed it was not physically/metaphysically possible to engage in sexual relationship until after their exile from the garden.

### **Eve Defined as Woman:**

On the assumption that the way in which a ‘thing,’ ‘person,’ ‘act,’ or ‘event’ is described reflects the way in which it is conceptualized, we submit that the subtle difference which exist in the descriptions of God's creation of Adam and Eve betray the entrenched consciousness of patriarchal presumption which dominated the theological framework of thinking within which these influential teachings of the Creation Story emerged. From the outset the very nature of Adam's creation invests the state of his existence with a value status and socio-cultural priority that similarly does not attached to Eve. The difference in the perceived worth attached to men and women becomes blatantly obvious in the writings of the Early Church. Tertullian, for example, goes as far as to define the word: *Woman* (γυνή; *gynē*) for his constituency by claiming: “When this kind of second human being was made by God for man's assistance, that female was forthwith named woman; still happy, still worthy of paradise, still virgin. “She shall be called,” said (Adam), ‘woman’.” -----“On all animals Adam imposed names; and on none on the ground of future condition, but on the ground of the present purpose”.<sup>22</sup>

Writing in the voice of man, Tertullian expresses in this passage, his disdain for the ignominy of contemporary woman, in addition to lamenting the loss of Eve's *virginity*. He accomplishes this theological task by defining ‘Virgin Eve’ as God's original nonsexual design, or archetypical *form* (φαῖνω; *phainō*), for the female gender. Virgin Eve was considered a condition of innocent femininity which existed prior to Eve's quest for higher knowledge.<sup>23</sup>

Eve was essentially transformed from her original Virgin State as the result of rejecting God's gift from innocence. Tertullian's claim is that the imperfect title of *wife-hood* is a natural condition or ‘natural affliction’ bestowed on Eve due to be properties associated with her inferior *woman-hood*.<sup>24</sup> This condition, Tertullian argues, is the central reason that the ‘Woman Eve’ should be both judged by Adam and condemned as a servant to Adam. This is the punishment for her rebellious nature and her eternal crime of corrupting ‘Virgin Eve.’ In addition to educating Adam's daughters in the ‘unique substance’ of the female gender, Tertullian criticizes Eve for having instructed man's daughters in the arts of sexuality, desire, and seduction, all of which cause discord among men.<sup>25</sup>

While it is true that Tertullian segregates the ‘woman’ by referring to her as belonging to a separate race; it is equally important to acknowledge that deeming her to be made from Adam, and of the same substance as him, bestowed upon man a divine mandate which prohibits all women from exercising her

<sup>20</sup> Anti-Nicene Fathers volume 1 Apostolic Father's Justin Martyr, Book 1, Chapter 30, Doctrines of the Ophites and Sethians

<sup>21</sup> Genesis 2:17

<sup>22</sup> Anti-Nicene Fathers, volume 4, Tertullian (IV), Minucius Felix, Commodian, Origen –Tertullian-part Forth –book 3. On the veiling of virgins. Chapter 5- of the word woman especially in connection with its application to Eve.

<sup>23</sup> Tertullian (IV) part Forth 3, ch5

<sup>24</sup> Tertullian (IV) part Forth 3, ch5., Ibid.,

<sup>25</sup> Tertullian (IV) part Forth 3, ch5., Ibid.,

maternal powers for the purpose of lording over him. Tertullian writes: “For when two are made into one flesh through the marriage tie, the “flesh of flesh and bone of bone” is called the woman of him of whose substance she begins to be accounted by being made his wife.”<sup>26</sup>

In an attempt to deconstruct any preestablished gender equality, Tertullian affirms that God labeled Eve as so vile a word or shape (*μορφή*; *morphē*), or bestowed upon her so vile and appearance (*φαινόμενα*; *phainomena*) as *woman* before the fall of creation because God himself knew of Eve’s future condition or service owed to her husband.<sup>27</sup>

### **Angelic Husbands and a Reason to Reform:**

The very name of woman was considered by Tertullian as a prosthetic sign to validate the establishment of a revolutionary male form, a form rooted in religious power, spiritual control, and natural dominance which among other members of the ECF, such as Irenaeus, refer to as ‘*His Judicial Faculty*.’ Ergo, the Faculty’s power was justified by the existence of the original gift of power the Father had placed in Adam’s possession.<sup>28</sup> Tertullian writes: “of course it is not with reference to Eve herself that (Adam) has uttered (the prophecy), but with a view to those future females whom he had named in the maternal fount of the feminine race.”<sup>29</sup>

The patriarchal consciousness out of which this permutation of the Creation Story arises is a blatant example of the “patriarchal theism,” against which we are here investigating. The anti-feminist religious sanctions, restrictions, and abuses fostered by the theological descriptive differences in the respective origins imputed to Adam and Eve are systematically dehumanizing. Tertullian tries to justify man’s contempt for women by elaborating in theo-historical terms his anti-feminist position rooted in the Enochian creation story dated sometime during the second Temple period between the fourth/third centuries BC.<sup>30</sup> Tertullian explains that one pernicious consequence of Eve’s rebellion, now that humanity was no longer directly under God’s protection, was the ignorant vulnerability suffered by Eve and her daughters as it pertained to their susceptibility to the enchantments of heavenly angels. Tertullian reminds his readers that it was Eve, not Adam, whose weakness of will led to her corruption in being the first to take the fruit from the fallen Angel. According to Tertullian, it was those angels who were banished from heaven who descended on the “daughters of men; so that this ignominy also attaches to woman.”<sup>31</sup>

It is from this vantage of patriarchal theism that Tertullian argues that those same fallen angels instructed the daughters of men in what would seem to be the arts of witchery. He writes: “if it is true that they had laid bare the operations of metallurgy, and had divulged the natural properties of herbs, and had promulgated the powers of enchantments, and had traced out every curious art, even to the interpretation of the stars—they conferred properly and as it were peculiarly upon women that instrumental mean of womanly ostentation, the radiance of jewels wherewith necklaces are variegated, and the circlets of gold wherewith the arms are compressed, and the medicaments of orchil with which wools are coloured, and that black powder itself wherewith the eyelids and eyelashes are made prominent.”<sup>32</sup>

Tertullian makes no attempt to disguise his prejudice that the women of his day showed little concern for heavenly virtues such as chastity, modesty, moderation, or natural beauty. The forbidden knowledge the fallen angels had afforded the daughters of men, in Tertullian’s perspective, was amongst other things, the corrupting knowledge of *lust*. This being so, the wages of sin are thus paid in the currency of moral corruptibility and ethical irresponsibility. Moreover, it was the intention of the fallen angel, who for earthly profit, was responsible for transforming Tertullian’s innocent Virgin Eve into the Woman Eve who in turn rejected the natural simplicity and synchronicity of what man had to offer her. Tertullian writes: “Was it that women, without material causes of splendour, and without ingenious contrivances of grace, could not please men..... Women who possessed angels (as

<sup>26</sup> Tertullian (IV) part Forth 3 ch5., Ibid.,

<sup>27</sup> Tertullian (IV) part Forth –3 ch5., Ibid.,

<sup>28</sup> Anti-Nicene Fathers volume 1, Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Irenaeus Against Heresies; book 3 chapter 22-25.

<sup>29</sup> Tertullian (IV) part Forth – book 3 ch5,

<sup>30</sup> Tertullian (IV) part Forth – book 1 ch 3 “I am aware that the Scripture of Enoch, which has assigned this order (of action) to angels, is not received by some, because it is not admitted into the Jewish canon either” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book\\_of\\_Enoch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Enoch)

<sup>31</sup> Tertullian (IV), part Forth- 2 On the Apparel of Women in book 1, chapter 2, The origin of female ornamentation traced back to the Angels who had fallen.

<sup>32</sup> Tertullian (IV) part Forth-2 book 1 ch2,

husbands) could desire nothing more.”<sup>33</sup> Augustine supports Tertullian’s concern that women are virtually incapable of unconditional love:

“For if she love him because he is rich; what if he be outlawed and all on a sudden be reduced to need? She gives him up, mayhap; because what she loved was not her husband, but his property. But if she love her husband indeed, she loves him even more when poor.”<sup>34</sup>

For Tertullian the anti-feminist doctrine was simple, the female’s power must be suppressed as a measure of necessity. “For you too, (women as you are, ) have the self-same angelic nature promised as your reward, the self-same sex as men: the self-same advancement to the dignity of judging, does (the Lord) promise you. . . . Unless, then, we begin even here to prejudge, by pre-condemning their things, which we are hereafter to condemn in themselves, they will rather judge and condemn us.”<sup>35</sup> Tertullian feared that the daughters of men had received the same power of judgment the angelic beings did possess over their earthly fathers. The heavenly angels had been given, by God, the power to judge man before the angelic rebellion, however after Jesus’ resurrection that judgment was now questioned. From this perspective gender-elitism was considered necessary for patriarchal protection and racial survival. According to Tertullian’s interpretation of the book of Enoch, he had just cause to fear an angelic rebellion on earth. Eventually all human females would be deceived and abducted just the same as Eve. At the same time all the human males would be condemned to forced labor deep in the earth, thus subjected to the torments of mineral mining; for no other purpose than the lust for female ornamentation.<sup>36</sup> Tertullian defines this economic process of seductively dressing the prostitute as ‘womanly gracing.’<sup>37</sup> He proves to his parishioners that desire and lust *for* the woman, and *of* the woman, is just as unnatural as the same virtues of fallen angels; ‘those angels, who rushed from heaven on the daughters of men; so that ignominy also attaches to woman.’<sup>38</sup> ‘Gold, silver, gems and garments used to accentuate the hair, the skin, and of those parts of the body which attract the masculine eye are not virtues supported by humility and chastity,’ Tertullian argues.<sup>39</sup> Motivated by this fear of the Enochian prophecy, it stands to reason the Female *Corpus* and the resources of Mother Nature herself represented nothing more than a battleground from where the sons of Adam fought monastically against God’s rebellious creations, and for control over ‘His’ gifts and grace.

