

Abstracts for Participants 2012

The Expressible and the Inexpressible

Biennial Conference in Philosophy, Religion and Culture

Abstracts in Alphabetical Order

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The Sacrilegious Spectacle of Theological Perversity in Klossowski's *Le Baphomet*

Is it not always the sacrilege that attests to the sacred? And is the transgression not the most true relation, the relation of passion and life, to the prohibition that transgression does not cease to pose and to presuppose in a contact in which flesh is dangerously made spirit?... [I]f transgression requires an interdiction, the sacred requires sacrilege, such that the sacred, which is attested to purely only by the impure speech of blasphemy, will not cease to be indissociably linked to a power always capable of transgression. – Maurice Blanchot

In "The Laughter of the Gods," his reading of Klossowski's (fictive) writings, Blanchot suggests that the most serious matters under discussion in these texts evoke humor, even hilarity. This paper will explore several such moments, often spectacular, of "serious hilarity," in the *Le Baphomet*, recognizing that this phrase (Blanchot's) is itself a "coincidence of opposites" or "suspension" of opposites, the one "suspended" in, yet never subsumed by, its other. The phenomenon, or rather, the spectacle of the Baphomet itself, offers the reader a dazzling and dramatic encounter with "serious hilarity" that briefly embodies the various "oppositions" that "coincide" throughout the text, yet can be said to crystallize at this moment, for this momentary but spectacular encounter in the undecidability which is the phenomenon of the Baphomet: in fleshly appearance, both masculine and feminine, both divine and devilish, temporarily inhabited by various spirits (including the saintly Theresa of Avila), the object of perversely secret and satanic rituals supposedly observed by the Knights Templar (an order impossibly duplicitous, both monastic and military) all executed for these same supposed satanic practices. But it is during this particular and spectacular moment when the Baphomet is revealed dangling at the end of a rope, dead yet revived in this particular moment, that the Antichrist shuffles into the spectacle, embodied as an anteater, but still able to give voice to Zarathustra's wisdom: When one god proclaimed himself unique, all the other gods died of laughter... Perhaps this "Antichrist" of questionable identity, "veiled" in the appearance of the anteater, offers appropriate comment on the tableau taking place, repetition without end, outside of time, for eternity: god is dead. This scene, this spectacle, in excess of time and space, offers appropriate comment on all that, all history, all theology, all meaning and significance from which it will have been excluded: simulacrum without ceasing, repetition without end.

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Theological Reflection: Moving from Implicit to Explicit Knowing

During the late 20th century and early 21st century, religion and theology have become increasingly separated from spirituality and affective experience. In addition to this rift, the body is frequently seen as marginal to spiritual life. The implications of these divisions for students engaging in theological reflection can be observed in reflections which are overly intellectualised or conversely overly emotional and lacking theological depth. Such reflections are often used to maintain a pre-reflective status quo of religious beliefs. The relationship between spirituality and theology is explored and theological reflection is seen as occurring in soulscape, a habitus of the believer which involves all dimensions of a person's lifeworld. It is suggested that the intentional practice of bodily awareness through the process of focusing may enable reconnections to be made between implicit pre-linguistic, bodily knowing and an explicit, reflective articulation of experience. Through a balanced attending to bodily awareness, the recognising and naming of emotions and the exploring of theological factors, theological reflection can offer a supporting framework in which theology and spirituality can be held together in partnership rather than as seen as separate enterprises. If there is a playful and creative openness to reflection as an integrative praxis at risk of encountering the unexpected in the movement

from implicit to explicit knowing, then the process of theological reflection can provide an opportunity for transformative learning.

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Inexpressibility in Augustine's Just War Theory: Lessons for Modern Warfare

St. Augustine's Just War Theory is relatively unique in the history of just war in that he relies heavily on Divine involvement in his doctrine of just war. God is the ultimate source of the justice of all wars, and his command is the source of justice for some wars. Furthermore, the authority of political leaders is also derived from God. This is problematic for Augustine's theory because it renders the *causa justa* of wars inexpressible to the subjects of the sovereign, who are forced to rely on the sovereign's (divinely originated) authority. Although these ideas may seem a long way from the state-of-affairs in war today, I will suggest that notions like the privilege of state secrecy, the implied expertise of political leaders, and the coercive power of patriotism represent new manifestations of the inexpressibility of the Divine in the modern-day practice of warfare.

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Keynote Lecture title: The Varieties of Knowledge

I develop the relatively familiar idea of a variety of forms of knowledge—not just propositional knowledge but also knowledge-how and experiential knowledge—and show how this variety can be used to make interesting sense of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy, and in particular their ethics. I then add to this threefold analysis of knowledge a less familiar fourth variety, objectual knowledge, and suggest that this is also interesting and important in the historical understanding of Plato and Aristotle, and in the understanding of ethics too.

Public lecture title: Whereof We Cannot Speak

In his first work, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, the philosopher Wittgenstein famously said "What we cannot speak of we must pass over in silence". To which his sardonic friend Frank Ramsey added "And you can't whistle it either". By the time of his last and most famous work, *The Philosophical Investigations*, I doubt Wittgenstein was as sure as he'd been in his early work that precise logical description and silence are really our only two expressive alternatives. There are Wittgensteinian reasons--and other reasons too-- for thinking that there might be other possibilities, and trying to develop them. That's what I try to do here. Whistling during the lecture is not absolutely ruled out.

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Plato and the Inexpressible

In this paper I investigate the role of the 'inexpressible' in Plato's thought. I argue that Plato's recourse to the dialogue as his medium for expressing philosophical thought is engendered by the inexpressible roots of all philosophical thinking: the dialogue form shows what cannot be said in action. I thus take up recent attempts of reading the Platonic dialogues as dialogues, taking serious the dramatic elements utilized therein. A close analysis of Plato's *Ion* supports not only my reading of Plato but also demonstrates the specific way in which Plato tackles the problem of articulating the inarticulable experience at the root of philosophical insight.

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The Word Who Makes God Visible

The final verse of the prologue of the Gospel of John declares "No one has ever seen God. The only begotten son (The Word) who is in the bosom of the Father – he has 'exegeted' him." (John 1:18) In

the last supper discourse, as he approaches the Passion, Jesus declares to one of his disciples, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9)

The task of the Gospel of John is to show how it is that Jesus makes clear to us the God whom no one has ever seen. That is, it is the task of Jesus, the Word who is God, to express in visible, comprehensible form, the inexpressible God.

One of the principle images by which the Johannine Jesus identifies God is as "Father." John 5:1-47 depicts Jesus as daring to portray God as his own Father with whom Jesus is equal. This paper will show how, through both narrative and dramatic discourse, the Johannine Jesus articulates the inexpressible God, in ways that human beings can comprehend.

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'It's the Enigma, Stupid!' Les Murray's Poems As Expressions of the Inexpressible

Les Murray's religious poems configure several tacit propositions, which function as underlying principles and drivers of the creative effort that produces the poems. These propositions may be summarised as follows.

- There is an unseen but experienced reality in all things and in every experience.
- The function of the poet is to reveal, however indirectly, some glimpse of this underlying reality, a Platonic notion; and
- As their medium is language, there is a kind of analogous relationship between seeing and saying that compels the poet towards the expression of the inexpressible. Hence the enigma of apprehending that there is that which exists beyond the reach of human understanding.

This paper takes as its fundamental premise the proposition that much of Murray's poetry is essentially religious; but it is religious poetry. Its underlying argument is that Murray's poems embody enigma expressed as understatement; the unstated, reverberative proclamations of metaphor, borne on implication and formed with a tandem union of both.

His 'dance on paper' as Murray's own words have it, circumnavigates the edge of the Black Hole of inexpression, the 'other end' of its gravitational vortex issuing forth the expressive necessities of what Patrick White in *Riders In the Chariot* referred to as 'the varying assertions of silence'. It is a 'dance' that combines grace, power and negation. Its rhythms are reflective. It is characteristically colloquial in its postures and abrupt pauses.

Murray has long ago left the threadbare simplisticisms of conventional theology, their homely banality. He gives us a view of what there is to be seen 'entirely within', not inside, that which is everyday and commonplace, that which is familiar and that which is silent in human experience. He achieves signification in an apparent rejection of the signifying process, where the subject's deepest meaning is to be perceived. It is perception intensified, phenomenologically uniting the witness and the object, the world and its inhabitant, the poem and the reader in an expressive enigmatic continuum.

Some questions that are prompted by these reflections:

- Why is the image of God in the Colo Mountains without a mouth?
- How is the 'Rainbow' man able to communicate by not communicating?
- To whom and for whom does Murray speak in presenting these and other notions in his work and of what do his religious poems speak if not of an enrichment of perception, an extension of understanding?

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Groping in the Gloom: The Inexpressible Meaning of Life in Vonnegut and Aphrahat.

Next year marks 50 years since Kurt Vonnegut wrote the seminal "Cat's Cradle", which addresses themes enunciated by Aphrahat nearly 1600 years earlier. Writing in response to his personal experience of the bombing of Dresden, Vonnegut repeatedly addresses important philosophical questions related to the meaning of life. His earliest books contain some of his clearest statements on the incomprehensibility of life, and his own response to the questions: What is the meaning of life, and in particular, how could a loving God allow such evil? For Vonnegut, the existence of WW2 atrocities means that God must be apathetic and uncaring, or possibly non-existent. He cannot conceive of a God who is deeply pained by human suffering, nor is he moved by the standard rational Western explanations. Early Syrian writers Aphrahat and Ephrem offer a very different perspective on these issues, an approach that recognizes the inexpressibility of God and his purposes, and the inability of

humans to make sense of life. They both affirm and contradict Vonnegut. This paper analyses Vonnegut's viewpoint in "The Sirens of Titan" (1959), "Mother Night" (1961), and "Cat's Cradle" (1963), in the light of Aphrahat and Ephrem's approach, and offers a sympathetic critique of Vonnegut's response to the inexpressible.

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Nankani Interpretive Divination and the Vicissitudes of the Unformulated and Inexpressible

At a fundamental level, divination probes the inchoate, concealed, or mysterious in an effort to acquire knowledge, validate understandings, or imbue decisions with authority. Early accounts of divination often fell into functionalist and evolutionary paradigms that did not account for the existential situatedness, meaning production, and subjective domains that exist beyond visible objective measures. Among the Nankani people in Northern Ghana, men use an interpretive form of divination to communicate with ancestors to solve problems, make decisions, and seek explanations for misfortune or ambiguous events. Bridging phenomenological and psychoanalytic paradigms, this presentation explores the intersubjective and narrative dimensions of Nankani interpretive divination; specifically, the interplay between a person's experiences of their social context and the negotiation, employment, and articulation of uncertainty and the ineffable. After describing the divination process, this presentation transcends assumptions that divination is simply an irrational way to manage anxiety. Ultimately, I consider how the relational process between the client, the ancestral and social world, and the organization of divinatory objects enables clients to uncover "the hidden" and transform the uncertain and inexpressible by directly organizing attention and shifting how one narrates and inhabits their world.

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When One and One Equals Silence: The Mystic Way in the Poetry of Theodore Roethke and Charles Wright

"By means of veils and symbols he must interpret his free vision, his glimpse of the burning bush, to other men"; so writes Evelyn Underhill of the artist or poet who, though not a mystic himself, understands something of mystical experience and seeks to record it. But how does one put into words, even metaphorically, a personal encounter with the Absolute when that experience, by definition, "transcend[s] all powers of human expression"?

Theodore Roethke and Charles Wright are two American poets whose works reflect their interest in mysticism and their familiarity with Underhill's so-called "Mystic Way," the hugely influential five-stage model of mystical development described in her seminal work, *Mysticism*. Roethke's poem "In a Dark Time" is, according to the poet, "a drive towards God: an effort to break through the barrier of rational experience." His ecstatic vision contrasts with the poems "Drone and Ostinato" and "Ostinato and Drone" by Wright, who presents himself through his body of work as an agnostic heir to the medieval mystics and a thwarted spiritual pilgrim. This paper will consider the epiphanies that Roethke and Wright describe, examining how these poets face the challenge of expressing such extremities of spiritual life in words when, according to Roethke, simply to "speak of it ... is a betrayal of the experience."

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Extending Expression through Theory Revision

The central hypothesis of this paper is that certain appeals to the 'inexpressible', 'mysterious' and/or 'ineffable' in Christian religious thought, writing and dialogue are synonymous with doctrinal or theological failure. This failure may be characterised as: (a) a failure of various doctrines, theologies or theological theories (which are, or so it will be argued, *abducted theological models* and are henceforth referred to as 'ATM' or just 'models') to accurately and congruently account for Biblical data, coupled with (b) an unwillingness to revise such ATM. In other words some level of mystery, inexpressibility and ineffability can be, at least with respect to certain identified examples, read as

'code' for intransigence in the face of partial or complete (more plausibly, the former) ATM failure. More specifically, it is proposed that certain 'overfitted' models imply counterfactuals that are not semantically equivalent to, or necessarily inferred from, Biblical data. Conversely, a contractive revision of these overfitted ATM (amounting to a revision of belief by contraction as described in the literature on *belief change*) can lead to modified models that produce 'better behaved' counterfactuals. As a result, these modified ATM contribute to an extension of expression and a corresponding reduction in mystery and ineffability.

The paper draws on Peirce's (1908) theory of scientific and religious knowing (which integrates abductive, deductive and indicative steps in single, cyclical and iterative model), supported by Newman's (1847) "developmental" theory of Christian doctrine, to demonstrate that belief revision is both plausible and preceded with respect to Christian doctrine and theology. As such, belief revision need not be seen as either an expression or a result of unfaithfulness. To the contrary, belief revision may be interpreted as means of defining and deriving modified ATM that, if true, account for, or explain, Biblical data more accurately than previous models. It should be noted that the purpose of the paper is not to suggest that no legitimate mystery, inexpressibility and ineffability (henceforth 'MII') applies with respect to religion in general or with respect to the Christian religion in particular. Rather, the paper suggests a way that 'legitimate' MII (i.e., MII attributable to the 'Divine mystery') may be discriminated from 'residual' MII (i.e., MII attributable to, in this case, overfitted models relating to the Divine).

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Ethical Beliefs

Since it is wrong always, everywhere and for everyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence, religions and religious beliefs are required at the very least to be shown to be not unreasonable, if they are to have any legitimacy. This means, first and foremost, that they must pass the ethics test. There is nothing startling about this, because everyone knows that Aristotle is right when he says that people who are puzzled about honouring the gods – or God – and loving their parents, need punishment, not perception. For, God is considered to be good, as indeed are our parents. What is, however, disconcerting, is that often when pronouncements made by religious authorities are subject to this test, they not infrequently fail.