#### **Adam’s Enemies:**

Motivated by anxiety, fear of judgment and condemnation by angels, and the fear of lustful enslavement by females, the Church fathers expressed yet another fear. The establishment of what might be called Adams ‘Separatist Movement’ is manifested in the defensive response Adam makes to both God, and his Wife Eve, immediately after his father God, remonstrates him for eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Adam replies testily by saying: “The woman you put here with me she gave me some fruit.”<sup>40</sup> In essence Adam was taking the unprecedented step of reminding God, his father, that it was He, not Adam, who took a rib from him to create his perfect partner Eve despite Adams wishes, as we have mentioned before. Here Adam tends to isolate himself from both God and Eve, and thus for the purpose of this heuristic, Adam’s poetic sentiments convey, to our ears that is, not only a feeling of communal loathing for the female gender, but rather a similar feeling of resentment toward his father.

Adam does not pursue the affection, or favor of Eve, neither does the Genesis text or the writings of the Church fathers make any reference to Adam loving his wife. Augustine writes: “Love your wives then, but love them chastely. . . . For this necessity is the punishment of that Adam.”<sup>41</sup> In fact, the very next Genesis narrative explicitly speaks in great detail about Adam’s son (Cain) who violently lashes out against his brother (Able), due to the overwhelming anger and frustration against God’s lack of favor for him. Logically it would stand to reason, that man, should accept to favor the female figure over the

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<sup>33</sup> Tertullian (IV) part Forth-2 book 1 ch2,

<sup>34</sup> Nicene and Post-Nicene fathers first series volume 6, St. Augustine Sermon on the Mount, sermon LXXXVII

<sup>35</sup> Tertullian (IV) part Forth-2, book 1 ch2, Ibid.,

<sup>36</sup> Tertullian (IV) part Forth-2, book 1 ch4-5

<sup>37</sup> Tertullian (IV) part Forth-2, book 1 ch4-5

<sup>38</sup> Tertullian (IV) part Forth-2, book 1 ch2, Ibid.,

<sup>39</sup> Tertullian (IV) part Forth-2, book 1 ch4-5

<sup>40</sup> Genesis 3:12

<sup>41</sup> Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers first series, volume 6, St. Augustine Sermon on the Mount, Harmony of the Gospels, sermon 1, Of the agreement of the evangelists Matthew and Luke in the generations of the Lord.

masculine. Considering it is Eve who so easily gives life through birth and Mother Nature who possesses the ability to reserve organic life.

However Justin Martyr writes: "For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith.....wherefore also the Holy Thing begotten of her is the Son of God."<sup>42</sup> Justin Martyr indicates that Eve's paternity and death, she offers to man, no longer deserve his respect. Considering that 'man had now become like God,' Adam and his father framed their contractual partnership under a new set of rules.<sup>43</sup> Both God and his sons would now bend the laws of nature; Immaculate Conception, Redemption, Rebirth, and Resurrection are the technological tools man used to conquer creation. Despite man's contemptuous nature, generated by fear, God's secrets would now become man's solitary pursuit. Notice, Genesis 3:8 states that the first sound that was heard in the garden was produced by the masculine God. The noise must have been so great that the text states: "then the eyes of both of them were open.....the man and his wife heard the sound and hid from the Lord. "for I heard you in the garden and I was afraid." One might well inquire whether Adam's contempt for both his father and his wife in this context reflected more than just his discontent with Eve, but rather contains the seeds of an anti-feminist perspective and rebellious disposition in reaction to being scrutinized and threatened by both parties; the castigation of the demanding father on the one hand, and the, traitorous wives of the deceptive wife on the other? Thus, as a result of Adam's detachment he finds his sense of perception, and emotional sensitivity as distorted. Adam never feared the sound of the father before Eve's disobedience, why should he fear him after?

It appears at first glance, as if Adam should be considered innocent for his crime, in accordance with his own justificatory proclamation. The failure of morality is confined to the conversation between the Serpent and Eve; it is Eve, who when tempted by the serpent, breaks her covenant with God. For this reason it is easy to interpret Adam's defense and intent to obey the rules of the garden as a legitimate safeguard against his Father's wrath. According to Adam's remark, he unknowingly ate "some fruit from the tree."<sup>44</sup> As far as he can recall, so the story suggests, he was merely eating a piece of fruit, 'I didn't know it was 'The Fruit taken; from The Tree!' For God there was no excuse as to why his son disobeyed him: "because you listened to your wife" and you did not listen to me, his father explains, the reason you must all (man, woman, and angel) be punished.<sup>45</sup> Clearly the implication here is that Adam's moral impropriety resulted from 'listening' to his wife; and thus as a result Adam now experiences the overall anxiety of Nature's Noise.

It's curious how the shifting of personal responsibility has on one level mutated throughout the history of the patriarchal church. Blame shifting appears to have become a creative practice, or structured art form, scattered throughout the history of Christianity. A highly regarded skill within the male tradition; many professional politicians, speechwriters, and attorneys among other patriarchal professions aspire to perfect the skill of shifting sound through the art of rhetoric and evading sexual responsibility in the name of economic protection and cultural survival. We wonder if our current, *us against them*, patriarchal mindset is not today grounded within Adam's self-perpetuating solitude and separatist movement Mary Shelley so eloquently articulates in (1818) *The Modern Prometheus*, and (1826) *The Last Man*.

### **Male Monotheism:**

There is perhaps a deeper philosophical point in relation to the creation story of Adam and Eve which highlights an even more fundamental picture of patriarchal theism within the Judeo-Christian tradition we have yet in this piece to make explicit. The special or privileged status according to Adam in the Christian story can be constructed as a patriarchal manifestation of the gender status which defines the God of Judeo-Christian tradition, by conceptualizing God as quintessentially male. The foundation of Judeo-Christian religion is built not simply upon a theology of monotheism, but upon a misogynist theology which declares that there can be only one God and the one God there is must be male. Because 'male monotheism,' as we shall call it, is so fundamental to Judeo-Christian religious tradition, it is easy to take for granted, and in so doing, failed to reflect critically upon the role it has played in encouraging the litany of prejudices and postures of socio-cultural discrimination suffered by women around the globe.

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<sup>42</sup> Anti-Nicaea fathers volume 1, Apostolic fathers of Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Typho – Chapter 100

<sup>43</sup> Genesis 3:22

<sup>44</sup> Genesis 3:12

<sup>45</sup> Genesis 3:17

It is highly significant that male monotheism shifts the source of all life from the primordial mother and the immanent womb of nature to the transcendent father. Where procreation and reproduction were once associated with the uniqueness of women and the fertile fields of Mother Nature, the move to male monotheism usurps the unique privilege of the Goddess, and nature itself, in bringing forth life. In earlier but nonetheless revealing patriarchal presumption of power over nature is witnessed in *The Theogony of Hesiod* when Zeus, the male 'King' of all Olympian gods 'violates' the unique birthing rights of all women by giving birth to Tritogeneia (i.e. Athena, who was born on the banks of the river Triton) through his head.<sup>46</sup> In essence the male 'god' of Judeo-Christian tradition establishes a truly revolutionary primacy of patriarchy by taking over the responsibility for the whole of 'Nature' and natural creation, human and otherwise unto himself.

It is the male God who creates Nature itself, and thus covertly usurps the nurturing role of Goddess mother in the process of creation. When all is said, patriarchal theism guarantees that the creative force of Nature itself is subjugated to the will of the Man-God who even steals from Mother Nature her right to give birth to Adam and Eve. This being so, the sacredness of the act of female birthing is in essence subverted and subjugated by the profanity of the patriarchal technologization of Nature itself. The original mother, Eve, and the feminine principle of love, empathy, along with the nourishment of body and spirit are subsumed under the divine character of Jesus and the domain of his church patriarchy.

The birthing prerogative of the Goddess is symbolically reconstructed in the discourse of rebirth, largely circumscribed by the theological meaning attached to Jesus' evangelical life of spiritual saving on the one hand and the promise of resurrection on the other.

The primacy of patriarchal theism is further symbolically entrenched in the transition from the male monotheism of Judaism to the Trinitarian expression of male monotheism in Christianity. The father and the son are unequivocally and palpably male images, and despite the sprinkling of dove like representations of the Holy Spirit, there is a rich religious art which depicts the Holy Spirit in the form of a ghost-like Jesus figure which is meant to affirm the spiritual presence of Jesus with us after his death and resurrection.

This depiction of male trinitarianism is nowhere else more symbolically represented and placed into practice, [and it is here with which we will conclude our argument], then carved in the arch of the entry way of the *Église de la Saint Trinité, Caen* (Church of the Holy Trinity); where by three identical male figures astutely sit above the egress to the *Abbey aux Dames*. Originally established by William the Conqueror and Pope Alexander II as a convent for female cloisters; the monumental Abbey, as Joan Davies (2002) points out, proved itself as an institution notorious for collecting religious revenue from female benefice holdings. The irony is rich when one understands the meaning behind placing the Trinitarian man at the archway of God's harem. The practice of providing a nuptial dowry with the bride to ensure political agreements, is implicitly, echoed in the patriarchal architecture and in the practice of providing ecclesiastical endowments to the church fathers for ensuring a nuptial arrangement with the divine male figure (Davies 2002).