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Preaching in the Age of Globalization: The Return of the Unfathomable God

The most celebrated leitmotif about globalization is the greater interconnectedness among nations, cultures and religions in the world and the massive expansion of knowledge and information. The interconnection of globalization has resulted not in sameness but in the radicalization of differentiability. The expansion of knowledge and information, on the other hand, has brought to the fore the limitation of reason, science and language. To preach the gospel in globalization is to preach the gospel amidst radical differentiability and unknowing.

This paper suggests the ancient tradition of apophatic or negative theology as a heuristic for preaching the gospel conducive to this leitmotif of globalization. Apophatic theology implies the limitation of human language in speaking about an unspeakable God, thus, exposing the impoverishment of humanizing God. However, it is always complemented by cataphatic or positive theology, which emphasizes a positive affirmation of God, that is, what God is.

Negative theology was prominent from the ancient to the Middle Ages, but was largely forgotten in modern times. It has made a comeback in contemporary theology.

Negative theology in preaching in globalization follows the path of mysticism while positive theology in preaching in globalization follows the path of prophecy.

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Contemplative Empathy in Religion

Contemplative empathy is a 'way of knowing' about the feelings and thoughts of other people, about how we impact upon them and how we can treat them better. Unlike face to face empathy however; we tend to practice contemplative empathy when we are alone. There is a collective silence towards contemplative empathy in the scriptures of the major world religions and within prayer theory, particularly towards practicing it as a regular ritual and asking God for help with it. Kindness and love for others are traditionally achieved through oneness with divinity, through following scripture, and through intercession and compassion meditations. I argue that everyone is called to practice contemplative empathy as a regular ritual, to use their own spiritual concepts and practices to assist them with it, and that divinity would like it to occur. Disciplined contemplative empathy allows people to relate to each other better, to treat each other and their environment better, and to feel happier within themselves. To help discuss this, I will engage with theorists such as Merton, Levinas, Aristotle, Outka, Pembroke, and De Botton.

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Thinking Theology through Practice

Ultimately, in any complete way at least, God is inexpressible. This is the dilemma of the believer engaged in theological research: how are we to 'express the inexpressible' knowing that we can at best do this only partially while remaining faithful to the community to which we belong? We are certainly able to increase our understanding through prayer, study, reading the Scriptures, worship or meditation for example. It also may be possible to gain a greater understanding of God through artistic endeavours. However, there would seem to be no single method able to complete the task - no writing, no painting, no music or dance piece, no sculpture - none of these on their own is sufficient. Based on my current PhD research, this paper presents a response to this dilemma.

Practice-led research is a new method emerging from the creative arts. It attempts to combine the strengths of creative practice with the traditional method of research grounded in the written and spoken word. Practice-led research investigates questions that arise within and through artistic practice and presents to theology, I argue, a methodology that can be used to assist in answering questions arising in and through faith practice.

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Deflating Ineffability

There are many people for whom abstract algebra or geometry in more than three dimensions has no meaning. This inability to think abstractly is like being tone deaf, and is nothing to be ashamed of. But it needs to be acknowledged. The failure to do so embarrasses those of us who have the ability, just like tone-deaf foghorn Harry heartily singing hymns, unaware of his limitations.

I submit that human beings have the ability to think abstractly about God, but that the abstraction-challenged embarrassingly tell us that God is LITERALLY ineffable. In this paper I assess some initially plausible theses about what we cannot say about God, which are perfectly compatible with our capacity to think about God. I consider to what extent these theses provide suitable PARAPHRASES for divine ineffability.

1. That we cannot 'grasp' the intrinsic divine attributes, such as being loving.
2. That we cannot know the divine essence.
3. That we cannot form true beliefs that God has various essential attributes
4. That we cannot provide a complete list of God's essential attributes.
5. That we cannot form true fundamental beliefs about God, as opposed to derived ones. (The last of these is due to Jonathan Jacobs.)

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Beauty as Resistance

Beauty has played an ambivalent role in Christian thought. This paper will explore the possibility that beauty might act as a form of resistance against the sense of hollowness or godlessness which exists within contemporary culture.

Through a series of examples this paper will argue that the creation and enjoyment of beauty can be a rallying call; an assertion of the sacredness of the human person in the face of that which diminishes us. It will contend that in its apparent superfluity, beauty asserts meaning without specifying meaning. In this sense beauty exists as an expression of the divine.

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Expressing Religion

Eminent commentary holds that the early Wittgenstein allowed for religion but inexpressibly, only in mystic silence. Indeed, for David Pears the *Tractatus* recognised the significance of inexpressible religious belief. Inexpressible belief smacks of oxymoron; but that is hardly the most significant point here.

Elizabeth Anscombe and Anthony Kenny also believed that religion was not intended to be eliminated by the *Tractatus*. Nevertheless, profound differences with Pears emerged. For Pears, *inexpressible* religious belief was allowed by the early Wittgenstein. For Kenny, *expressions* of religious belief were not intended to be eliminated by the *Tractatus*. And a phalanx of philosophers, D Z Phillips among them, have relied post-*Tractatus* upon a Wittgensteinian position for the contemplation of expressed religious locutions.

Now, the *Tractatus* in Pears' conception may be problematic for theism, but expressivism also challenges. Because it takes as its focus the attitudes expressed by religious locutions, expressivism depreciates theism. Indeed as a post-*Tractatus* religious Wittgensteinian, Phillips may have become entrapped in the non-cognitive stickiness of expressivism as he contemplated religious language games. This despite the fact that he sought to avoid the particular kind of expressivism offered by R B Braithwaite. What are the subtle difficulties here? And can we show both Braithwaite and Phillips a way out of the expressivist fly bottle?

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School Chaplaincy Services and the Church-State Divide

This is the third in a series of presentations made at subsequent Biennial Conferences looking at chaplaincy in the Australian context. Drawing on the discipline of the Social Sciences, this paper attempts a response to a number of questions, and explores possible philosophical, ethical and epistemological justifications for government support for 'the spiritual' in schools. In doing so, we explore ways of knowing within ethics and religion.

Government support for school chaplaincy services is a topical issue here in Australia and in other countries around the world. For instance: in Australia, there is the current Australian High Court Challenge regarding National School Chaplaincy Program, challenging the program's constitutionality; while in Ireland too, there are Parliamentary conversations regarding support for government school chaplaincy services. In Western Democratic countries where there is widespread acceptance of the notion of separation of church and state, the financial support of religious programs raises several questions which we intend to address:

- In pluralistic societies such as Australia, to what extent is it ethical for religious issues to be expressed in the national interest?
- Philosophically, do religion and spirituality belong in a secular democracy?
- Given the increasing social privatisation of religion and spirituality, are these topics fast becoming inexpressible 'no-go' areas within the public arena?
- Against this backdrop of pluralism, secularism and privatisation, to what extent may governments acknowledge the place of religion and spirituality in helping society understand itself?

- What impact do answers to these and similar questions, have on the experience of government-funded schools?

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Concentric Authority as a Common Template for Social and Celestial Geography in the Hekhalot Literature

The Jewish mysticism from late antiquity known as the Ma'aseh Merkavah (Account of the Chariot) constitutes an elaborate attempt to re-enact Ezekiel's famous vision of the chariot. It is a nebulous tradition of midrash, magical incantations, cosmological speculation, angelology and shades of apocalyptic expression. While recounting various paradigmatic ascents to the celestial realm in search of the theophanic intimacy enjoyed by Ezekiel et al, the Hekhalot literature leaves a highly detailed description of a celestial geography, arranged in concentric layers in increasing holiness. This paper will discuss the paradoxical situation whereby the long felt absence of an earthly temple, or an associated priesthood, prompted a remarkable outpouring of the religious imagination. The aim being renewed access to the intimacy and protection associated with the presence of God. The veritable overload of descriptive information lent authority to the claims of mystical experience. By employing a distinctly 'priestly' mode of expression some of these texts also sought to establish a place of high esteem for their authors amongst the Rabbinic academies. Just as God sat at the very centre of the heavenly complex, so the Merkavah mystics located themselves at the very heart of the Jewish community. This is not true of all the Hekhalot literature, and contrasting positions will be explored to add nuance to our definition of this visionary tradition.

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Why Should there be Something rather than Nothing?

1. For his question Leibniz needs 'nothing' is a surd merely. 'Nothing' does not need to be filled in.
 - 1.1 It is filled in in Thomist thought by the pair 'Contingent & Necessary Being'. These are the two categories of Being: of the one logical type.
2. Being and Nothingness form an ācategorical-pair, even though they seem to be the prime antithesis-pair.
 - 2.1 Nothingness-es can be plural: as many kinds as contexts of the use of the term 'nothing'. (Some adverted to in the paper).
 - 2.2 Nothing has no predicates, is like nothing, and could not have predicates since there would be 'nothing' for them to inhere in.
 - 2.3 Being has and grounds predicates, beings are like one another, or can be. Being is not, like nothing, without likenesses.
 - 2.4 'Existence is before Essence' (Sartre). This is true iff one considers the neonate, who comes to existence flat on, before predicate-sorting occurs. Being in this case is without predicates, but this is not generalisable. See below 4.
3. Modern cosmologists who maintain that 'the Universe comes from nothing' set up an interesting context. Dr. Lawrence Krauss of University of Arizona says 'the Universe come from Nothing', and talks of '3 kinds of nothingness'; which may be added to the "set" of nothingness contexts (Themselves putatively ācategorical).
4. Thomists write of 'Necessary Being': Mystics of 'Nada'. Consider the pre-existing matrix for Negative Theology in the natural language Spanish: *cosa nacida* = 'something born' = *nada* a positive: negated, *nonada* which becomes simply *nada* = nothing a negative. Proverb: *todo es nada*.
5. It would be a stroke of wit to postulate God-as-Nada as the 'cause' of the Universe – see 3.above.
 - 5.1 Whether the stroke of wit has metaphysical importance is a question left open.
6. As is: 'How many contexts of Nothingness are on offer? Less than the Categories of Being – or More?
7. God as 'Necessary Being' or as 'Nada': both witness the limits of language [(EGod) & (-EGod)] represents the limitations of language. The formula would be acceptable iff God as

Necessary “exceeds” Existence: and would be a poetic marking of this. It would not entail any sort of atheism, only a conjunction of Positive and Negative Natural/Mystical theology.

Patrick is unable to attend the conference, but Peter Forrest will lead a discussion of the paper. Copies are available from reception.

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Expansion and Invention: Maximus the Confessor and Schelling on Creativity within Divinity.

This paper examines two thinkers from very different ages. It sets out to identify their thoughts on creativity within the divine. For both, creativity in the divine seems to utilise a pattern of ‘internal-self-differentiation’, however I point out that Maximus’ divinity creates by generating new regions whereas Schelling describes how the expansion of the divinity ‘innovates’ new possibilities. The theories are different in important ways but offer interesting insights into the processes of divine creativity.

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Participation and Analogy in the Early Work of St Thomas Aquinas

St Thomas uses participation and analogy throughout his work. This paper will be concerned with St Thomas’s use of participation and analogy in his metaphysics. In this context, participation refers to the circumstance whereby an inferior being receives in a limited way and proportioned to its essence or nature, a perfection, which belongs to a superior being in its fullness and as its essence or nature. In this way St Thomas is able to explain how the inferior being is able to share in a likeness of the perfection of the higher being without sharing its nature. Analogy we could understand as the language of participation. Consequently, when we come to speak of the divine perfections such as being and goodness, the structure of participation and analogy enables St Thomas to explain how these perfections are intrinsic and not merely accidental to creatures, without slipping into either pantheism or emanationism.

St Thomas consistently argues that God is named from God’s effects, but that we cannot know God in God’s essence; furthermore, certain properties of God must be known by remotion. Yet, when St Thomas comes to speak of the divine perfection, he argues that simple perfections such as being and goodness can be affirmed positively of God, and he actually draws remotion into this process. I will argue that it is St Thomas’s understanding of participation and analogy which facilitates this process. I will frame the presentation around a series of propositions which I have drawn from St Thomas’s Exposition of the De Hebdomadibus of Boethius where, in response to Boethius, St Thomas offers some insight into his understanding of participation.

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Ezekiel Chapter 1 – The Vision of God: Expressing the Inexpressible with the Expressible

Abstract: One of the most popular books of the Bible is the Book of Revelation (The Apocalypse). For the most part, this popularity is due to the strange, almost bizarre, imagery that it employs, especially in depicting the characters in the narrative. The characters, quite often grotesque monsters, are composed of layers of symbolic language. Although these symbols are practically unintelligible to the contemporary reader, they were highly significant for the ancient audience for which the book was originally intended. In fact, these symbols actually provided a means to convey complex theological concepts that ordinary language could not communicate.

One of the most important scenes in Revelation is in chapter 4 which presents the throne room of God. The narrative returns no less than six times to this scene in order to take time out to worship the one, true God. Some of the most stunning apocalyptic imagery is used to describe the throne room of God and the retinue who serve him. The imagery used in this scene, however, is not original and finds its source in literature that predates Revelation by almost 700 years. The description of God’s throne and the four-faced creatures who serve him were first used by the prophet, Ezekiel, to describe his own vision of God that he saw in 593 BCE in Babylon during the Israelite exile. Some scholars see the early beginnings of apocalyptic in this biblical passage. This paper will explore the manner in

which Ezekiel used a variety of common elements such as fire, wind, and even the human form in order to express the inexpressible appearance of God.

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'When the truth is found to be lies': The Coen Brother's A Serious Man, and the Ambiguity of Moral Action

This paper will argue that brothers Joel and Ethan Coen's film 'A Serious Man' functions as a post-Einsteinian critique of the certitudes of a Newtonian/Kantian physical/moral theological universe. Through a reading of the film's use of Schrodinger's paradox I will argue that what the Coen's seek to create is a correspondence between the collapse of the elegant simplicity of a Newtonian physical universe, and a renewed sense of moral ambiguity in post-Kantian late-modern societies. Drawing on resources deep within Hebraic wisdom traditions (particularly the Job narrative) the Coen's expose the poverty of an all too simplistic set of broadly Kantian deontological moral reasonings (deeply associated with Newtonian mechanics), and seek to reintroduce a sense of the ambiguity of moral action in the face of the silence of God and the inextricability of human finitude. The paper will then culminate with some reflections on the Coen's complicating of the lack of perspicuity in divine speech and the banality of the freedom of the moral agent.