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<sup>46</sup> The Theogony of Hesiod, translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White [1914] (ll. 924-929) "But Zeus himself gave birth from his own head to bright-eyed Tritogeneia, the awful, the strife-stirring, the host-leader, the unwearying, the queen, who delights in tumults and wars and battles. But Hera without union with Zeus -- for she was very angry and quarrelled with her mate -- bore famous Hephaestus, who is skilled in crafts more than all the sons of Heaven". International Sacred Text Archives, 2008, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/theogony.htm>

## CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT

### Freedom, Nature and Sexuality by Ross Morrow

This paper will explore some of the arguments about the role and interaction of nature, society and freedom in relation to human sexuality. It will look specifically at some of the ways sexuality is understood and studied via essentialist and social constructionist perspectives and attempt to assess some of the merits and shortcomings of these views. The paper will draw on ideas from realist philosophy both as a basis for analysis and a resource for critique of these major perspectives.

#### Introduction

In exploring some of the interconnections between freedom, nature and sexuality in this paper, I will particularly focus on two main issues: firstly, the major theoretical perspectives of 'essentialism' and 'social constructionism', their application to human sexuality and some of the main criticisms of them. Secondly, I will make some comments on what could be done to address some of the problems with these views in terms of philosophy, knowledge and practice.

#### Essentialism

Essentialism is an old and diverse philosophical doctrine. It goes back at least as far as the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and particular versions of it have been utilised by a range of important thinkers, including Georg Hegel, Karl Marx and Charles Darwin (Meikle 1985). It is not a doctrine that is specific to sexuality. It is primarily concerned with ontology – the nature of being or reality – and the claim that at least some parts of reality have essential properties or essences which make those things what they are or which make them things of a particular kind. Because it is about ontology, essentialist claims can be found across a wide range of disciplines.

When applied to human sexuality, its central claim is that sexuality is a natural and inherent part of the individual. This can take many forms: for example, that humans have an inbuilt sexual instinct, sexual drive or sexual orientation. Over the last century, most sex researchers and theorists, including Havelock Ellis, Sigmund Freud, Alfred Kinsey, William Masters and Virginia Johnson have believed in the existence of an inherent sex drive or instinct. They often disagreed, however, over the specific causes of this phenomenon, and whether it was a positive force distorted by an antagonistic society (for example, Ellis, Kinsey, Masters and Johnson) or a negative force requiring vigilant social control (for example, Freud and the majority of his followers) (Gagnon and Parker 1995, 7; Irvine 1995, 3).

Until the late nineteenth century in Western societies, essentialist views about sexuality were mainly expressed in religious terms (Connell and Dowsett 1992). An example is the work of Saint Augustine (1963 [c. 412-427CE]) who believed that God had originally provided Adam and Eve with a capacity for sex in an uncorrupted form. However, after the Fall, they became aware of new impulses independent of their minds and wills, especially in the sexual realm, and their sexual organs began to act independently of their control.

From the late nineteenth century on, essentialist views of sexuality began to be reformulated in scientific terms. The change was marked by the publication of Darwin's book, *The Descent of Man*, in 1874 (Connell and Dowsett 1992, 52). This provided an account of 'sexual selection' which Darwin saw as a mechanism of evolution alongside 'natural selection'. Sexual selection posited sexual attraction as being natural and as helping to steer the course of organic evolution. In contemporary work on sexuality, essentialist claims are typically found in disciplines such as biology, psychology, medicine and sexology. They also feature in common-sense views of sexuality and can be found to some extent in both history and the social sciences.

'Social constructionist' accounts of essentialism can make it seem puzzling as to why anyone would hold essentialist views about sexuality because they are often presented as simplistic, false, and implausible. Constructionist critics sometimes say, for example, that essentialism has a deterministic view of people's sexual identities and behaviour when this is not necessarily the case (see, for example, Harding 1998, Ch. 2 and Irvine 1995, Ch. 1 for constructionist views and Halwani 1998 for an essentialist response). Critics also allege that essentialists believe sexuality is 'predictably stable and similar both across cultures and throughout different historical times' (Irvine 1995, 11). This is a position which is easily refuted but it is not necessarily a refutation of essentialism. Essentialists can hold a view of sexuality as an essential feature of human beings without having to deny diversity and

variability in its expression or meaning (Halwani 1998). Sayer (1997, 462) has pointed to a tendency for social constructionist writers to 'load the dice' against essentialism in their very descriptions of it. The effect of this is that it makes essentialism a non-starter in any serious discussion of the phenomenon under investigation which leaves the field open to social constructionist accounts. Essentialist views about sexuality have not just been plucked from the air, however. Nor are they without rhyme or reason. There are various reasons why people hold these views about sexuality and I will briefly mention four of them here. Firstly, they provide a possible explanation of the origin and/or function of sexuality, whether this is in religious terms to do with God's placement of sexuality within human beings and other animals; or in Darwinian terms about the process of evolution and the biological need for species to reproduce and survive into the future. If an inherent sexual drive does not exist within animals, then Darwinian assumptions would seem to be violated, and species reproduction would need to be explained in some other convincing way (Assiter 1996, 134). Secondly, the sex drive appears to have similarities with other biological human needs, such as for food and sleep. It is similar in that it can appear and recur in people independently of their intentions and actions (as noted by Saint Augustine). Some people report experiencing this drive as something that is very powerful or compelling even though there are various possibilities for ignoring, managing or gratifying it (Mohr 1992, 229). (Indeed some people even submit themselves for treatment for what is alleged to be 'sex addiction' though see Levine and Troiden (1988) for a critical interpretation of this). Thirdly, humans have biological similarities to other species where mating behaviour is more evidently under biological imperatives. It is sometimes assumed, as a result of a common evolutionary history that humans have with other animals, that there might be some common biological basis for sexual motivation (even though humans are also different to other species because learning and experience play a much greater role in relation to decisions and actions involving sex) (Pfaus 1999; Pfaus, Kippin and Coria-Avila 2003). Finally, research findings on the sexual orientation of identical twins, fraternal twins and biologically unrelated siblings are consistent with a possible genetic explanation of sexual orientation. Michael Bailey and colleagues (1991; 1993; 2000), for example, have found in a number of studies that the concordance rates of both identical twins being homosexual (or bisexual) is higher than for fraternal twins and higher again than for adopted unrelated siblings. These studies do not prove that sexual orientation is genetic only that the evidence from them is consistent with a possible genetic effect. (Scientists so far have not discovered any gene or set of genes that determine sexual orientation nor any mechanisms by which they might operate (Murphy 1997, 35)).

### **Some problems with essentialist accounts of sexuality**

There are a number of important problems with essentialist accounts of sexuality. Firstly, there is no firm evidence so far that human desire for sex is directly caused by a biological need. Researchers have tried to find some kind of homeostatic disequilibrium in the human body, such as in specific hormone levels or (in men) pressure on the seminal vesicles to account for sexual need but no such disequilibrium has yet been conclusively identified (Beach 1956; Person 1987).

Secondly, there is no evidence that an instinct governs human sexual behaviour. If the term 'instinct' refers to a genetically determined pattern of complex behaviour which occurs in an animal at a particular point in its development or in response to a particular environmental stimulus, then instincts only seem to exist in non-mammalian species. Sociological, anthropological and historical research has been particularly important in debunking instinct theories of human behaviour because it provided a wealth of counter-evidence to what people in Western societies believed was instinctive (Laumann and Gagnon 1995, 185).

Thirdly, research on the sexual orientation of twins and unrelated siblings, such as that by Bailey and colleagues (1991; 1993; 2000), shows that sexual orientation is partly not the result of genetic factors. Even identical twins do not always share identical sexual orientations, and in one study of female identical twins, they did so less than half of the time (Bailey et al 1993). This indicates that other factors are probably at play in determining sexual orientation.

Fourthly, strong versions of essentialism can become deterministic and leave little role for human agency or freedom. An example here is Masters and Johnson's (1966) description of physiological changes in men's and women's genitals during sexual arousal. They describe them as expressions of an inner psychological imperative and as being naturally and exclusively geared to heterosexual intercourse. They write, 'Just as penile erection is a direct physiologic expression of a psychologic demand to mount, so expansion and lubrication of the vaginal barrel provides direct physiologic indication of an obvious psychologic mounting invitation (Masters and Johnson 1966, 68). Masters and Johnson's description makes it seem as if the inner psychological drive or the genitals themselves are making the sexual decisions rather than the individuals themselves. It also gives 'the impression that

the only biologically correct way to deal with sexual excitement is to have heterosexual intercourse' (Boyle 1993, 78).

### **Social Constructionism**

Social constructionism is the other major perspective on sexuality and it is usually posited as the main alternative to essentialism. It first emerged in the mid-1970s but has earlier roots. Some of its key philosophical ideas go back to the work of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant in the eighteenth century (Devitt 1991, 235). It has also developed from a range of other sources, including symbolic interactionism, the sociology of knowledge, ethnomethodology, phenomenology, symbolic anthropology and various social psychological theories (Gergen 1985; Gagnon and Parker 1995). It is usually found in the social sciences and humanities in disciplines like sociology, anthropology and history, as well as gender studies, and gay and lesbian studies (Vance 1989; Brickell 2006).

Its key philosophical ideas include that of an unknowable 'noumenal' world which is independent of us; a known world of socially constructed concepts; and the relativity of truth and reality. The first two ideas come from Kant: the idea that the only independent reality is beyond the reach of our knowledge and language, and that the known phenomenal world is partly our own creation through the imposition of concepts. The third idea that truth and reality are relative to the conceptual schemes of different social groups was foreign to Kant (Devitt 1991, 235).