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Toward an Anagogical Imagination: How Gothic Sacred Architecture Might Make Known the Things Unseen

This paper is a philosophical investigation of the medieval understanding of the anagogical level of interpretation (of Scripture, but I will argue also of relationship to the world). It proposes that anagogy is represented in Gothic sacred architecture, where the visible constantly refers to what is invisible but intelligible. The builders of these structures intimate that something can actually be experienced and known of the unseen. I propose to discover and articulate the juncture at which the seen and the unseen meet in such sacred spaces.

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On The Immanent Counter-Enlightenment

Charles Taylor argues that the modern moral order tends to reduce life into an abstract existence. This modern attitude can "threaten to crush our spontaneity, or our creativity, or our desiring natures", for it favors ordinariness and buries our potential for individual greatness. Now as a response sparked by Schopenhauer, steered by Nietzsche, and flanked by the likes of Mallarmé, Jeffers, Bataille, Derrida, and Foucault, the anti-humanist army of the Immanent Counter-Enlightenment attacks this modern moral order that flattens our understanding of life. The movement sidetracks the question of the good, and tries to unleash the forces suppressed by modernity's attempts to privilege egalitarianism.

This paper elucidates two ideas of immanent revolt. First, the movement regards modernity as a prison, for it endorses the sort of existence that Nietzsche baptizes as 'a miserable ease.' This stance kills off the vibrant quality and the affirmative force of life in favor of comfort and tedium. Second, it tends to valorize death and violence. As radical breaks from continuity, these events must be celebrated for they serve as sites for enriching our conception of existence. Here we arrive at a critical point: that the upholding of death and violence, as manifested in both primitive religions and in modern art, reinforces the idea that man has a basic nature of *homo religiosus*: a bent towards the ecstatic, a yearning for something that approximates the transcendent, a search for the spiritual in the material or the corporeal. This seems to bespeak of our natural orientation to a life beyond but without recourse back to God. This conception of the Counter-Enlightenment movement, then, despairs for the power of the transcendent in the immanent.

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Expressing the Inexpressible: the work of Mons John Cyril Hawes, Priest and Architect.

What is the result of the combination of priest and architect, Anglican and Catholic heritage, English and Roman education in a deeply faith filled man?

The answer can be found in the hot and dry country of Geraldton Diocese Western Australia in the work of priest and architect Monsignor John Cyril Hawes (1876-1956). Hawes expresses the inexpressible through his many churches, hermitages, chapels, residential buildings and the Cathedral in Geraldton as well as other buildings in many other parts of the world. His deep and passionate faith is expressed in the eclectic use of symbols and forms encountered in his work and yet his buildings also express his concern for the human person as they 'fit' in the Mediterranean climate and are scaled to fit each community. This paper will explore Hawes' visual theology made evident through his buildings in Western Australia and through the individual art works he created to live within those buildings. His iconography is 'borrowed' from many traditions and brought to life in a unique way in gargoyles, relief sculptures, paintings, baldachin, designs, stained glass windows, drawings and other artefacts. He was a man of his times and the challenge for those who live and worship in these buildings today is to preserve these earthly treasures of his legacy and yet function within them while celebrating 21st century liturgies.

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Among the Believers: From Confusion to Multiple Conversations

Practitioners of the relatively new art of engaging with believers from different religions do not agree on how to name and describe their activity. Is it "dialogue" or "building relations"? Is it "interfaith" or "interreligious"? The four categories—the dialogue of life, the dialogue of action, the dialogue of theological exchange and the dialogue of religious experience (life, hands, head and heart)—have now become standard. As a further refinement, I propose that these four categories must address each of the three theological virtues, faith, hope and love. Since each topic has its own proper themes, the activity which addresses them must be given its own proper designation. Accordingly, I propose "interfaith dialogue", "inter-hope conversation" and "inter-love communication". I note in passing that each of these activities has its own proper time frame, referring to past, present or future. More importantly, these three activities have Trinitarian implications: each activity has a direct association with one or other of the three persons of the Trinity; and together they unite under the single heading of building relations among the believers. This refined analysis of the content of the engagement between believers from different religions enables us to move from confusion to multiple conversations.

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Speaking between the Known and the Unknown

Philosophers sometimes distinguish some types of discourse as being particularly suited for speech to or about God. For instance, Heidegger's analysis of onto-theo-logy suggests that classical metaphysical language reduces God to a being amongst beings, albeit the highest being. In a similar vein, Jean-Luc Marion argues that the discourse of praise avoids this reduction by drawing on the via eminentiae of apophatic theology. This paper will argue that, while there are clear differences between kinds of discourse, all discourse involves both the known and the unknown. Thus, apparently impersonal statements of scientific fact are actually historical, provisional, cultural and directed towards a particular purpose. They assert some knowns, but also imply unknowns, in relation to which they will be revised. Similarly, even religious discourse that explicitly prescind from conceptual affirmations about God still depends on articulating shared meanings and concepts. Though it may be directed toward the excessive and transcendent, if it was concerned with the unknown only as unknown, it would become meaningless. The paper will conclude that there are significant resemblances between types of discourse such as scientific observation and religious worship, which are often radically separated from one another.

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The paradoxical discovery of 'I am' in infancy within the experienced 'as-one-ness' with (M)other

This paper argues that we are created in connection to other-ness, initially explored here in the context of (M)other and baby. The image of the Madonna and Child, most specifically with the child at the breast, is discussed as a metaphor for remembering what is a connected intimacy for an infant and the (M)other and I will discuss 'new-born-ness' as being experienced as 'we-are' and the emergence of 'I-am' in the context of the relationship with (M)other: I am more than me and fully me.

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Meaning and Morals: A Post-Kantian Conception of Art

A recent philosophical theory of perception reverses the standard view of the relation between sensory experience and perceptual classification. Surprisingly, this new theory provides the framework for making better sense of the structure of aesthetic judgment and its relation to the structure of moral judgment, a relation, aspects of which were mooted in Kant's aesthetic theory.

The central idea of the paper is that aesthetic judgment involves the particular raised to the level of universality; the personal edited and calibrated into a public subjectivity. The main objective of the paper is to show that the link between aesthetic and moral judgments rests upon the dependency of individual experience on (ways of knowing internalised through) exchanges within a community; and a two-way dependency between the logic of experience and the evolution of meaning.

This updated Kant sets in stark relief by way of contrast the distortions that dominated interpretations of Kant's aesthetic theory in the twentieth century by Anglo-American writers on art and into the twenty-first century particularly by writers on environmental aesthetics. These interpretations were constructed to serve as a foil for theories of art and environment which focus on the meaningful content of art and nature. In contrast, I will argue that post-Kantian theories of meaning and the theory of perception mentioned above provide the basis of an interpretation of Kant's aesthetic theory which is better placed to explain the nexus between aesthetics and meaning. In particular, a post-Kantian aesthetic theory explains how art occasions the construction of meaning rather than expresses it.

I draw upon the modes of producing and public reception of a selection of art-works by the prominent contemporary Icelandic-Danish artist Olafur Eliasson. Many of Eliasson's art works are large architectural installations. As such they challenge the unexamined assumptions of traditional interpretations of Kantian aesthetics. Eliasson creates art work which requires movement by the audience into and around components of the work. The audience in effect edits and constructs what they take to be the work. This involves calibrating the priority of elements and the resulting configuration with relevant peers or in some cases recognized experts. This exemplifies in an explicit way what is normally implicit and unrecognised in the public's perception and understanding of cultural interactions and artefacts.