Social constructionism stresses the role of culture, learning, and socialisation in the construction and shaping of people's sexuality. For example, if a person has 'sexual' feelings but has not learned what, if anything, to do about them, then there is nothing in human biology which will automatically lead him or her to have sexual intercourse. In the 1930s, Dickinson and Beam (1970 [1931], 185-6) reported a study in which eighteen of their 1000 patients remained virgins for an average of four years after marriage because in almost all cases neither the husband nor wife knew how to have sexual intercourse. Similarly, R. M. Zingg (1940) reviewed thirty-one cases of humans brought up in social isolation or with animals in the wild rather than with other human beings. Despite his own beliefs that sexuality was an animal trait closely linked to biology, he was surprised to find an absence of overt sexual expression in these individuals which he attributed to environmental factors in their development. However, there is disagreement among social constructionists about what role natural factors (for example, biology and psychology) might play in a person's sexuality. More moderate social constructionists might accept that people have an inherent sexual drive or orientation but that their expression and meaning are socially constructed in different ways in different times and places. More radical social constructionists, however, would question any notion of an inherent sexual drive or orientation and would see these too as being socially constructed (Foucault 1981; Vance 1989; Vance 1991; Irvine 1995).

Social constructionists also reject universal definitions of sexuality. They generally argue that what sexuality means can vary greatly over time or from place to place. Their basic view is that 'nothing is sexual but naming makes it so' (Plummer 1975, 30). A corollary of this is that social constructionists would also tend to deny transcultural or transhistorical definitions of other sexual categories, such as homosexuality or heterosexuality.

### **Some problems with social constructionism**

As with essentialist views, there are a number of important problems with social constructionist accounts of human sexuality. Firstly, there is a problem with the noumenal world as a basis for social scientific explanation. The noumenal world (of things-in-themselves) is present in social construction theory because it seems to provide an external constraint on theorising. It is to stop people theorising whatever they like regardless of how the world actually is. However, while it is plausible to believe there is such a constraint on theorising, the idea of a noumenal world does not seem to provide it. This is because, if the noumenal world is beyond our knowledge and language, then we cannot know how it exercises its constraint on us and it cannot figure in our explanations. Furthermore, the very notion of a noumenal world exercising constraint on human theorising is incoherent in terms of Kant's own views. This is because, for him, causality was not part of the noumenal world but a concept imposed on the (phenomenal) world by human beings (Devitt 1991, 237-8).

Secondly, social constructionists are faced with the problem of how people construct the known world of other people, animals, plants and landforms etc with their minds. How is it that concepts inside our heads can literally construct different types of entities (dinosaurs, stars, mountains etc) outside us that would not exist unless there were people to think about them? Social constructionists owe us a convincing account of how that is possible (Devitt 1991, 238).

Thirdly, there is the problem of social constructionists taking a relativist view of truth. This is the view that there is no objective truth and that truth is relative to social groups, social positions or conceptual

schemes. If relativists claim that their relativist view of truth is objective, then their position is self-contradictory. If they claim their relativist view of truth is only true relative to themselves, (but not for others) then they can make no claim to objectively true grounds that might convince others of their position (Schick, Jr. and Vaughn 1995, Ch. 4).

Fourthly, if sexuality is seen as purely discursive, as relative to discourse and either as not existing or as unknowable outside of discourse, then it is unclear what gives different discourses about sexuality any common object to which they might refer. In this view, the object of sexuality seems to disappear and to fragment into multiple and even contradictory constructions of sexuality in different discourses. The more sexuality is treated as a social construct that is just a matter of nominal definition, the more the object of study itself threatens to slip away (Vance 1989; Morrow 1995).

Finally, strong versions of social constructionism can become deterministic and leave no role for non-social factors, or for human agency and freedom. Social constructionism was developed in part to counter biological determinist views of sexuality. However, as Sayer (1997) points out, strong versions of social constructionism often simply replace biological determinism with social determinism. Instead of biology being all powerful and the social irrelevant, the social becomes all powerful and the biological irrelevant. It is interesting that this is not talked about very much in the literature on social constructionism and it does not appear to be a prominent part of its own self-knowledge.

Strong forms of social constructionism can also have disastrous ethical and political consequences because they can make it hard to argue against practices of torture or mutilation of the body, such as clitoridectomy or lobotomy (Sayer 1997). The more that social constructionism stresses the way that anatomy and physiology are culturally constructed, the less room there seems to be for a conception of the body as having its own structures, processes and causal powers. Yet, these may be damaged or destroyed by practices, such as clitoridectomy or lobotomy, causing pain, suffering and incapacitation to those subjected to them. It is both important and reasonable 'to argue that some acts are wrong because they involve damage to biological or psychological [mechanisms and] powers which are important for human flourishing and happiness ...' (Sayer 1997, 477).

### **What to do about this?**

Realist philosophy can aid the scientific study and understanding of human sexuality and its relationship to nature, society and human agency. It can do this by helping to clear the ground of misconceptions and faulty views about both scientific practice and its object of study (see, for example, Trigg 1989; Devitt 1991; and Collier 1994). Three ideas seem particularly important here. The first is the idea that reality exists independently of human conceptions of it. This means that human conceptions of reality may be mistaken. In essentialist accounts of sexuality, for example, it is now clear that Masters and Johnson's (1966) research on human sexual response misunderstood key aspects of male and female physiology (Morrow 2008, Ch. 5). Similarly, Michel Foucault's social constructionist account of sexuality misunderstood key aspects of the history of sexuality (Morrow 1995). Unless reality is independent of how people conceive of it, it is difficult to explain how people might be wrong about it and so learn from their mistakes.

Secondly, reality in principle is accessible to human knowledge of it. If it were not, there would be no point in trying to scientifically study it and it would be hard to explain how humans had survived long enough to even develop science in a world they could not know. The assumption of the accessibility of the world to human knowledge is necessary to avoid the problems generated by a useless and incoherent Kantian notion of a noumenal world, and the problem of relativism about truth. If reality is accessible to human knowledge of it, then we can have a conception of objective truth. This conception is necessary both as an aim of science and a basis for critique.

Thirdly, a realist conception of causality is essential for understanding human agency and freedom. In this view, a 'cause is whatever is responsible for producing change' (Sayer 1997, 471). Proponents of a strong social constructionist position have tended to reject the concept of causality (and people changing their situations) in favour of people discursively repositioning or redescribing themselves.

These social constructionists rejected causality because they confused it with determinism which seemed to leave no space for free will. The irony of their position is that for discourse to have effects, it must be able to cause change which is what they seem to deny (Sayer 1997).

Finally, scientific knowledge of human sexuality will not necessarily free people from unwanted forms of determination, unless these consist only of falsehood or ignorance. If they do, then the truth might set people free. For example, if you were a woman living on the Irish island of Inis Beag in the 1950s and 60s where female orgasm was virtually unknown, learning of its existence could well prove liberating (Messenger 1971, 16). However, in most cases, people's lack of freedom is not due just to falsehood or ignorance. It is due to socially structured inequalities of power, resources, and recognition. People who face disapproval, stigma, discrimination, and even physical violence on the basis of their

sexuality may all know what would make them free but still lack the power to get it. Political struggle and structural change are necessary to liberate people from such constraints because they challenge the fundamental ways that power is held and exercised in society to oppress, marginalise and subordinate people.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY NINE

### Spiritual Consciousness in the Context of Educative Pedagogy

by

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Our aim in this paper is to argue that western education and the dominant pedagogies constructed to express it are in a state of crisis. A considerable literature has accumulated to address various aspects of this crisis, with an aim to improving the curriculum to make it more educationally efficacious as a way of ameliorating the impoverished standards of literacy and numeracy in the Western world, and especially in Australia. Although such initiatives should certainly be applauded, the practical curriculum reforms being professed represent, we shall argue, only a facet of a deeper problem. When all is said, there is an important distinction between educating the 'head' or intellect, as it is more commonly put, on the one hand, and educating the 'soul' or nurturing the 'compassionate heart', as we shall put it on the other. Traditional pedagogies of learning are predominantly concerned with the transmission of knowledge, while what we calling the 'education of the soul' is concerned to cultivate 'connective understanding' and enhanced spiritual consciousness. Thus to know is not the same thing as to understand, and we shall argue that a precondition of the love of learning is having a connective understanding of what we know.

For many researchers the concept of 'spiritual consciousness' is enveloped in mystery in the sense that because its connotation is multifaceted, the task of trying to define it monolithically and in fully explicit terms is almost assuredly to be frustrated. Discoveries concerning the mechanisms of the human mind, access to verbal and interrelated consequential developments and abilities have, according to Torey<sup>1</sup>, in relatively recent decades initiated new insights into the workings of the mind, specifically advanced through the development of a new psychology of cognitive science. Other researchers have argued that a more recondite body of mystical and unconventional literature has long been developing within some eastern religions and peripheral scholarly materials, some of which has more recently been recast and reconstructed as a component dimension of the burgeoning cognitive science of mind. Speaking about this new science, Smith writes:

ideas about intelligence at large do not represent some abstruse philosophical hypothesis, but something readily deduced from everyday experience<sup>2</sup>.