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"The Palm at the End of the Mind": The Nature of the Inexpressible in the Late Poetry of Wallace Stevens

The ontological nature of the inexpressible was important for the high modernist American poet Wallace Stevens (1879-1955) because, as a neo-Kantian idealist, he believed reality as the thing itself (the *ding an sich*) cannot be apprehend nor represented in speech. My paper will consider Stevens' concept of the ineffable as it plays out in his late poetry. In particular, drawing in part on the work of French Structuralist Gérard Genette, I will present a reading of Stevens' late poem "Of Mere Being" which specifically concerns the limit of thought. I will show how silence in both the presence and absence of speech contributes to and resists the creation of literal and figurative meaning in the form and subject matter of this poem. This reading, which illuminates how a semantics of silence might be applied to literature and poetry, demonstrates the way in which a poet, by silencing the representational function of language, may actually express the inexpressible nature of reality. In the process I consider how this demonstration informs Wittgenstein's early observation concerning the

limits of thought and speech: "There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is the mystical". And, in contrast, Stevens' notion of poetic truth: "Music falls on the silence like a sense/A passion that we feel, not understand".

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Reaching towards the inexpressible: A psycho-spiritual expression of the good life

Throughout the ages people have sought to grasp and express the nature of the good life. Philosophical reflections have considered the politico-social structures and human qualities necessary for ethical actions and the good, flourishing life. Yet philosophical discourse does not provide a powerful, motivating expression of the ethical, flourishing life today. In fact, in contemporary culture a widespread understanding of the good life reduces to hedonism, expressed most blatantly in advertising. Psychological discourse also describes the good life at the level of the individual and suggests ways of promoting happiness, mental health and positive relationships. Although limited, psychological expressions of the good, flourishing life are popular and influential. Theological writings and Christian spiritual expressions of the good are less popular but point to what is inexpressible as the source and end of the flourishing life. They provide a way to identify, express and explain human spiritual experiences in ways that enhance human flourishing. We argue that insights from philosophy, psychology and Christian spirituality can be integrated into a popular and compelling expression of the good and flourishing life. A psycho-spiritual model of the relationship between spirituality and human flourishing is proposed.

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The Unmetaphysical God of Richard Swinburne.

Theists identify by God by his properties, as also do atheists. Theistic philosophers commonly assert of God metaphysical properties, derived from God's supposed property of being the cause of the existence of all that is not God. God's properties are not such as belong to any other thing and are quite unlike those of created things. A paradigm case of an exponent of this view is Thomas Aquinas. Richard Swinburne is a recent exponent of an account of God's properties which is un-metaphysical, in that they are not derived from the notion of what it is to exist. They can be described as 'common sense', in that they are readily comprehensible and akin to our ordinary concepts of properties of things other than God.

This paper considers only three of the properties commonly assigned to God: goodness, immutability, and eternity. Aquinas' accounts of them is examined in some detail. He argues that we must be agnostic about the properties of God because we do not know what God is but only what he is not. Knowledge of God, then, is limited by the conditions of knowing. Aquinas also argues that none of our concepts apply to God but only resemble our concepts.

Swinburne maintains that we can know the nature of the properties which distinguish God. With regard to God's being good, immutable, and eternal, these properties are readily comprehensible for they agree with our ordinary concepts of goodness of character, of changing, and existing over time. Swinburne's account will be defended briefly.

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Reason, Audit Culture, and the Inexpressibility of Practice

This paper will explore the rise of audit culture, as an aspect of the wider process of rationalisation critically examined by the German sociologist, Max Weber (1864-1920). It will focus on the institutional auditing of practices, such as teaching and research in universities, and some of the ways in which this occludes and subordinates the role of practical reason, which has an inexpressible aspect, in these activities. The paper will argue for a rethinking of both instrumental and practical reason as ways to better understand, improve or change people's practice.

Andrew Murray

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For a previous conference, I studied Thomas's use of analogy to make the claim that something, though minimal, could be positively attributed to God. But Thomas also embraced the *via negativa* and was clear that God could not be comprehended. In this paper, I propose to investigate how strong was Thomas's sense of the unknowability of God. The paper will discuss Thomas's use of the *via negativa*, the Divine simplicity and God as *ipsum esse subsistens*.

John O'Neilljto@hotkey.net.au**Towards the Whole: Exploring Raimon Panikkar's Cosmotheandric and Ken Wilber's Integral Visions.**

In this paper I will give a brief outline of Ken Wilber's Integral vision, which is based on his AQAL model – all quadrants, levels, lines, states and types. I will also outline Raimon Panikkar's cosmotheandric vision – in which the Cosmic, the Divine and the Human are seen as inter-independent dimensions of reality. I will consider the broad philosophical approaches of both men, referring mainly to two recent books by each author. I will touch on their understandings of mysticism, both as experiences within the territory mapped by their visions and as ultimately about the unqualifiable Absolute, Mystery, Silence and Emptiness.

They both aspire to provide comprehensive, coherent, holistic, inclusive, philosophical visions of reality, drawing on many sources of knowledge and wisdom from Eastern and Western religions and spiritual traditions as well as modern, post-modern and contemporary philosophy, sociology, anthropology, psychology, science and other disciplines.

Both speak of using the eyes of flesh, mind and spirit and have new interpretations of the Trinity. For Wilber, this is his three Faces of God, while Panikkar writes of the radical Trinity, which for him includes the whole of reality. Both allude to the significance of first, second and third person pronouns as providing basic constitutive perspectives on reality. For Panikkar, in order to experience reality using all three eyes, especially the third or mystical eye, purity of heart and a disciplined way of life is necessary. Wilber describes and points to higher states and stages of consciousness which could be considered mystical. He acknowledges that people will only understand his descriptions if they experience the requisite levels of consciousness and experience for them. He asserts that this usually involves following some injunctions, training and practices within adequate communities. This is a major way in which he brings together the expressible with the inexpressible.

Both have similar views of Kosmology (their spelling), which include all aspects, levels, and dimensions of reality. I will briefly link Wilber's treatment of involution and evolution with Panikkar's ideas of continuous creation and incarnation and the destiny of Being.

I will also look at some of the factors which differentiate them.

Both conclude that new visions are urgently needed in order to more effectively, comprehensively, and inclusively meet the global challenges of our times and contribute to an evolutionary unfolding to greater dimensions of being, becoming, knowing and acting.

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In 1974 Jürgen Moltmann published his book *The Crucified God*, arguing that a God who cannot suffer is a *deficient* God. His argument was built up from exploring the question of God's *Will*. This question is an equally significant topic within Islamic theology. The following paper will argue that new developments in interreligious dialogue may justify appropriation of the crucifixion event into a pocket of Islamic thought; specifically, on the will of God and its relationship to human free will. While the Qur'ān compellingly insinuates that Jesus was not crucified at all, debate within Islamic scholarship as to whether Jesus at least made it onto the cross has been re-opened within contemporary hermeneutics (*tafsīr*). Taking up that development, this paper will argue that for God to *know* humanity, it seems reasonable that He deny Himself all preconceived judgment of what humanity is-in Islamic terms God *may* experience the state of *fan'a* (Self-annihilation) in Christ on the Cross. As much as this seems heretical to the majorities of both faith communities, it is acknowledged this is an

imperfect attempt to express an ultimately ineffable experience of the early Christian community of a tear in the fabric of existence. By no means is it to be asserted as 'truth' or even a unique event in time but perhaps it is a mere 'shadow' of a state (apophasis) that the unchanging God of monotheism is eternally in, and in paradox to His simultaneous existence.