Certain psychologists, notably Jaynes<sup>3</sup> pose some intriguing views on the subjects of thinking and consciousness. Jaynes argues that until the time of the *Iliad*, humans experienced and confronted a very different world of nature, which in its own way informed, conditioned and shaped the template development of human consciousness. According to Jaynes, it was from this context of highly threatening natural events and human situations that a peculiar mode of thinking and consciousness evolved. On this view certain patterns such as the 'flight or fight' response became deeply imbedded in the human psyche and continues to influence direct overt behavioural and covert physiological responses that in some cases are currently triggered by very different human situations. It has been shown that adverse health effects can result from this. On some accounts both 'Reptilian' and 'Higher' consciousness patterns co-exist but may do so in dissonance<sup>4</sup>. So whilst it would seem that the nature of consciousness and the mind have produced many and varied explanations, as the writings and postulations from ancient philosophers attest, the emergence of the scientific study of consciousness as such, has only established itself as a recognized discipline in combination with Psychology since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>5</sup>.

In its most basic explanation brain function continually processes sensations and exogenous stimuli, which in turn transform and catalyze intellectual stimulation into actual physical activity<sup>6</sup>. Despite all that is presently known about consciousness, no absolutely precise elucidation of 'consciousness' *per se* has according to Wallace, ever been totally, specifically or absolutely quantified or qualified by a definition<sup>7</sup>. At this functional level of human consciousness examples abound which show that however it is accomplished, human subjects have translated and can translate creative thought processes into imagined and later into factual realities. One only has to visualize the pyramids of Egypt, the last of the remaining seven wonders of the ancient world, to have some inkling of this astonishing cognitive skill or gift, as it may be. Many other later architectural edifices of antiquity and the more recent past which were erected to represent mythological significance endure as evidence of intellectual inventions, thus testifying to the human mind's creative ability. Some anthropologists report in awe how the ancient Egyptians designed and correlated their constructions to be in corresponding alignment

with the stars, and how these designs were intended to portray in real life imagery, their tribal and spiritual concepts of belief in a supreme being or beings and in an eternal destiny. Similarly, remarkably creative translations of mind into matter are witnessed in some of the great philosophical and historical personages from both eastern and western traditions. Some of these translate and communicate their messages through the construction of visible edifices<sup>8</sup> whilst others were motivated to reveal illuminative thoughts and teachings to posterity through their inspired words and writing. Contemporarily, the disciplines of medical, brain and animal science have moved rapidly forward to unravel further mysteries of brain and neuronal tissue function such that particular sections of the brain and the faculties associated with them are being progressively analyzed and explained<sup>9</sup>. Identifying the neural processes involved has helped by clarifying how humankind's thinking and decision-making processes originate from the brain's deep neuronal responses to both inner and external stimuli. From the time of emergent rationality, there exists beyond doubt that element of consciousness in humanity, that faculty of thinking and creating, which is akin to a progressive manual of philosophic and educative instruction that has been passed down through the ages<sup>10</sup>. This legacy of cognitive heritage has formed a compilation of teachings which has inspired and motivated disciples and religious followers alike. The legacy these teachings have bequeathed has afforded a new focus upon the way in which human consciousness can materialize images that are chemically enshrined in the brain.

### **Consciousness References from Antiquity**

Over a broad spectrum of time, and from many diverse sources, there are several prominent systems and methods that are worthy of consideration which have contributed to and advanced the intellectual growth and spiritual consciousness of humanity. A brief digression and explanation is apposite for recalling how, from antiquity, there is evidence of the evolving phenomenon of spiritual consciousness expressed by prophetic insight. As Smith writes:

‘Who are...the greatest benefactors of the living generation of mankind?’ Toynbee asked. I should say ‘Confucius and Lao Tze, the Buddha, the Prophets of Israel and Judah, Zoroaster, Jesus, Mohammed and Socrates’... to which he adds...

‘...The religious analogue to the biochemist's atoms are the facts that history, sociology, anthropology, and textual studies marshal about religion. These could be as complete as the biochemist's knowledge of the atomic structure of protein molecules: by themselves they are as lifeless. I have tried...to apply the ‘rules’ that ‘fold’ religious facts ‘into their natural form’. I have tried to make them live religiously<sup>11</sup>.

In India from before 4 000BCE came the Mahabharata, the Vedas, and the Upanishads from which derived the teachings relating to Brahma, Brahman and the Atman, and from which in practical reality, a socio-religious pattern of consciousness formation was constructed that helped to educate people and preserve order in Indian society over many centuries. In 563 BCE, the Buddha, Prince Siddhartha Gautama in his turn, gave humanity the message of the fourfold path and the eightfold way, the moderate middle way of thinking and a guide to living that gave no latitude to excesses<sup>12</sup>, and which, with perseverance, may be a critical factor leading to a specific form of intellectual and spiritual enlightenment. From China in 600 BCE, the teaching of Lao Tzu of the Tao Te Ching<sup>13</sup> and the Analects of Confucius<sup>14</sup>, introduced outward civic order through intentional methods of contemplation which followed centuries of warfare and progressive invasion, and which, only in the 1950s, was reversed by the Cultural Revolution of Mao Tse Tung. It is now reported that these philosophies are undergoing a resurgence of sorts, less through open communal practice than principally through personal adherence, so as not to arouse the suspicion of authorities. Paradoxically, or at least ironically, the authorities themselves have concurrently introduced a communistic version of Confucianism as a model for the regulation and management of civic behavior and responsibility. For thousands of years the ancients Greeks<sup>15</sup>, then the Romans<sup>16</sup> theorized about the origin of life, and created tragic, comic and religious theatricals that sought answers to the puzzles of rationality, human behavior and existence, most of which reflected the continuing emergence of a spiritual consciousness which ‘connected’ people to every aspect of the living world around them. The evolution of spiritual consciousness is witnessed in the holy books of many religions. Judaism expressed its level of spiritual consciousness through the Bible, with its own version of the genesis of mankind. The Bible and the Torah provide the spiritual aetiology for the practice of ritual observances and worship practices. The Biblical mythology surrounding God's relationship to Abraham, the reputed father of the Jewish nation, has provided a powerful narrative in reference to which Jewish identity was itself spiritually defined. The Bible subsequently became a legacy of Christianity's manifold religious denominations, with their divergent interpretations of spiritual belief and practice drawn from the New Testament and the message

of Jesus. Their reliance upon Jesus as the harbinger of spiritual edification has dramatically shaped the processes of intellectual reasoning and consequent moral conduct which guide Christian adherents in their religious responses to personal events and subsequent interactions and influences which spiritually connect them with the wider world.

Islam sprang from the teachings of Mohammed around 600 CE, who was inspired to reform and unite the Arab nations of the world, but which subsequently appears to have been fragmented divisively into Sunni, Shi'ia and Sufi factions, and according to some scholars, in this divided state lost its true direction<sup>17</sup>. For a time the so-called 'golden age' of Islam was a source of great intellectual progress, but much of its scholarly advances in philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and architecture were progressively lost to the West, and in great part to itself. Sectors within Islam have gravitated towards religious fundamentalism that in certain quarters, some would argue<sup>18</sup>, manifests itself in a constrained spiritual consciousness of hegemonic disposition of intolerance toward other faiths. This disposition manifests contemporarily amongst some Islamic extremists as an obsession with terrorist vengeance, factionalism and territorialism.

These and of course many other religious traditions not mentioned above, whose origins can be traced to Northern Europe, Africa, the Americas, the West Indies and the Pacific, give testimony to and recognition of a spiritual consciousness of connectivity which enshrines a deep-seated belief in and recourse to non-material instrumentalities that exert a life-long physical-psycho-spiritual influence upon huge sectors of the human population as regards religious beliefs, ritual and practice. Derrett has done much to detail the history of these developments<sup>19</sup>. In a specific and confused reaction to these motley accounts of the spiritual consciousness of certain belief systems and ceremonies throughout history, an accompanying history of wars, persecutions and vilifications have also run parallel, often in reaction, to materialist elements of vested interest in that same history.

In relatively recent centuries, from the period of what may loosely be termed the 'beginning of modern philosophy' the provocative theories of Descartes, Eckhart, Spinoza, Husserl, James, Otto, Jung and others of a spiritual leaning, have brought into educational circles a religious perspective of a much more critically reflective kind. Given the dominant status of religion in the institutions of Descartes' times, the birth of critical reflection, itself an expression of spiritual consciousness, served to disturb complacency and created diversities of opinion between postulations relating to philosophy, religion and morality. Classical science and the religious determinations of Newton and his contemporaries, paved the way for the separation of Church and State and the eventual schism between sectarian and secular education. Newer developments in science from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century are characterized by groundbreaking research into relativity theory, cosmology, quantum philosophy and particle physics. Consequently, traditional religious postulations are currently being challenged by an emergent perception of a new spiritual consciousness of mankind's connection to the world in which she/he finds herself, where the ancient concepts of God as the mother and nurturer are being reinstated<sup>20</sup>. Such reflections of spiritual consciousness have in turn fostered a resurgence in the beliefs and practices associated with a diverse range of age-old female and feminist oriented movements worldwide<sup>21</sup>, along with a renewed interest into diverse mythologies<sup>22</sup>. Legacies from tribal folklore such as those researched by Cotterell, profess their imprint on DNA inheritances, which genealogically recall a genotype holographic history which then sequentially transport themselves as images and impulses into the human mind.

Acknowledging the totality of this remarkable treasury of intelligent, reasoned and aware summation of human mind-body energy and its contribution to the evolution of both a spiritual and secular consciousness of the scope and limits of knowledge, confluent with connective understanding and wisdom, represents a form of emancipation of the human spirit. By recognizing that no single philosophy can explain all of the mysteries spiritual and otherwise that are to be known, connective understanding forges the pathway to a form of religious pluralism, where every major religion symbolizes a piece of the holistic puzzle. Added to this emancipatory relinquishment of religiously driven territorial imperative are spiritual insights such as those initiated by Steiner<sup>23</sup> and Blavatsky<sup>24</sup>. Their specific philosophic and theosophic systems of living, in association with developmental strategies for cultivating enhanced moral sensibilities and spiritual attitudes, have impacted widely on the educational world.

### **Functional Diversity and Basic Cognitive Consciousness**

Beakley and Ludlow describe the concept of basic Cognitive Consciousness at an individual level as the having of an 'intellectual history'<sup>25</sup>. While this account represents a plausible heuristic for a particular purpose, others argue that the complexity of the concept is such that, as Crick and Koch write, 'no satisfactory or clearly defined explanation has been universally accepted'<sup>26</sup>. Around 1890 William James described the study of consciousness as dependent upon brain coordinates that involves the

senses and the imagination, and the effects that these mental phenomena exert on the brain. He nevertheless refrained from an outright definition of the essence of consciousness itself, except to say that 'during waking hour every centre communicates with others by association paths'<sup>27</sup>. According to Chalmers<sup>28</sup>, consciousness, in a strictly anatomical context may said to describe, via the operations of the bicameral brain and its identifiable, visible structures, the repository for an individual's synaptic thought processes which are activated by catalytic responses through neurons contained within memory cells in the cranium. When all is said, Chalmers rather vaguely defines consciousness as 'subjective experience [which] emerges from neural processes in the brain'<sup>29</sup>. Those who have, however read his engaging book would realize that this concise description is intended as an inchoate and very basic designation of the subject, and functions as a helpful introduction to an enormously complex subject. Beyond the basic idea of consciousness as a form of experiential awareness resulting from neural brain processes, the focus of this paper is on spiritual consciousness, or what we have also called 'connective or empathetic understanding'. Our focus is on the evolving dynamic of connective awareness by individuals or groups in their existential search for answers to purposeful existence and humanistic/moralistic behaviors, and how the discourse generated can be interpreted and associated with moral beliefs and practices which connect people to each other and the world around them in deeply ethical, caring and loving ways.

Chalmers' interest is different and his book deals carefully with the physical componentry of the brain, their physiological processes and anatomical locations, and finally with the sensations that arise in the context of self-awareness when any of these particular areas are stimulated. Chalmers' research indicates that when individual areas of the brain are stimulated to imprint on particular memory cells, for example, the amygdala or hippocampus, a typical and predictable response is initiated<sup>30</sup>. This account of determinate imprinting and programmed response patterns, involved perhaps in fostering a particular attitude may well seem to challenge the idea of 'free will'. Chalmer's considerations pose the question that the human will may not be truly autonomous, given that compulsive responses may be inherited and wired into the genetic code in highly regimented ways. On the other hand, Torey argues that free will is the product of a mind induced self-generating process of self-management that charts a course of sequences, which permit the self-selection of the those that are acceptable whilst rejecting other alternatives that are not<sup>31</sup>. Thus said, the consciousness factor within the brain encompasses all the memories associated with a person's experiences, and the resultant choices that are made are encapsulated within and consequently affect the decisional patterns throughout an individuals' entire lifespan. On this primarily physiological chemical account of brain activity, consciousness is a form of awareness resulting from the continuing chemical fusion of mind-body processes imprinted by all stimuli channeled into the brain from physical and sensory experience, and the activities by which the brain analyzes, responds to and renders meaningful all the information that it processes.

### **Mind-Body Connectiveness and Influences**

Additional factors significantly affecting the physiological account of brain activity include the hormonal systems which are manufactured primarily on bodily organs from the complex networking of brain stimuli, particularly from the pituitary gland, which is often described as the 'conductor of the endocrine orchestra'<sup>32</sup>. Neural responses which react to bodily indicators of pleasure, pain and fear, according to Sagan, are transmitted to the brain via the neural physical connectors of the limbic, sympathetic and para-sympathetic nervous systems which the mind translates into non-tangible emotive sensations, and neural responses that react to these bodily indicators. Additional factors affecting the mind-body entity are genetic inheritance, which are believed to influence to some extent the consciousness and self-consciousness dimensions of each individual, including physical make-up, response patterns to diverse personal diverse personal experiences. The cumulative effect of calculated and dispositional decisional making, particularly in relation to religious belief and moral behavior<sup>33</sup> is of critical importance in scenario. Contributing to the foregoing imprinting processes are the talents, natural gifts, and the degree of sociability and personality of an individual that is never entirely comparable with that of another, even of an identical twin, as recent studies in Hox genes indicates<sup>34</sup>. What the theory of Hox genes indicates is that subjectively, although each individual shares many vital genetic characteristics with every other, (phenomenally, physically and mentally), the individualized physio-chemical composition of each person's brain that sustain consciousness is uniquely singular, as are the response patterns to overt human situations and covert environmental stimuli<sup>35</sup>. The deeper the level of analysis we give of consciousness, the more complex are the mind-body parameters which support it, the more their teleological facets appear to be entangled<sup>36</sup>. It soon becomes virtually impossible to separate these dimensions of cellular processes, one from the other in their interactive processes, and the consequent variables in the cognitive and conscious decision-making processes of the individual concerned become stochastic and unpredictable. This element of

unpredictability is particularly relevant when engaging the minds and memories of children who have been exposed to radically different systems of religious and ethical belief.

### **Theological Influences and Conditionings**

In association with religious and moral perspectives are the evolutionary, philosophical, historical, psychological, sociological, educational and environment factors within the mythical and religious world traditions, which according to Hoose<sup>37</sup>, are embodied in and inform the conscious grasp of theological beliefs of people over the globe. Heil<sup>38</sup> augments these considerations by writing of how alternative interpretations result from differing ethnic and religious influences, thus impacting the type of mindset which hosts the varieties and levels of spiritual consciousness that define people differently. Citing one such example is the contrast that exists between Western and Tibetan mentalities. That of the West is strongly inclined towards rationalism and adherence to physical laws, whilst Tibetan thought embraces a strong dependence on intuition and an emphasis upon the importance of the mystical<sup>39</sup>. As in the case of ideological difference or divided interests in any discipline, spiritual consciousness provides a transcendent level of loving acceptance which seeks not to dilute the differences in religious doctrine, or to marginalize the socio-cultural heritage of a particular sectarian institution. The objective is rather to reconceptualize commitments of vested interest in doctrines and institutions so that we emancipate ourselves from their tyranny by comprehending the transcendent elements of the universal spiritual unity which gives them a deeper sense of connective purpose. Generally speaking, the spiritual reconceptualization of specific religious doctrine has not yet been incorporated at the grassroots level into the structure of religious education<sup>40</sup>. For many, the image of the Divine Being tied to the idea of an old man in the clouds with supernatural powers, represents an example of how cognizance of the world, as defined by a socio-cultural image such as a programmed stereotype, according to its accepted operations and functions of the past, can persevere<sup>41</sup>.

What we are proposing in this piece is an invitation to adopt a new paradigm of empathetic connectivity and moral vision whose sense of spiritual unity provides the foundation for building relationships of universal complementarity. According to Birch, what may ultimately compel religions into genuine spiritual companionship may be threats to a humanity in danger<sup>42</sup> which will in turn compel them to examine how much they actually share in common reaching solutions to world problems by learning to work together for the good of humanity. Further, as Jamison<sup>43</sup> reminds us, the basic tenets of all the classical religions affirm the common values and uniformity of practical modes of living that shape a life lived with purpose and peace.

When we observe the pace of current technological advancements, the dissemination of scientific data and the rapidity of the assimilation of these developments, it leads one to suspect that an accelerated consciousness of immense intellectual capacity will overtake the world in the short term. To be truly globally effective, this heuristic would need to be translated into the acquisition of a guiding principle of ethics which is morally unadulterated. Laura describes these phenomena in his book *Empathetic Education* in which he elucidates the mechanisms by way of which all knowledge is interactive and interrelated. General knowledge becomes purposive or 'teleological' by virtue of our connective understanding of it<sup>44</sup>. Without bringing empathetic connectivity and spiritual significance to intellectual knowledge, the things we know remain empty and we decidedly detached from what we know. It is by embracing what we know through our connective understanding of it that we can resolve the social realities of extremism, totalitarianism and autocracy throughout the world. This model of universal connectivity can serve as a catalyst to spiritual cooperation among religions of the world by bringing to bold relief the truth there us but one world and we are all children of God. The world in which we live is one seamless, indivisible unity within which, whether we acknowledge it or not, we are ourselves connected.

*In loving memory of Charmaine Clarke*

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## CONCLUSION: CHAPTER THIRTY

### **The Digital Revolution: Theophilosophical Reflections on the God of Computechology**

by

Ronald Laura and Amy Chapman

If there is a defining characteristic of the contemporary socio-cultural epoch, it is very likely to reside in the obsession of the western world with the power of the 'digital revolution' possesses to transform and control the world. Of the diverse examples one could conjure to illustrate the way in which the digital revolution mediates its transforming power, computechology represents a bedazzling advance. In one way or another the computer is present in virtually every aspect of our lives, and we are increasingly connected to its multifarious technological modalities. This being so, we have come to regard technology in general and computechology in particular as the panacea for all our ills, including those that are not even technological problems. Because we are so bedazzled by digital technology and the way in which it facilitates global communication, we forget that much of what we communicate is less intimate and personal, less deep, less noble and less connecting. In what follows it will be argued that we have as a society slipped almost imperceptibly from believing that digital technology can make our lives easier (ie. better?) to believing that digital technology is the source of our social and even our personal salvation. Far from the massive progress clearly made in making communication easier, computechology has also made it easier for us to be less present and less accessible within the context of our exchanges. We end up spending more time communicating with people via our machines and thus spend less actual time with people than we do with our machines. Indeed, there is a mordant irony in the fact that a growing segment of our population journey to chat rooms, not to chat with each other but to log on and work on their own computer. Never has it been easier to communicate, but it is paradoxical that never has the social disease of loneliness been higher or more associated with the despair of cultural and community isolation.