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What about the Inexpressible in Music? Musical Performance as Embodied, Spiritual Exercise

When we think of the inexpressible we seem to suggest that it refers to something that transcends expression. Music, we colloquially argue, has the power to express the inexpressible. What is meant by this, is this a cogent view and how does music achieve this? Using these questions as a preliminary rhetorical context, this paper presents two philosophical arguments with relevance to artistic expression in musical performance: The first, negative argument critically examines the validity of a common view that performing musicians acquire a technique which then underpins their capacity to express musical content. I intend to argue that this view is flawed and accounts neither for creative practice and artistic experience nor does it provide us with a cogent explanation how to actually develop artistic practice and performance. My second, positive argument attempts to establish how we could alternatively understand musical performance as immediate expression of the imagination and any technique as "care of self". Musical performance should then be conceived as a form of embodied philosophy or spiritual exercise in which musicians and audiences participate in the expressed from different perspectives. In this argument I will attempt to synthesize conceptions of music as a spiritual art (Hanslick) and holistic conceptions of art or artistic practice advanced in Richard Shusterman's arguments for his "somaesthetics". My conclusion tries to show that while a colloquial division between the expressible and the inexpressible corresponds to an ordinary division between technique and expression, my revised, unified view of musical performance leads to a more creative stance. Here, the inexpressible makes no sense at all and we only encounter expression or silence.

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The Suppression of Faith and the Ethics of Belief

If faith is something like seeing in the dark ("through a glass, darkly"), it is no surprise that it is attacked by those who have firm and, as they would think, down to earth requirements for the reasons that justify belief. Confronted with the idea that faith is a virtue, they reply that it is in fact a vice. Belief on the basis of faith is unjustified, contrary to reason and morality, and the deliverances of faith are inexpressible in that they ought to be banned from public discourse.

Disagreements like this have a distinctly ethical flavour, leading to the idea that a substantial part of the theory of knowledge is aptly called the Ethics of Belief. In this paper I will make a few observations about the structure and content of the ethics of belief and apply them to the claims of the people like Richard Dawkins.

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Expressing the Inexpressible through Signs and Images

In the philosophical literature self-knowledge and the knowledge of God as One is usually delegated to the realm of the mystical and confined to Hermetic or Neoplatonic sources. Negative theology considers the connection between the human and the divine to be "beyond the limit of all human understanding" (Kearney, 2001, p. 104). As often cited, Wittgenstein insisted that what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence.

However, Gilles Deleuze's philosophical method of transcendental empiricism (Deleuze, 1994) is oriented to perceiving the imperceptible and thinking the unthinkable. Deleuze was interested in esoteric languages irreducible to verbal expressions but encompassing images, memories, and diverse regimes of signs in general. Deleuze's method as "esoteric calculus" is inseparable from his metaphysics as ontology of the virtual.

In this paper I will analyze in detail Deleuze's ontology and his unorthodox, experimental and experiential, "epistemology" that involves "the conquest of the unconscious", in his words. I will focus on Deleuze's notion of transversal communication as connecting disparate levels of reality such as virtual and actual (both real, for Deleuze). While transversal communication remains a theoretical construct, I will argue that it is possible to establish it in practice and if so, to indeed connect what since Descartes is considered to be the dualistic opposites. The perceived opposites of consciousness and the unconscious; of material and spiritual; of body and mind can become traversed in human experience.

I will present an example of a particular "esoteric language" (in Deleuze's parlance) that literally constructs or lays down what Deleuze called the plane of immanence and that SHOWS what otherwise would have remained unexpressed. The knowledge of such a language and our understanding of the function of signs becomes imperative if we want to overcome the limits posited by negative theology and Wittgenstein's pessimism.

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Aspiring for Truth

This paper defends the idea that, while it is by no means the only thing involved in religion, and need not be the concern of everyone, what I will call aspiring for truth has a key role to play in the context of religion. By this, I mean the ongoing attempt to give an account of what the world is like, what is the human situation, what is the character of morality and of how it relates to religion, and of why ones particular religious beliefs are compelling. Such an account will need also to face, and to make sense of, the development of the tradition of which one is a part – and of contending ideas within it – over time.

The reason why I shall argue that such an account is needed is because a religious response to the world – to say nothing of any one specific religious response – would seem only to make sense, if it is plausible that the world is a certain way. I.e. Theism would seem pointless, if there is, in fact, no personal God; and so on. Clearly, it is possible to take a purely internal view of religious meaning and practises – as is suggested, say, by Peter Winch. But to do just that would seem problematic, if, in fact, the world may not be as ones views suggest. Similarly, different religious views suggest that one should take different kinds of ethical stances towards things. But approaches – such as those of Richard Braithwaite and Karl Popper – which reduce religion to ethics are inadequate, given that taking up a specific religious perspective would seem only to make sense if certain things are true, or at least plausible.

I will argue that we cannot expect the truth of religion to be something that can be demonstrated. But we can reasonably expect that those who have the capacity to do so will aspire to show that it is intellectually compelling. However – and this is the rub – if they don't do this, or if the task that they would need to accomplish looks daunting, then they should not be surprised if their case is rejected.

I will conclude, however, by suggesting that those who are not religious face a similar problem. For example, they owe us an account that can make sense of how one can square the normative significance that they accord to their own ethical views, within a naturalistic perspective. E.g. are they able to square this with the *prima facie* reductionist, evolutionary account of the character of these views, to which they will typically subscribe.

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The Worldview Expressed in Medieval World Maps

Developing older models, the Western medieval period produced a number of *mappae mundi*, variously large and small maps that showing the lay of the surface of the whole earth within a circle, a two-dimensional representation of the three dimensional reality as that was understood. Beyond the circle there are often representations of the divine realms. The three known continents meet in the middle, with Asia at the top, Europe to the left, and Africa to the right. In recent years these maps have been the subject of substantial new investigation and many details have been elucidated.

Whatever the intention of their respective makers with regard to recording and conveying sheer information, and whatever the geographical and historical cultural features revealed, these maps are typically objects for personal contemplation. This paper reads a selection of surviving *mappae mundi*,

including the most famous of them, the Hereford *mappa mundi*, as expressions of a Christian worldview to be embraced as each person contemplating it undertakes a version of the implicit quest for salvation.

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“Worship God as if you see Him”: Sacred art, aniconism and the inexpressible in the Islamic tradition.

What is the relationship between the inexpressible and the creative imagination? What is the function and role of sacred art in the spiritual life? How do religions differ on these matters? Such are the questions this presentation seeks to address from the mystical perspective of the Andalusian Sufi Ibn al 'Arabī (1165-1240).

While the aniconism of the Islamic artistic tradition is familiar, Muslim understandings of the creative imagination are less well understood. Notwithstanding the historical, doctrinal and cultural differences on this point between Islam and Christianity, it is perhaps surprising to read Ibn 'Arabī, in the following passage, praising Christian iconic painting:

The Byzantines developed the art of painting to perfection because, for them, the singular nature (*al-fardaniyya*) of our Lord Jesus is the supreme support of concentration upon Divine Unity.