Within the context of our schools, workplaces, and homes, we are strangely alone, though other people may be present but online and thereby inaccessible. We shall see that in our schools, and in many other public institutions we inadvertently allow ourselves to be distracted by the computechological opportunities that capture our attention, both student and teacher, and employee and employer alike. We succumb to this form of disenfranchisement without recognizing that the bonds of loyalty and performance success to be gained are dependent in large part upon the personalized behavioural interactions of staff and students that have themselves been technologically or otherwise engaged. Reinforcing one dimension of this new awareness of the educational importance of personalized interaction amongst teachers and students are several studies which establish that the quality relationships which young students develop with their teachers may play a critical role in their personal constructions of self-esteem, motivation to learn, and confidence to take on new challenges, all of which have been proven to be salient factors contributing to integrated well-being and overall academic achievement (Monfries & McAlpine 2005; McDevitt & Ormrod 2004; Zins et al. 2004; Johnson, Crosnoe & Elder 2001).

As Johnson, Crosnoe and Elder (2001) propose, there is a determinate association between the secure attachments which students form with teachers and resultant levels of subjective happiness and integrated well-being. This correlation is in turn accompanied by better attendance, better classroom behaviours and improved academic performance. Monfries and McAlpine (2005) also agree persuasively that the earlier students can establish secure attachments to teachers and significant others, the more likely it is that behavioural problems will be self-mediated and limited. Given the importance of the secure bonds formed between teachers and students, integrated well-being and enhanced academic performance, the central contention of this piece is to explore philosophically the extent to which the current trend toward computer based learning, including online teaching, may serve inadvertently to discourage the development of such inter-personal attachments. This being so, the resultant sense of integrated well-being, of fundamental importance not only for students but teachers as well, may also be marginalised, thereby limiting the potential of students to learn and of teachers to teach.

#### **The Technological Connection: can Schools be too plugged in?**

Given the increasing awareness of the pedagogic importance of the depth of bonding between students and teachers, there is a mordant irony in the fact that so little critical reflection exists which questions whether computer-based learning is systematically depersonalizing the school environment. To understand the source of this irony we first need to comprehend why western culture is far too quick to applaud the success of technology, yet strangely slow to recant its indiscretions. Because technology is

now a defining feature characteristic of the modern age, so to say, we are as a culture more inclined to embrace new technologies unreflectively than to assess them critically. One plausible explanation for this discrepancy is that technology has itself come to function as the standard measure of progress and thus as the primary means of resolving our problems, whatever they are.

This being so, it is perhaps unsurprising that computechology has been assimilated into the school curriculum more as a matter of course than as a consequence of rational assessment and philosophical discussion. Within the culture of what we shall dub 'compuphilia', the admonitions of philosophical thinkers such as Stoll, proffered just more than a decade ago, were barely audible. From this vantage, the trust we put in computer-based education may not so much have been earned, as it has been inherited as part of our socio-cultural commitment to the technological worldview. Is it not possible that we have become so bedazzled by the power of technology to let us walk upon the earth as giants that we have failed in the educational context to discern that we now walk the earth as blinded technological giants who have lost our way?

Stoll states, 'a poor substitute it is this virtual reality where frustration is legion and where – in the holy name of Education and Progress – important aspects of human interaction are relentless devalued' (1995: 4). Technological power does not in itself bequeath philosophical vision, and without that vision we have only a shadow of a picture of what it is that gives education its value and in turn confirms that the educational goals we seek are worth pursuing. In their study on computer use in American schools Warschauer, et al, concluded that placing computers and internet connections, especially in low-SES schools, in and of itself 'does little to address the serious educational challenges faced by these schools (2004: 585). Thus, even when it is so admirably discerned that the bonds between students and teachers represent an integral constituent of effective pedagogy, the suspicion that computer-based education could possibly serve as an impediment to such bonding rarely occurs.

### **Theologizing Technology**

The concept of technology is admittedly multifaceted, and it is no part of our purpose here to get mired in the semantic morass of definitional demarcation which surrounds it. Suffice to say, there exists a subtle but monumental difference between the sense of technology as it refers to the specific machines, tools or devices we use to direct or facilitate our interactions with the world around us, on the one hand, and the sense of technology as a *Weltbild* or conceptual scheme within which we actually view the world, on the other. The point of important distinction we are endeavouring to bring to bold relief here is that we no longer simply use technology; we live it. This being so, technology is ascribed an authority and priority in our lives that it tantamount to theologizing it. We literally experience our existence in the midst of our technologies, and we use technology to become co-creators of a technological world. Our lives, our movements, and even our values become technologically textured. In a bizarre sense it could be said that in so doing, we unwittingly 'sacralize' what is in essence 'secular' and we secularize what is in essence sacred.

Postman (1995) reminds us, however, that utopia is no more present to us in cyberspace than it is on earth. Because we are surrounded by and immersed in the technological texturing of our lives, we tend not to notice how profoundly technology has impacted on every aspect of our lives, including the sacredness, as it were, of our relationships with each other. Indeed what might be called the 'theology of technology' has become so pervasive that educators are seduced into thinking that they cannot live without the materialist catechism it extols. This being so, we are blinded to the growing body of evidence and human experience which strongly suggests that the truth is that it will become increasingly difficult to live with it. It is certainly worth contemplating that the unbridled commitment of western culture to technology and thus to the uncritical acceptance of computechology within education is a consequence of theologizing technology in such a way that it becomes a 'value presumption' of our educational paradigm. Compuphilia is thus born out of a cultural womb which nurtures technology as a form of social salvation. This being so, our belief in the value which technology serves as foundational to the way in which we see the world becomes fossilised as a doctrinal belief of within education against which all other educational beliefs are to be judged. Our belief in the value of technology is thus shifted from the status of a hypothesis for continued testing to a theologized dogma of science which characterizes the conceptual measures by way of which we test. Despite findings which suggest, for example, that technology does little 'to overcome or minimize educational inequalities' (Warschauer, Knobel & Stone 2004: 584) we persist in believing that technology is the panacea to all our problems, even non-technological ones. The tenacity of compuphilia is so resilient that even when a particular problem has no immediate technological solution, we simply persist in believing that improved technology will solve the problem and make things better, without ever considering the extent to which the 'improved technology' can actually make things worse.

The rub is that many of these things are the really important things; the things that make human relationships worth having and life itself worth living. Because we have as a culture become distracted from the task of living simply, we think the only way we can live is complexly. So we technologize our lives as a self-fulfilling prophecy of our power to complicate our lives unnecessarily. The conceptual difference between a better standard of living and a better quality of life takes on a special force in this context. In the absence of sufficient philosophical consideration requisite for its balanced expression, our unrestrained educational commitment to computechonology remains problematic and requires re-evaluation. Whatever the result of this ongoing debate, it is incontestable that technological development with regards to improved standards of living should never be confused with the deeper question of whether what we dub as 'progress' stands unequivocally as a commensurate gain in quality of life. On this point, Arcilla elaborates:

By struggling to preserve liberal learning in this way, we may come to a more acute sense of its gaping absence in the dominant entertainment culture of our information society. For some time, it has been in retreat; now one of its last refuges is being stormed. Perhaps this will embolden us to question, finally, the cost of this society to our humanity. And so to find our humanity once again (2002: 465).

In the final analysis our cultural belief in the technological approach to the world is so determinately entrenched as a defining characteristic of the educational paradigm that it functions not as a belief to be tested but as, what Laura calls an 'epistemic primitive' by way of which we characterise the way we test (Laura 1978). From a different vantage, Postman has remarked that:

at the moment it is considered necessary to introduce computers into classrooms...To question 'Why should we do this?' the answer is : 'To make learning more efficient and more interesting'. Such an answer is considered entirely adequate, since...efficiency and interest need no justification. It is, therefore, not usually noticed that this answer does not address the question 'What is learning for?' 'Efficiency and interest' is a technical answer, an answer about means, not ends; and it offers no pathway to a consideration of educational philosophy (1995: 171).

On the assumption that the philosophical caveats expressed here have at least some heuristic value, it is easier to appreciate why reflective debate on the tension between computer-based education, on the one hand, and the most effective educational contexts for forging strong student-teacher bonds, on the other, is long overdue.

### **Computechonology and Depersonalization**

We are now in a position to make explicit our main reservations about computer-based education. The persistent claims and promises for the most recent innovations in computer-mediated communication are inescapable. This technological 'advance', it is argued, will bring to our lives knowledge, power, pleasure, personal liberation, even personal salvation (Brook & Boal 1995). On this rationale, whatever is lacking in our lives can be provided by way of greater access to new forms of communication, entertainment and information. Let us thus make plain that we have no wish to deny the many benefits which computechonology makes available both inside and outside the classroom. Nor do we wish to contest that in certain contexts computechonology may both encourage and facilitate the cultivation of personal relationships across the continuum of human interchange. The problem to which we are alluding is a different one, and its resolution depends firmly on qualitative considerations, not on quantitative ones.

The first consideration to be addressed relates to the fact that while it is to be admitted that appropriate contexts may exist for the use of computechonology, we have as a culture, partly due to vested political and economic interests, generalised the specific cases of acceptable use in such a way that the application of technology in question becomes universal. For example, it has been only a few years since it was acknowledged that enrolment procedures for some students could be facilitated and thus made more administratively 'efficient' by enrolling online. Shortly thereafter, however, it was legislated that enrolments for all students would have to be organised online. From a specifically justified principle for the use of computechonology in one context, an almost imperceptible extrapolation is made which universalizes the principle in other contexts in which it has not been justified. We thereby diminish options for students by standardising procedures which by their very nature discourage face to face interchange. Because provision of on-line courses for distance students may be justified, by parity of reasoning, it clearly does not follow that any justification has been provided to show that all university courses should be offered online and only online.

By embracing the theologised form of secular life within which the technology of electronic communication is embedded, we at one and the same time marginalise and compromise the value of face to face interchange.

The more that the use of computers is demanded of us, the more we shall be taken away from truly deep human experiences. That does not mean you should never spend time at a computer screen. Nor does it mean that if you spend time at a computer, you will never have any deep human experiences. It just means that current developments tend to put pressure on people to live less humane lives (Lakoff, 1995:124).

This being so, our reliance upon computechonology and its various modes of communication (eg. mobile phones, video games, internet transaction, etc) become ever more embedded, taken for granted, and thus socially ubiquitous, without philosophical reflection for why this should be so. Should we not be asking whether our resolute commitment to computer-based learning serves unwittingly to devalue the qualitative experience of our children's education by increasingly substituting face to face classroom interchanges with mechanically informational transmissions characterized primarily by the processing of data? Is it not worth considering that the more time we encourage schoolchildren to spend in the isolated context of the computer screen, the less time they spend actually interacting with their teachers and the less time they spend learning how to interact with them and others to form bonds of trust and loyalty. Should we not be concerned philosophically that the pedagogy of computopia may in the end serve inadvertently to propagate contexts for depersonalisation not only in schools, but in both the workplace and the wider community? (Laura & Marchant, 2002: 95).

### **Computechonology and Dehumanisation**

One significant facet of the depersonalization associated with computechonology is well illustrated in the paradox that as a culture, we have developed metaphorical idioms for personalising and anthropomorphising our computers, while we depersonalise humans by speaking about them as if they were machines. This way of speaking is by its very nature dehumanising. If a computer is not fully functional, it is not uncommon for the user to rationalize and 'forgive' its dysfunctionality by anthropomorphizing its mechanical functions as if they were human forms of behaviour. It is not unusual, for example, to hear a user excusing his/her computer by saying that the computer has a virus, is not warmed up or, is just understandably 'slow', 'lazy' or 'on strike' because it is still early on a Monday morning. We thus accept the shortcomings of the machines by speaking in a way which makes it seem as if their faults were human. The rub is that we all too often expect humans to behave as if they were machines and respond unforgivingly when they do not. In a tone of remonstrance for a job not so well done, for instance, we create idioms such as, 'get with the program', 'get your engine running' or 'it's time you plugged in'. On the other hand, we often compliment someone who works particularly hard by ascribing accolades associated with our conventional descriptions of machines. In this context it is not uncommon for a person's hard work, (manual, intellectual or otherwise) to be complimented by using mechanistic metaphors (eg. 'He works like a machine', 'his engine never stops running' or 'she clearly got with the program'). In the foregoing cases the issue of depersonalization is conflated with dehumanisation, since the expectation is that the value of a human being can be judged without moral impropriety by assessing the work a human can do against a well-functioning machine.

### **The Loss of Face: The Human Face**

That computechonology has facilitated and proliferated the forms of communication now available to us is incontestable. It is salutary to remind ourselves, however, that the more forms of communication we increasingly embed to expand the culture of computechonology, the increasingly less intimate and depersonalized the face to face human interactions become that they were designed to replace. Simply put, the argument advanced here affirms that the depersonalization of human relationships and the dehumanization which follows from it are an inevitable consequence of universalising the highly mechanised modes of communication which characterise computechonology. Compuphilia thus comes to represent a socially legitimated syndrome which implicitly encourages the love of computers, without adequately understanding the extent to which their universality is by its very nature a threat to the love we have for humans. This is why as a culture, we tend to anthromophormise our machines while dehumanising each other. Consequently, these contrary dispositions give rise to serious moral issues which have been badly neglected. For example, humans are expected by their employers -or we demand it of ourselves – to work at our computers, not only throughout the day but sometimes tirelessly into the night. One promise of comptuopia was to give us all, even school children, more leisure time, but truth is that if we have more leisure time, we all too often spend it working or 'playing' at the computer in virtual isolation. I-Pods are just another symptom of this growing trend towards

'technological isolationism'. It is well worth noting that to date insufficient attention has been paid to the deleterious physical and mental effects of these new forms of social isolation. Because we spend progressively more time communicating through or working in isolation at our computers, we tend not to notice that we are spending less time, and certainly less quality time with each other. In particular within such technologically structured contexts of learning the potential for creating deep and bonding relationships between teachers and students is decidedly diminished. Potentially intimate and vital personal relationships are in essence being channelled without much, if any notice on society's part, into impersonal one dimensional, mechanistically mediated ones. We have slipped, that is to say, almost imperceptibly into a new condition or culture of human relationships, which structurally encourages the substitution of fac- to-face forms of human interchange with technologically mediated forms of communication, even when face-to-face communication is available. When we treat each other more and more as machines and treat our machines more and more as humans, there is no doubt that the time has come to rethink the nature of our relationships with each other and to redefine the nature of our commitment to computechonology, especially as it impacts upon us educationally. When people young and old, log-on to distant relationships mediated through computer cyber-space, the illusion is fostered that these relationships are comprehensive and deep, when in fact they are only a one dimensional form of human interaction. Loyal friendships and loving relationships depend upon bonds of understanding, trust and intimacy, few, if any of which can be satisfactorily provided a single 'facet-experience of a multi-faceted person. Given western society's commitment to electronic technology, it all too frequently goes unnoticed that we have come to rely increasingly less upon face-to-face contact. Because we are able to converse over the telephone, we often choose not to meet people in person, even when we can. Indeed, we often use our answering machines to screen calls from both loved and unloved ones, just as many would rather text than make a call. Put simply, 'conversations' take place but they are increasingly no more than conversations with far removed or absent others. Because it is easier to communicate with people at a distance, we feel less compunction in distancing ourselves from them. The distance we create, encourage or tolerate represents a form of depersonalisation and dehumanisation which gives rise to personal alienation and social isolation. "Whilst the internal workings of a child's mind remains shrouded in some mystery, it is palpably clear that protracted periods of social isolation do little to encourage a child's overall development" (Laura & Marchant, 2002: 113).

## Conclusion

We have from the outset made it clear that our prime objective in this piece has been to reflect upon the impact which computechonology has had and is having in the arena of interpersonal relationships. Our central concern has been to tease out some of the neglected implications of the computer revolution, as they pertain to the domain of education in particular, and society in general. It has been no part of our purpose to deny that computer technology can serve to facilitate communication with others who are remote from us, whether the medium of contact is undertaken by way of email, video-conferencing, teleconferencing, online banking, home shopping, electronic voting or telecommuting.

Notwithstanding these benefits, we have been concerned to argue here that the potential for integrated well-being and the forming of deep and trusting relationships between teachers and students, so integral a factor in educational outcomes, is being jeopardised by the increasing reliance on computechonology as the predominant medium within which education is administered and mediated at virtually every level of teaching. A central concern of this piece has been to show that such electronic technologies become dehumanising and depersonalising when the relationships they simulate are substituted for the face-to-face personal modes of human contact and interchange, which by their very nature have the potential to be intrinsically richer than electronically mediated ones. This is as true in the educational context as it is in society generally.

Put another way, the argument advanced here has endeavoured to establish that notwithstanding its many benefits, the much applauded technologisation of the modern world is leading ineluctably to the depersonalisation of fundamentally intimate aspects of human relations. By legitimizing the culture of computechonological communication, we implicitly encourage the progressive substitution of technological innovation for forms of interchange characterised by the physical presence of another human. Not only have we come to mediate our natural experiences of human relationships via mechanistic interactions, but we have technologised our lives in such a way that it is becoming ever more difficult to conduct the vast array of our communications with each other in any other way. This is the lamentable legacy of compuphilia which now confronts us.

We have argued that while computechonology may have a salient role to play in education, compuphilia serves inadvertently to weaken the unions of loyalty, commitment and trust between teachers and students which would otherwise enhance educational achievement and student satisfaction. The bonds

of loyalty and trust, stemming from genuinely intimate relationships feature as essential elements in the dynamics of all human relationships, but they are absolutely critical to loving and truly creative ones. We have endeavoured to show that while technology has made electronic modes of communication increasingly accessible to us, the forms of communication upon which we have come progressively to depend are themselves for the most part decreasingly intimate. This being so, we have been concerned to argue that the ensuing loss of intimacy alters the nature of education irrevocably, and not necessarily for the best.

Having surrounded ourselves with machines, and having now brought the computer into our homes and schools, technology has itself become a value which we can use as a measure of the worth of the world around us. When all is said, the substitution of technological innovation for the phenomenon of human interchange represents a deep wound to the human spirit. We thus become caught in the web of a bizarre moral ambiguity. We still claim we value people, but we are not entirely certain what we value them for. Within the context of this moral ambiguity, it is difficult to see how the relationship of bonding between students and teachers, so critical to educational outcomes, can be maximally fostered.

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