Ibn al 'Arabī recognises that for Christians, the icon is a legitimate support for the contemplation of the Absolute and not worshipped as an object in itself. This recognition in turn is made possible by Ibn al 'Arabī's profound understanding of the role of the imagination in the respective spiritual economies of Christianity and Islam. For Muslims aniconism is a concomitant of the particular role the imagination plays in Islamic prayer. A hadith states: “Worship God as if you see Him”. From Ibn al 'Arabī's mystical perspective, aniconism may therefore be understood less as an expression of cultural intolerance, and more as an integral aspect of the mediating function the imagination fulfils between what can and cannot be expressed.

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The Name of God – Judaism and Hermeneutics: Structure and Meaning of Language

The name usually defines our thinking of the named, as our language respectively reflects our understanding of the expressed.

The Hebrew Tetragrammaton in the Scriptures represents the explicit or 'revealed' name of God which at the same time, according to early tradition, cannot be pronounced, but rather told through other and descriptive names, all expressing the same one Name or the name of the One. This structure of the revealed and the hidden, of presence and withdrawal, of ambiguity and modality is inherent to the understanding of revelation, and decisive for the hermeneutics of the texts responsive to different religious exegesis.

There is an important philosophical-theological issue in this mediated form between ontology and language, between our understanding and our faith which I will present with this paper.

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Western Churches' difficulty with Femininity and Mysticism

If we consider language as a communication tool, the 'inexpressible' and 'expressible' could be seen as dichotomous elements of language, e.g. failure or success of communicating. Jacques Lacan, however, in Seminar XX goes much further and posits the 'inexpressible' beyond language, as if there is a ceiling to the 'expressible'. He equates the 'inexpressible' with the ineffable Spirit present in human life which, in turn, he equates with feminine *enjoyment* and *enjoyment beyond* (*jouissance* and *jouissance-en-plus*) which is often experienced in mysticism. He devoted much of his time (Seminar XX and XXI) to posit femininity as inherent in the spiritual life of society, and mysticism as one of the most powerful expression of this.

The Western Churches' difficulty with accepting women into the inner sanctum of the hierarchy goes deeper than just being based on dogmatic and biblical references. It is the difficulty of accepting femininity and mysticism as an integral part of the Church.

In this paper I want to explore Lacan's (Irigaray's, Kristeva's and Žižek's) thinking with respect to above and discuss how femininity and mysticism keeps on subverting the hierarchical structure of the Lacanian Master Discourse, which is often considered as an illuminating and exemplary structure of the (amongst others) Western Churches.

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God and the Realm of the Inexpressible in Gabriel Marcel

This paper explores the nature of the inexpressible realm that is an important part of the thought of French philosopher, Gabriel Marcel, with special consideration of the significance of Marcel's views for the topic of religious experience, and the affirmation of God. After a brief overview of some of Marcel's key distinctions, including reflection and experience, primary and secondary reflection, and problem and mystery, the paper will apply these notions to the area of religion. The emphasis is on developing one of Marcel's central insights: that the realm of conceptual knowledge, which includes both philosophy and science, is inadequate to capture the fundamental experiences of human beings in their world. No matter how careful or deeply philosophical our reasoning is, we can never fully capture at the level of reflection the nature of some of our most important experiences. These experiences are to some extent inexpressible, yet real and can be known objectively. The paper attempts to illustrate some of these experiences (including those of fidelity and hope) and the way in which they point toward the transcendent realm (the "Absolute Thou") in human life. The general aim of the paper is to make more explicit an argument for God's existence that is based on the inexpressible dimension of human life, an argument that is latent in Marcel's thought, but not developed in any detail.

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Justice *contra* the Inexpressible: The Rhetoric of Corruption in the Book of Job

It is not uncommon to hear by way of commentary on *Job* that God is beyond all definition and thus beyond the reach of dogma; that God is of an inexpressible nature such that the only appropriate response to matters divine is one that acknowledges some form or other of a 'negative' mysticism. The argument of this paper is not only that this is serious misreading of *Job* but that it masks and promulgates an ideology that serves arbitrary power and corruption by reason that it severs all ties between God and justice. Instead, what we see in *Job* is a critique of that discourse that claims to be able to speak about what it has already defined as being inexpressible, using the rhetoric of the inexpressible in order to undermine the hope for, and thus the realisation of, justice.

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Love as Revelation

In his 1963 work *Love Alone: The Way of Revelation*, Hans Urs Von Balthasar proposed a 'third way' of conceiving the theological category of 'revelation' beyond cosmological or anthropological methods. He calls this method love as revelation. This paper asks, first, what did von Balthasar mean by this phrase and second, why would contemporary Australian theologians be interested? Von Balthasar is seeking an aesthetic way of speaking about God that respects the particularity of the Christian gospel whilst acknowledging the limitations of human knowing. As such, it is a resource that might address some contemporary philosophical concerns about knowledge and reason, subjectivity and objectivity, being and thinking.

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The mystical theologian: the influence of Abbé Huvelin on Friedrich von Hügel

Most theology in the Academy is focused on the Expressible. Theologians argue over rational, understandable definitions of God: clear cut, precise, and analytical. By contrast, mystics encounter the Inexpressible, and struggle to describe their lived experience of God: what they have seen, heard and tasted.

Baron Friedrich von Hügel (1852-1925) was a religious philosopher, a self-taught scholar in the Classics, languages, exegesis, philosophy and theology. Though he never attended a school or University, von Hügel was awarded honorary doctorates from both Oxford and St Andrews Universities. In his later years, he was viewed as one of the leading Catholic intellectuals in England. But what is really distinctive about von Hügel's work is that he learned to be "a mystical theologian who referred everything to the soul", seeing both the rational and the mystical as valuable and necessary in his scholarship. This tension was encouraged by his spiritual director, the Abbé Huvelin, who taught him the practice of contemplative prayer, and introduced him to the model of the scholar-saint, as exemplified by some of the Catholic masters of 17th century spirituality: Fénelon, de Sales, and Grou.

This paper tracks how Huvelin encouraged von Hügel towards a "dim" theology; a theology informed, balanced and safeguarded through a life of mystical prayer.

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Knowledge as *Poesis*: Aristotle and Goethe on the Relation Between Art and Science

Aristotle is often viewed as having a common-sense realist ontology (the basic entities in the world are sensible particulars and their existence and nature are independent of human consciousness), a representationalist epistemology (knowledge involves forming accurate representations of the world), and a correspondence theory of truth (a mental or linguistic representation is true if it matches its object). These three theories, if taken together with Aristotle's threefold distinction between theoretical, practical and productive sciences, seem to imply that knowledge is, or should be, a kind of mirroring, in which a certain portion of the world is "copied" in consciousness, and that this is a process in which the *poiesis* (making, production) characteristic of art has no place. This paper presents an alternative interpretation of Aristotle's theory of knowledge, by relating it to the scientific writings of the German poet and scientist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. By drawing on Goethe, it will be suggested, firstly, that there is a relationship between certain of Aristotle's aesthetic ideas, as expressed in the *Poetics* and elsewhere, and his conception of scientific knowledge. Secondly, it will be argued that both Goethe and Aristotle have a "poetic" theory of knowledge, according to which knowledge is not, merely, a matter of mirroring the sensible appearances of nature, but, rather, involves creatively transforming the initially unformed sensory and imaginative "material" of experience, into a form which best displays the essence of the thing being studied. On this conception, knowledge does not simply repeat nature in a mental copy; rather, knowledge transforms and even, potentially, improves on nature, insofar as a thing can reveal its essence more clearly in the mind than it does in external nature.